

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.



February 2, 2025

February 2, 2025
The Sacrament of Holy Communion
Fourth Sunday After the Epiphany
10:00am

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

We joyfully welcome **all** to our worship service, including those worshipping on Zoom! We invite everyone to Coffee and Community in Fellowship Hall after our worship service.

The First Congregational Church of Wiscasset is an Open and Affirming Church affiliated with the Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ denomination.

For Your Contemplation:

“A prophetic word is always needed, but seldom wanted.”

. . . anonymous

PRELUDE

Missa de Angelis

I. Kyrie

RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHORAL INTROIT

My Soul is Thirsting

Angrisano/Pierce

* INVITATION TO WORSHIP

Let us rejoice, for morning has dawned. A new day has been born, and we are newly alive to enjoy it.

**We know the beauty of God’s creation and the wonder of the human family.
We remember those whose love has shaped our lives and those whose
struggle for justice has been unsleeping even in nighttime’s of loneliness.**

We gather in our church to worship God, to share prayers and gifts, to pledge ourselves to God’s work in the world.

**May God bless us, so that what we do in this time together may be honest,
sacred and filled with hope.**

* HYMN

Morning Has Broken

No. 145

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

O God of all the nations, You made known Your love by sending Your only Son into the world that all might live through Him. Pour out Your Spirit on Your Church, that it might fulfill Jesus' command to preach the Gospel everywhere; send Your people into Your harvest lands; defend them in all dangers and temptations; give them grace to bear faithful witness to You; through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CHORAL ANTHEM

I Will Live My Thanks

Joseph Martin

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

Amen

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Luke 4:14 – 30

Liturgist: This is the Word of God.

People: Thanks be to God.

* HYMN OF PREPARATION

Rise Up, O Saints of God

No. 474

SERMON:

"Today"

Rev. David C. Myers

Texts: "Today, in your hearing, the scripture is fulfilled." . . . Luke 4:21

"When the people heard this, they were all furious." . . . Luke 4:28

OFFERTORY

OFFERTORY ANTHEM

Missa de Angelis

III. Sanctus

IV. Agnus Dei

**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.**

THE SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION

THE WORDS OF CONSECRATION

THE SHARING OF THE SACRAMENT (elements served in the pews)

* HYMN

Here I Am, Lord

S - 8

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

Postlude in G-minor

E. L. Ashford

You are invited to sit for the postlude.


* * * * *

“Our worship ends, let our service begin”


NOTE: Liturgy for today’s worship is taken from *Flames of the Spirit: Resources for Worship*.
Edited by Ruth C. Duck, The Pilgrim Press, New York, 1985

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145 From Heaven High I Come to Earth



1. From heav - en high I come to earth to bring you tid - ings
 2. Look now you chil - dren at the sign — a man - ger cra - dle
 3. This ti - ny ba - by that you see, up - hold - er of the
 4. Who is that love - ly lit - tle one? The Ba - by Je - sus,
 5. You want - ed so to make me know that you had let all
 6. O dear Lord Je - sus, for your head now will I make the
 7. To God who sent to us the Son, be glo - ry, laud and



of great worth. A lit - tle child for you this morn
 2. far from fine, a lit - tle child so ten - der, sweet,
 world is he. It is the Christ, our God in - deed,
 4. God's own Son? O God, who made and mold - ed all,
 great things go. You had a pal - ace in the sky;
 6. soft - est bed. The cham - ber where this bed shall be
 hon - or done. Let all the choirs of heav'n re - joice,



has from a cho - sen maid been born.
 2. that you should skip up - on your feet.
 who saves you all in ev - 'ry need.
 4. how did you come to be so small?
 you left it there for such as I.
 6. is in my heart, in - side of me.
 the new ring in with heart and voice.

Luke 4:14 – 30

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, “Is not this Joseph’s son?” He said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Doctor, cure yourself!’ And you will say, ‘Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.’” And he said, “Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s hometown. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.” When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

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

People: Thanks be to God!

David C. Myers
February 2, 2025

“Today”

Luke 4:14 – 30

Text: All spoke well of Him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from His mouth. They said, “Is not this Joseph’s Son?” . . . They got up, drove Him out of town, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl Him off the cliff.” . . . Luke 4:22, 29

In his poem, “Death of the Hired Man” (1904), Robert Frost said, “Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in.” I’m here to tell you that despite what Robert Frost said, it’s not always easy to go home.

Jesus, shortly after He was baptized and had spent time in the wilderness being tempted, returns to the region know as Galilee to go back to His hometown to preach. He receives rave reviews – until He starts a-meddlin’.

It’s tough to preach in your hometown. Believe me, I can testify to it!

In your hometown your identity is never quite your own; it always comes through your parents, or remembrances of your childhood.

When I returned to Orono to preach at my home church in 1991 I was remembered through my parents. “Is this not Carl and Becky’s boy – how they must be proud.” “First in his family to go to college, and seems to be

learning something, too!” “Oh, I can remember when little Davey was in Sunday school.”

I hate it when people call me Davey!

“I used to change your diapers!” one of mother’s friends said to me. Do you know what that does to the ego of a then 43-year-old preacher?

My only consolation was that it was much worse for Jesus.

Jesus had left Nazareth as a boy, perhaps even as a budding carpenter; but he returned home baptized by John. He was no longer a carpenter’s son, but a preacher, a teacher, a healer. His reputation grew, and word of His ministry preceded Him back to Nazareth, His hometown. And when He returned, Luke tells us, “He was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.”

He would need it.

Oh, everything started out all right at first. He went to the synagogue and was asked to read the appointed text from the prophet Isaiah. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has sent me to announce good news to the poor, release to the prisoners, sight to the blind . . .”

Words of hope. Words of promise. Familiar words to the people of the synagogue.

Things were not easy in Nazareth. It was a small community without an abundance of wealth. There is more than anecdotal evidence that Nazareth was one of the forgotten places of Israel. So Jesus’ words of hope and

promise sounded good to all who heard Him. And then Jesus said, “Today, this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Douglas Meeks formerly of Eden Seminary, then Wesley Seminary and later at Vanderbilt Divinity School rightly states, I believe, that this was Jesus’ only sermon – the rest of His teachings were just further elaborations on this passage. Furthermore, Meeks says, the only thing new in this teaching from Jesus on the Isaiah text is just one word – “**today**”. “**Today**, this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” The Kingdom is present today. Not tomorrow. Not someday. The word to the Nazareth congregation and to the entire church is “**today**”.

And Luke’s Gospel tells us, “All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from His mouth. They said, “Is not this Joseph and Mary’s Son?”

However, it’s one thing to read Scripture, it’s quite another to understand it. Two points on what it means to have the Scripture fulfilled in your hearing, . . . “**today**”.

1.) The first is the concept that no one country, one people or one religion is the chosen people of God, rather everyone is the chosen of God!

Jesus helped the people understand the meaning of the very familiar words of the prophet Isaiah, the stories of Elijah and Elisha. You see, Jesus didn’t tell them anything they didn’t already know. That’s not the task of a

prophet. Prophet's don't tell us anything new, rather **they remind us of what we already know**. The Jews in Nazareth at the synagogue were being confronted by Jesus with what they already knew, stories **they** probably taught to Him in His religious training. Familiar stories; but also, when totally understood, they were very disturbing stories, for they changed the boundaries of faith. What Jesus did was to bring them face to face with their own Scriptures and consciences.

Elijah, the greatest of all the prophets, did **not** help the widows in Israel, but rather a **widow in Zarepath near Sidon** – in other words, a Gentile. And Elisha did **not** cure the lepers that lived in Israel, but he healed Namaan, the commander of the Syrian army. And if there was ever a concept of the enemy, the Syrians were it. This illustration was an illustration of the enemy receiving God's favor. Being a chosen people took on new significance – no longer were just the Israelites the chosen; now **everybody was chosen by God**, even the enemy.

When much of our religious upbringing is spent establishing that we are a chosen people, having your favored son remind you a most revered prophet showed demonstrably that God does not show partiality . . . Quite literally all that you have believed is like the proverbial rug, “swept out from under your feet!” And so,, the Nazareans, both hearing, and **knowing** what was said, reacted in anger and tried to throw Jesus off a cliff.

No longer were they dealing with Joe and Mary's boy, the carpenter's son; now they were dealing with Jesus, the Son of God. And Jesus was pushing the boundaries of their faith.

It's difficult when we hear that our God does not show partiality, that God does not favor one people over another. However, today we need to affirm and grow in our understanding of God's work for **God's** chosen people. For today is proclaimed the acceptable year of the Lord; not just to us, but also to **all** people.

2.) The second point about what it means to have the Scripture fulfilled in your hearing – today – is how we live out our faith. And what it means, as Jesus goes on to spell it out, is that God's activity in the human arena is not just a memory or a promise for tomorrow. Only as the Scripture is fulfilled in our midst – today, are we doing God's will.

To put it another way, one of the most fundamental of Judaistic beliefs is that without Messianic signs, there is no Messiah. Until we see that good news is preached to the poor, the sick are healed, the prisoners released, and the blind can see, there is no reality or presence of the Messiah.

Today God will give rest to the weary and the heavy-laden.

Today those who are persecuted for their faith across our globe shall know of God's realm.

Today the peacemakers will be called children of God.

Today the naked are clothed, the hungry are fed, and the lonely are visited.

And **today** the oppressed are given release and set free.

But let us be sure what it means to be oppressed.

While I was in seminary back in the early 70's I attended a Consultation on White Racism. We clergy-in-training (mostly liberal) white males were feebly struggling to understand, and at the same time resist, the dynamics of white racism. I now take pity on those leaders. There is nothing quite as difficult as white liberal clergy seminarians coming to grips with something they deny they are.

But these leaders were up to the task. At one point the leaders called five of us husky, athletic types into the center of the room. Then they called on one of the black leaders to come forward. We were told to physically hold the black man down. No matter what else happened, we were instructed to hold him down. At the same time the black leader was instructed to struggle for his freedom.

Well, we were able to hold him down – but with great difficulty. And while we did this, one of us was asked by the consultant to come and talk with him. As he started to leave, the black man started to break free. The revelation was how restricted we were while holding him down. As long as we held him down restricting **his** freedom, we had no freedom.

It became quite clear to me – as long as there is oppressor and oppressed *neither can be free*. Not only would the oppressed be held down, but so

would the oppressor. The oppressor would be restricted by the energy it takes to hold the oppressed down.

The lesson, I believe, applies to the world as well. As long as we perpetuate political and economic institutions, societies, cultures, and countries that maintain there will be haves and have-nots, **all** stand in need of liberation – the oppressor as well as the oppressed. Until the chains of injustice are broken no one is free – not the rich, not the poor, not the oppressed, not the oppressor.

Today!, said Jesus, “this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”
“**Today**” the signs of the Messiah are present in your midst.

When the Scriptures are not just a memory, but a reality of how we live – there are ramifications. What is it like to suddenly be set free? What is it like to suddenly no longer be an oppressor? What it is like to realize God’s favor is no longer for just the chosen few, but for all people, even your enemies?

Well, . . . what will we do with this message? Will we be like the Nazareans? Their admiration for Jesus was not long-lived, they wanted to throw Him off a cliff.

In the next two or three years there would be many reasons to discount Jesus, to ignore Him. “He ate and drank with sinners.” He didn’t uphold the religious customs of the day, after all He healed on the Sabbath, and He didn’t require His disciples to perform the ritual washing before eating.

Come to think of it, most of the Biblical record is one of reasons people gave so they could cast His message aside.

It's not so different now. As Michael W. Mooty said, "My sense is that in the world in which we live, Jesus is not so much opposed as He is dismissed. I do not now know a single person who would claim to be against Jesus. We would not stone Him, crucify Him, push Him off a cliff. We are more dangerous, . . . we would ignore Him."

We know Him well enough to disregard Him. We have listened to Him long enough to know when not to listen.

And yet, once again we have heard Jesus words, "***Today*** the Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing!"

Is ***today*** going to be the day we proclaim that message to others – not just with words, but also with our deeds?

+ + +

Rise Up, O Saints of God!

1. Rise up, O saints of God! Have done with less-er things;
 2. Rise up, O saints of God! The king - dom tar-ries long.
 3. Rise up, O saints of God! The church for you doth wait,
 4. Lift high the cross of Christ; tread where Christ's feet have trod;

give heart and soul and mind and strength to serve the King of kings.
 Bring in the day of righ-teous-ness, and end the night of wrong.
 with strength un - e - qual to the task; rise up and make it great.
 come sis - ters, broth-ers in the faith, rise up, O saints of God.

WORDS: William P. Merrill, 1911, alt.
 MUSIC: William H. Walter, 1894

FESTAL SONG
 SM

S-8

I, the Lord of Sea and Sky

(Here I Am, Lord)

Unison

1. I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my peo - ple cry.
 2. I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my peo - ple's pain.
 3. I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame,



All who dwell in deep - est sin my hand will save.
 I have wept for love of them, they turn a - way.
 I will set a feast for them, my hand will save.



I who made the stars of night, I will make their dark-ness bright.
 I will break their hearts of stone, give them hearts for love a - lone.
 Fin - est bread I will pro - vide till their hearts be sat - is - fied.



Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?
 I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send?
 I will give my life to them. Whom shall I send?



Refrain (Harmony optional)

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard you

The first system of music features a vocal line in treble clef and an optional harmony line in bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The vocal line begins with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a half note B4. The optional harmony line provides accompaniment with chords and single notes.

call-ing in the night. I will go, Lord, If you

The second system continues the melody. The vocal line has a quarter note C5, a quarter note D5, and a half note E5. The optional harmony line continues with accompaniment.

lead me. I will hold your peo - ple in my heart.

The third system concludes the refrain. The vocal line has a quarter note F#5, a quarter note G5, and a half note A5. The optional harmony line provides accompaniment, ending with a double bar line.

Those serving you today:
Interim Minister: Rev. David Myers
Music Director/Organist: Joel Pierce
Ushers: Anne Harris
Reader: Linda Wallace
Flowers:

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Communion Sunday: We are now serving all gluten free (gf) elements during communion, and “the cup” contains grape juice.

Outreach Team will meet Today following Sunday worship.

Faith Development Meeting, February 3, 2025 6:30pm.

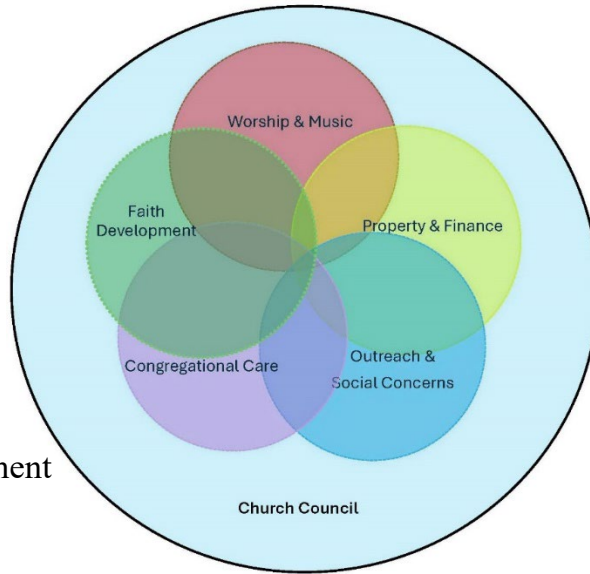
Council Meeting, Wednesday, February 12, 6:30pm via Zoom.

Anyone who would like to attend should email Cindy Clement at cindytabaclement@gmail.com to get the link. An agenda will be publicized via email a week before the meeting. Anyone with a question or concern should send it to Cindy at least a day before the meeting.

Volunteer Opportunity at St. Philip’s Church

St. Philip's is looking for volunteers to in the Bargain Basement thrift shop. 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.



President - Cindy Clement
 Treasurer - Deb Myers
 Clerk - Becky Lenz

Worship and Music Co-chairs - Libby Mooney and Linda Wallace
 Congregational Care Co-chairs - Judith Sutter and Susan Zimmerman
 Faith Development Co-chairs - Sherri Dunbar and Angie Eddy
 Outreach Co-chairs - Nancy Roby and Martha Speed
 Property and Finance Co-chairs - Beth Maxwell and Deb Myers

Here is an initial list of people to be recognized as "routine helpers" – volunteers easily added!

Worship and Music Helpers - Mary McKinney, Carol Peck, Raegan Eddy, Dave Myers, Joel Pierce

Congregational Care Helpers - Jane Junkert, Anne Harris, Ron Sanchez, Lisa Hargreaves

Faith Development Helpers - Susan Attwood, Libby Mooney, Oscar Wallace

Outreach Helpers - Laurie Labar, Beth Maxwell, Deb Myers, Linda Wallace

Property and Finance Helpers - Deb Olson, Tom Clement, David Lenz, Ken Cooper

Coming Up:

Sunday, February 2:	Choir Practice, 8:10am Sunday Worship – 10:00am Outreach & Social Concerns meet after church, 11:15 <i>Shop Organ Society</i> , the Organ society is taking a break from new sale items for now. The puzzles will remain for sale until further notice, enjoy a puzzle or 2. No Youth Group
Monday, February 3:	Mah Jongg, 6:00pm – 8:30pm Faith Development Meeting, 6:30pm
Tuesday, February 4:	Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm
Wednesday, February 5:	Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm Organ Society Meeting, 9:30am Feed Our Scholars(FOS), 11:00am
Thursday, February 6:	Office Hours 9:00am – 12:00pm Garden Club Wiscasset, 11:30am – 2:00pm
Sunday, February 9:	Choir Practice, 8:10am Sunday Worship – 10:00am Youth Group, 4:00pm
Wednesday, February 12:	Council Meeting , 6:30pm via Zoom. Request a Zoom link with Cindy Clement.

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.