

WELCOME TO THE FIRST CONGREGATION CHURCH, UCC



JANUARY 29, 2023

ANNOUNCEMENTS

"Get to Know You Question" for Sunday, January 29th: Would you rather hike up a mountain or explore a cave, and why?

Next Circle Discernment Gathering, Sunday, February 5th from 9:30-10:15 am, before worship. You can join us "in-room" or on Zoom!

SOUPer Bowl Sunday is coming up! On Sunday, February 12th the Ministry of Outreach will be gathering a special collection to be given to The Friendly Kitchen in support of their mission to reduce food insecurity in the Concord area. *The Outreach team humbly requests that if you are planning on emptying out your coin jars for this special offering (as has been done in the past), that you first bring them to your bank for them to count and THEN donate in either dollar bills or write a check for the amount in your jar.* Our small counting team thanks you in advance!

Jazz Sanctuary for February is Sunday the 19th at 2:30pm! We will be celebrating Mardi Gras with the theme of Holy Play. BEFORE Jazz Sanctuary, the band and Pastor Emilia will be providing the Mardi Gras music for the Plymouth Congregational Church during their morning worship service. You are invited to join the band and our siblings in Christ at Plymouth either in person, or using the Facebook "streaming" services from Plymouth (we will include this link in OUR E-News that Sunday, so that you can access it more easily.)

Page Turners for February: We are reading *Crossing the Line: A Fearless Team of Brothers and the Sport That Changed Their Lives Forever* by Kareem Rosser, and all are invited to join us for the discussion on February 27th from 2-3pm in the Chapel at Wesley UMC or on Zoom.

The **Anti-Racism Study Group** will continue its work on Tuesday, February 7th from 7-8, on Zoom. All are welcome and need to first register with Pastor Emilia. This coming session, we will be reflecting on "Shoutin in The Fire: An American Epistle" by Dante Stewart.

Merrimack County Nursing Home is again accepting "all occasion" Cards and Magazines. Please donate only CURRENT magazines (examples: National Geographic, Home & Garden, Reader's Digest, etc.) Donations can be placed in the box outside of the Chapel doors.

Welcome to First Congregational Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ

Worship Service 10:30am

January 29, 2023

***Please stand if you are able**

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

For the Beauty of the Earth

Annie

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR WORSHIP

CALL TO WORSHIP: (written by Christine Longhurst)

O God, we gather together in Your presence with expectation, hungry for an encounter with You, and eager to hear Your Word.

Open our eyes and ears to the presence of Your Holy Spirit.

May the seeds of Your Word scattered among us this morning fall on fertile soil.

May they take root in our hearts and lives, and produce an abundant harvest of good words and deeds.

Bringing Ourselves into God's Presence: (www.themuddyfork.org)

Steadfast God, when we feel overwhelmed encourage us to take one step at a time and to remember we are never alone. Amen.

*SONG: #581

Lead us from Death to Life

World Peace Prayer, Marty Haugen

First Line: Lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth

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Hear now Psalm 57 from the Rev. Benjamin Chavis psalter...

Psalter Lesson

Psalm 57

Here ends the Psalter Lesson.

Amen.

Hear now from the Hebrew Scriptures...

Hebrew Scriptures

Genesis 1:9-13 (NRSVUE)

Rev. Emilia Halstead

⁹ And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. ¹² The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

Here ends the Lesson.

Amen.

13 ¹⁻³ At about that same time Jesus left the house and sat on the beach. In no time at all a crowd gathered along the shoreline, forcing him to get into a boat. Using the boat as a pulpit, he addressed his congregation, telling stories.

³⁻⁸ “What do you make of this? A farmer planted seed. As he scattered the seed, some of it fell on the road, and birds ate it. Some fell in the gravel; it sprouted quickly but didn’t put down roots, so when the sun came up it withered just as quickly. Some fell in the weeds; as it came up, it was strangled by the weeds. Some fell on good earth, and produced a harvest beyond his wildest dreams.

⁹ “Are you listening to this? Really listening?”

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ “Study this story of the farmer planting seed. When anyone hears news of the kingdom and doesn’t take it in, it just remains on the surface, and so the Evil One comes along and plucks it right out of that person’s heart. This is the seed the farmer scatters on the road.

²⁰⁻²¹ “The seed cast in the gravel—this is the person who hears and instantly responds with enthusiasm. But there is no soil of character, and so when the emotions wear off and some difficulty arrives, there is nothing to show for it.

²² “The seed cast in the weeds is the person who hears the kingdom news, but weeds of worry and illusions about getting more and wanting everything under the sun strangle what was heard, and nothing comes of it.

²³ “The seed cast on good earth is the person who hears and takes in the News, and then produces a harvest beyond his wildest dreams.”

Here ends the Lesson.

Amen.

SERMON

Seeds of All Shapes and Sizes

Rev. Emilia Halstead

Moment of Silent Reflection

SONG: #318

Almighty God, Your Word is Cast (Public Domain)

Almighty God, your Word is cast like seed into the ground;
now let the dew of heaven descend and righteous fruits abound.

Let not the sly satanic foe this holy seed remove,
but give it root in every heart to bring forth fruits of love.

Let not the world's deceitful cares the rising plant destroy,
but let it yield a hundredfold the fruits of peace and joy.

So when the precious seed is sown, your quickening grace bestow
that all whose souls the truth receive its saving power may know.

Global Ministries Weekly Prayers: India

(Both the mission moment and prayer were written by Dr. Sarosh Koshy, Global Ministries Executive for Southern Asia)

Mission Moment from India

Prayers from India

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

(Response to each prayer:)

God of dirt and seeds,

Receive our prayers.

PASTORAL PRAYER (written by Terri for the RevGalBlogPals)

Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, which 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, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Sung Amen:

The Johnny Appleseed Song

(The "official" title is THE LORD IS GOOD TO ME. It was written by Kim Gannon and Walter Kent in 1946 for The Music of Disney: A Legacy in Song, from Walt Disney's Melody Time.)

OOOooooohhhh...

The Lord's been good to me

And so I thank the Lord,

For giving me the things I need,

The sun and the rain and the apple seed.

The Lord's been good to me -

Johnny Appleseed...

Amen. Amen. Amen, amen, amen! Aaaaaaa-MEN!

Offertory

Invitation (written by Life in Liturgy)

GRATITUDE MUSIC

Touch the Earth Lightly

Annie

PRAYER OF DEDICATION (written by Life in Liturgy)

Almighty God, giver of every good and perfect gift, teach us to give to you all that we have and all that we are, that we may praise you not with our words only, but with our whole lives.

*CLOSING SONG: #532

Come, Labor On (Public Domain)

Come, labor on.

Who dares stay idle on the harvest plain
while all around us waves the golden grain?
And to each servant does the Savior say,
"Go work today."

Come, labor on.

Claim the high calling angels cannot share;
to young and old the gospel gladness bear.
Redeem the time; its hours too swiftly fly.
The night draws nigh.

Come, labor on.

Away with gloomy doubts and faithless fear!
No one so weak but may do service here.
Though feeble agents, may we all fulfill
God's righteous will.

Come, labor on.

No time for rest, till glows the western sky,
till the long shadows o'er our pathway lie,
and a glad sound comes with the setting sun,
"Well done, well done!"

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK AHEAD

SENDING & BLESSING (written by John Birch)

POSTLUDE

Plante un chou

("Plant the cabbage") (trad.)

Annie