

First Congregational Church

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

An Open and Affirming Church

PO Box 350, 28 High Street, Wiscasset, Maine 04578

207-882-7544, www.uccwiscasset.org



We welcome you to the First Congregational Church of Wiscasset.

VISION: We are on a journey to reflect God's love, embracing diversity and affirming the dignity and worth of all.

MISSION: Together we strive to praise God, grow in faith, cultivate love, spread joy, care for all people and God's creation, promote peace, and do justice.



November 17, 2024

November 17, 2024
Stewardship Sunday, Part II
10:00am

* Indicates to please stand with your heart or your posture.

We joyfully welcome all people and those on Zoom to our worship service this morning!
The First Congregational Church of Wiscasset is an Open and Affirming Church
affiliated with the Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ denomination.
You are invited to Coffee and sharing with one another in Fellowship Hall after worship!

For Your Contemplation:
“What?!?! Me worry?!?” . . . Alfred E Newman



“He who binds to himself a joy does a winged life destroy; But he who kisses the joy
as it flies lives in eternity's sunrise. . . . from William Blake’s poem “Eternity”

PRELUDE

Seek Ye First

arr. Douglas Wagner

RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHORAL INTROIT

Christ, Be Our Light

* INVITATION TO WORSHIP

Come and see what God has done.

**God’s work is honorable and glorious, and God’s righteousness endures
forever.**

Let us test and examine our ways and return to the Lord!

Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God in praise!

* HYMN

In Christ There Is No East or West

No. 381

* INVITATION TO CONFESSION

Gracious God, we come before You to confess our sins, knowing that you are a
God of love and forgiveness.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (UNISON):

When we have acted out of fear, when we have acted out of anger, when we have acted out of selfishness, we have sinned.

When our thoughts have been small-minded, when our thoughts have been unruly, when our thoughts have been bitter, we have sinned.

When our words have been unfeeling, when our words have been thoughtless, when our words have been admirable but empty, we have sinned.

When we have wasted Your gifts and possibilities, when we have not lived out of love, we have sinned.

But You, Gracious God, are the source of love and life, and we ask Your forgiveness and Your re-forming of our very selves, both for our sake and the world's sake, we pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, our risen Savior. Amen.

WORDS OF PARDON AND FORGIVENESS (said to each other):

The good news is that God forgives us and gives us Christ to be living water and true bread. Let us accept with joy these precious gifts of abundant life. Amen.

CHORAL ANTHEM

Holy

Tom Fettke

MINUTE FOR STEWARDSHIP

Angie Eddy

JOYS AND CONCERNS:

After each Joy or Concern please respond:

Pastor: "Lord," **Congregation: "Hear our Prayer"**

MORNING PRAYER

SILENT MOMENTS FOR PERSONAL PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

CHORAL RESPONSE

The Cry of the Poor

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Matthew 6:24 – 33

Liturgist: This is the Word of God for the people of God.

People: Thanks be to God!

* HYMN OF PREPARATION *Help Us Accept Each Other* No. 376

SERMON: “What?!? Me Worry?!?” Rev. David Myers

Text: “But seek first the kingdom of God and God’s righteousness, and all these things will be given unto you as well.” . . . Matthew 6:33

OFFERTORY PRAYER

OFFERTORY *Offertory on "Land of Rest"* arr. Lani Smith

DOXOLOGY No. 46

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God for all that love has done;
Creator, Christ, and Spirit One. Amen.**

* HYMN *When We are Living* No. 415

BENEDICTION

BENEDICTORY RESPONSE

*Go now in peace. Never be afraid. God will go with you each hour of every day.
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true. Know God will guide you in all you do.
Go now in love, and show you believe. Reach out to others so all the world can see.
God will be there watching from above. Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.*

POSTLUDE *Our Refuge and Strength* arr. Edward Broughton

You are invited to sit for the postlude.

* * * * *

“Our worship ends, let our service begin”

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1. In Christ there is no east or west, in him no south or north;
 2. In Christ shall true hearts ev - ery - where their high com - mu - nion find;
 3. Join hands, dis - ci - ples of the faith, what - e' - er your race may be;
 4. In Christ now meet both east and west, in him meet south and north;

but one com - mu - ni - ty of love through - out the whole wide earth.
 his ser - vice is the gold - en cord close - bind - ing hu - man - kind.
 all chil - dren of the liv - ing God are sure - ly kin to me.
 all Christ - ly souls are one in him through - out the whole wide earth.

WORDS: John Oxenham, 1908, alt.
 MUSIC: African-American melody, arr. Harry T. Burleigh, 1939

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Matthew 6:24 – 33

“No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Reader: This is the Word of God for the people of God.

People: Thanks be to God

Help Us Accept Each Other

Unison

1. Help us ac - cept each oth - er as Christ ac - cept - ed us;
 2. Teach us, O Lord, your les - sons, as in our dai - ly life
 3. Let your ac - cep - tance change us, so that we may be moved
 4. Lord, for to - day's en - coun - ters with all who are in need,

teach us as sis - ter, broth - er, each per - son to em - brace.
 we strug - gle to be hu - man and search for hope and faith.
 in liv - ing sit - u - a - tions to do the truth in love;
 who hun - ger for ac - cep - tance, for righ - teous - ness and bread,

Be pres - ent, Lord, a - mong us and bring us to be - lieve
 Teach us to care for peo - ple, for all, not just for some,
 to prac - tice your ac - cep - tance, un - til we know by heart
 we need new eyes for see - ing, new hands for hold - ing on;

we are our - selves ac - cept - ed and meant to love and live.
 to love them as we find them or as they may be - come.
 the ta - ble of for - give - ness and laugh - ter's heal - ing art.
 re - new us with your Spir - it; Lord, free us, make us one!

When We Are Living

(Pues Si Vivimos)

1. When we are liv - ing, it is in Christ Je - sus,
 2. Through all our liv - ing, we our fruits must give.
 3. 'Mid times of sor - row and in times of pain,
 4. A - cross this wide world, we shall al - ways find
 *5. Sha - lom to you now, sha - lom, my friends.
 (1.) *Pues si vi - vi - mos, pa - ra Él vi - vi - mos*

and when we're dy - ing, it is in the Lord.
 Good works of ser - vice are for of - fer - ing.
 when sens - ing beau - ty or in love's em - brace,
 those who are cry - ing with no peace of mind,
 May God's full mer - cies bless you, my friends,
y si mo - ri - mos pa - ra Él mo - ri - mos.

Both in our liv - ing and in our dy - ing,
 When we are giv - ing, or when re - ceiv - ing,
 wheth - er we suf - fer, or sing re - joic - ing,
 but when we help them, or when we feed them,
 in all your liv - ing, and through your lov - ing,
Sea que vi - va - mos o que mu - ra - mos,

St. 5 may be used alone as a benediction.

WORDS: St. 1, anonymous; tr. Elise S. Eslinger, 1983; sts. 2, 3, 4, Roberto Escamilla, 1983, SOMOS DEL SEÑOR
 tr. George Lockwood, 1987; st. 5, Elise S. Eslinger, 1980 Irr.
 MUSIC: Traditional Spanish melody; harm. FCC, 1997

“What?!? Me Worry?!?”
Matthew 6:24 – 33

Text: “But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” . . . Matthew 6:33

We are about 11 days away from Thanksgiving, and this is also part II of the Stewardship campaign. and we are about 12 days into preparing to face a new reality in this country after an election season that has been more cantankerous and disgusting than anything I have ever imagined. So, as we come to worship today at a time when we are either 1.) fearful of what the results of the past election will bring; or 2.) cheering on the changes that have been promised by the incoming president elect. It is a good thing that today we hear a word from Jesus: “Don’t worry about your life! Don’t worry about what you eat or what you will wear. Consider the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. If they trust God for the future, shouldn’t you?!?”

Growing up in the 50’s and 60’s and being a devotee of *Mad Magazine*, these words might as well be attributed to Alfred E. Newman, who consistently said, “What?!?! Me worry?!?”. It was antithetical to common sense then, and it is now. If you happen to be a worrier, can you imagine anything more frustrating than being told not to worry? It’s like telling someone who is experiencing a full-blown panic attack to calm down! Sometimes I think the world is divided between worriers and non-worriers. I don’t tend to be a worrier – some would say that is simply because I don’t understand the situation. I remember the plaque that my dad had above the door you had to use to exit our house. It read. “Today is the day you worried about yesterday – and all is well.”

I don’t know if my dad put that up there because he didn’t let things bother him enough to worry about – or because he was trying to get my mom to

stop worrying about everything. I think it was a little of both, for he saw the needless agony worry put her through. Mom would overly analyze every situation and always managed to see only the worst possible outcome. Our family never had much money, and one day when I was about 7 years old mom won the weekly drawing at Sears and Roebuck in Bangor, Maine and won a combination radio and record player. In the mid-fifties that was a huge prize – like winning a surround sound system now. She cried that night, worrying that now that we had a record player where would we get the money for the 45rpm records that my teen-age sisters would now want to buy. Much later upon her death nearly 50 years later, my sisters and I commented that mom did enough worrying for our entire family. And that never changed; I guess some people are worriers and some are not.

Someone passed on to me an internet piece entitled “Why Parents Drink”. I suspect a few of you have seen it. It tells of a father passing his son’s bedroom only to discover a note his senior high son had left for him. It read:

Dear Dad,

It is with great regret and sorrow that I’m writing you. I had to elope with my new girlfriend because I wanted to avoid a scene with mom and you. I have been finding real passion with Stacey and she is so nice. But I knew you would not approve of her because of all her piercings, tattoos, tight motorcycle clothes and that fact that she is 10 years older than I am. But it’s not only the passion. . . . Dad she’s pregnant. Stacey says we will be very happy. She owns a trailer in the woods and has stacked up enough firewood to heat it all winter. We share a dream of having many more children. Stacey has opened my eyes to the fact that marijuana doesn’t really hurt anyone. We’ll be growing it for ourselves and trading it with the other people who live nearby for cocaine and ecstasy. In the meantime we pray that science will find a cure for AIDS so Stacey can get better. She deserves it. Don’t worry Dad, I’m fifteen and I know how to take care of myself.

Someday, I'm sure that we will be back to visit so that you can get to know your grandchildren.

Love, your son, John

P.S. Dad, none of the above is true. I'm over at Tommy's house. I just wanted to remind you that there are worse things in life than the report card that's in my center desk drawer. I love you. Call me when it's safe to come home.

Well, I think "John" might anticipate a call pretty quickly, but I'm not sure about the "safe to come home" part. But it does put our worries about what we will eat or what we will wear in perspective, doesn't it? Jesus also puts our worries in perspective by saying, "If you must worry, worry about the Kingdom of God – worry about doing God's will and all the lesser needs will fall into place."

With the election, the Democrats worry about what will happen now that the Republicans control both the executive branch and both houses of Congress, and soon will also have a majority on the Supreme Court. The interesting thing is that with the election some Republicans are perhaps even more worried about the president-elect more than the Democrats. And for those who face homelessness or recent immigrants it would be cruel to say to them that God provides for the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, just not for you.

And there were folks in Jesus' day who were hungry, but that's not the group to whom these words from Matthew's Gospel are addressed. Jesus fed those folks and taught them to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Jesus never minimized hunger. In fact, one of the signs of the reign of God, which Jesus says is **worth worrying about**, is that the hungry are fed.

Remember Mary's song – the Magnificat? She envisions a day when people will say, "God has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty."

But these words from Matthew about not worrying are directed to a church in conflict. The church was being persecuted by the larger community and there was internal conflict over the best way to respond to that persecution.

One group went on the offensive; they went out as itinerant missionaries going from community to community proclaiming the good news and were totally dependent on the hospitality of others for the bare minimum necessities of food, clothing, and shelter for the night. They did not worry about where they would sleep the next night, or what they would eat the next day; it was enough to have food and shelter for today.

But, at the other end of the spectrum in this church conflict were those who were followers of Jesus in private but would not own their faith in public for the fear that it would cost them, that persecution would mean a loss of their ample material goods. They were not the “starving” or the “tattered”. They were like us – plenty to eat and an outfit for every occasion. Yet, they were anxious about what might happen to their wealth tomorrow if they publicly claimed Christ today. They didn’t dare trust God for the future! And it is to these that Matthew’s Jesus says, “You can’t serve two masters. You can’t serve God and wealth.” Which is going to be?

Most of us have other worries than where our next meal will come from. We worry about our loved ones, especially about their health. We worry about those loved long-time members of this church that are battling with cancer or some other terminal illness.

Who among us has not had such a string of bad luck or ill health or devastating grief and felt like the target of some demonic force that swept out to the blue to snatch happiness from us?! My mother used to say that bad news always comes in threes – as if that was some divine ordinance given by God. But if that is what we think we are – a target – it’s not who we are created to be, not ultimately at least. For we are the beloved children of a benevolent God Who will not let us go! And the only way I know to live life to the fullest in this day is by loving and forgiving people and then to trust tomorrow to God’s hands. An over simplification?? Perhaps, Oh, I know well from experience that that’s easier said than done, for I am convinced that the longest faith journey for most of us is the journey from security to trust. From the security of things as they are to trust in that God who is making all things new! The continuity of our vital life is not, after all, permanence but instead, newness – the constant regeneration of the universe and us with it.

Artists are people like you and me who paint a picture or write a poem, or love a person, or dream a dream about that newness that surges forth from within us and sometimes overwhelms us. One such dreamer wrote:

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth . . . I heard a loud voice proclaiming from the throne: ‘Now at last God has His dwelling among humans! He will dwell among them and they shall be His people and God will be with them. God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be an end to death and to mourning and crying and pain; for the old order has passed away! . . . Behold, I am making all things new.’” (from Revelation 21:1-5)

The author, the poet, is John, who wrote the Book of Revelation.

“I-am-making-all-thing-new” is a long name, but it is one of the Biblical names for God. William Blake, who while never showing much love for religion, none-the-less wrote I poem I love and was used as the title of a much-loved devotional book by Robert Raines¹. I believe it expresses the secret to living fully in the present and trusting God for the future. Blake writes in his poem, “Eternity”:

“He who binds to himself a joy does a winged life destroy;
But he who kisses the joy as it flies lives in eternity’s sunrise.”

Such wonderful images, for isn’t all meaningful life a “winged life” – like a butterfly or a bird – you can’t hold onto it without destroying it? But to live fully in this day is to live in “eternity’s sunrise.”

I believe, at its heart, our worry is a control issue. Even though the Christians to whom Matthew is writing have never gone hungry, they still felt the need to control things – to ensure that tomorrow and the next day were already arranged for. But we can’t control the future. “He who binds himself to a joy does the winged life destroy.” If we try to keep our children,

our friends, our family life, our church as they are now, then one day we wake up to discover we're hugging something that is lifeless. But she who lives full in this day and trusts the future to God "lives in eternity's sunrise!" And isn't that what it means to "seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness?" And when we do that, "all these things will be given to you as well."

If we truly feel that way perhaps our commitments – financially and our time and our talent – will be seen in a new and more generous light. Just a thought for you to consider as you fill out your pledge cards.

That's not a bad message during this stewardship time of Giving Thanks to God, a God Who will not let us go and will make all things new!

† † †

¹ *To Kiss the Joy*, Robert Raines, Word Incorporated, 1972, Waco, Texas.

Those serving you today:
Interim Pastor: Rev. David Myers
Music Director/Organist: Joel Pierce
Ushers: Youth Group
Reader: Margot Stiassni-Sieracki
Flowers: Nancy Roby

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Please return your pledge card to the church as soon as possible! You may also place them on the offering plate. If needed, more cards are in the pews.

CHRISTMAS WREATH SALE 2024

It's time for the Annual Organ Society Wreath Sale. Wreaths will be available for pick-up on Tuesday, November 26th, or on Sunday, December 1st. **Please order by Thursday, November 21st.** Prepayment is appreciated! Forms and payments, **(Make out checks to the Organ Society)**, can go to the church office or to Libby Mooney libbymooney1954@gmail.com.



There is a drop off box in Fellowship Hall for new unopened toys.

The mission of the U. S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program is to collect new, unwrapped toys during October, November and December each year, and distribute those toys as Christmas gifts to less fortunate children in the community.

Volunteer Opportunity at St. Philip's Church

St. Philip's is looking for individuals to work 3 or more hours on Saturdays in the Bargain Basement thrift shop. Volunteers can work behind the scenes, or out front helping. Contact Sharman Ballantine at sharman1738@gmail.com or 207 481 1043 for more info.

Please take note of the colored paper prayer slips in the pew rack. These are for you to write a word or phrase of prayer or concerns and place it on the plate of offering. It will only be shared with the pastor.

Coming Up:

Sunday, November 17:	Choir Rehearsal, 8:10am Stewardship Sunday Worship, Part II – 10:00am Youth Group Meet, 4:00pm. “The Chosen” 5:30pm, season finale. Watch the finale of Season 4 and enjoy a Pot-Luck Supper with Discussion.
Monday, November 18:	Mah Jongg, 6:00 – 8:30pm
Tuesday, November 19:	Office Hours, 9:00am – 12:00pm
Wednesday, November 20:	Office Hours, 9:00am – 12:00pm Organ Society, 9:30am Feed Our Scholars, 11:00am
Thursday, November 21:	Office Hours, 9:00am – 12:00pm Wreath Orders Due!
Saturday, November 23:	Linda Winterberg Memorial Service, 10:00am
Sunday, November 24:	No Choir Rehearsal Sunday Worship – 10:00am
Tuesday, November 26:	Organ Society, Wreath Making in Fellowship Hall

Need a ride or Can you provide a ride?

If you need or would be willing to provide a ride to and from church on Sundays for those unable to drive themselves, please call Lisa Hargreaves at 207.315.0802.