

**First Congregational Church, U. C. C.
3 Gray Rd., North Yarmouth, Maine 04097**



February 22, 2023 ~ 6:30 p.m.

**A Combined Worship Service
of United Church of Christ Congregations**

**First Congregational Church, North Yarmouth
Rev. Dr. Paul A. Day, Pastor**

**First Congregational Church, Gray
Rev. Stephen Carnahan, Pastor**

**First Congregational Christian Church,
New Gloucester
Rev. Kelli Whitman. Pastor**

Ash Wednesday
February 22, 2023 ~ 6:30 p.m.

“No matter who you are, or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.”
– The United Church of Christ

* Indicates: Please stand if you are able.

Bold print indicates Congregational Responses.

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Note: An offering will be received for the Maine School of Ministry (MESoM), a regional theological education catalyst within the United Church of Christ, devoted to the call to ministry in this place. MESoM works with students discovering a path to pastoral ministry, and those practicing congregational leadership. Programs combine classroom learning and core ministry competencies, offering theological education for the life of the church. By promoting and cultivating a culture of call, adding academic resources and mentorship, we affirm God’s gifting and guidance in every generation – including toward more remote or rural congregations. Over its first decade, MESoM has affirmed students on their way to authorized ministry (lay or ordained) in the various associations of the Maine Conference.

Rev. Dr. Paul A. Day and Rev. Kelli Whitman has both served as instructors for MESoM.

Checks may be made out to “Maine Conference UCC”; put MESoM General Fund or MESoM Scholarship Fund in the memo line. Gifts may also be made on-line at <https://www.maineucc.org/giving/>; designate the gift for MESoM.



*Voice Your Hopes
Shape the Future*

Order of Worship

Prelude

Jesse Meyers-Wakeman, organist

Welcome and Announcements

Land Acknowledgement

As we gather for worship on this Ash Wednesday, we acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of the Wabanaki Confederacy. We recognize and honor the tribes who comprise the Wabanaki Confederacy today—the Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, and Micmac peoples—who have stewarded this land throughout the generations. We respect the traditional values of these tribes and affirm their inherent sovereignty in this territory. We support their efforts for land and water protection and restoration, and for cultural healing and recovery. We pause in humble repentance, remembering those whose lives and land were taken through the colonial settlement of this land. We commit ourselves to the ongoing work of justice for all people in Maine and beyond.

Call to Worship

– from Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain!

Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming, it is near — a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness!

Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing.

Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. . . .

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Sanctify the congregation

We humbly bow before our Maker and Redeemer.

***Hymn**

Abide with Me – vv. 1, 2, 3 & 5

CH # 636

Words: Henry F. Lyte; Music: William H. Monk

1. **Abide with me: fast falls the eventide;
the darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.**
2. **Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away.
Change and decay in all around I see.
O thou who changest not, abide with me.**
3. **I need thy presence every passing hour.
What but thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who like thyself my guide and strength can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me.**
5. **Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes.
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.
Heaven's morning breaks and earth's vain shadows flee;
in life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.**

***Invocation (in unison)**

– *Worship Ways*

Merciful God, we gather together in your name. Our hearts yearn to be touched and moved. Our spirits rise in anticipation of your convicting word. Open our mouths to declare your praise. Open our minds to consider your ways. Open our community to participate in your kin-dom. Amen.

Scripture Reading

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Prayer of Confession

– from Psalm 51

**Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. . . .**

+ Silent Prayer +

**You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.**

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

+ Silent Prayer +

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.

**Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.**

Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.

**For you have no delight in sacrifice;
if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.**

+ Silent Prayer +

The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, God will not despise.

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

+ Passing the Peace +

(Please turn and greet your neighbors with a smile and wave.)

Invitation to Generosity

Jesus said, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." – Matthew 6:19-21

An Offering for the Maine School of Ministry

Offertory

***Doxology**

**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.**

Christ our Redeemer, you came to comfort us in our affliction, and to disturb us in our complacency.

You came to seek us when we were lost and to save us from our sins.

Holy Counselor, we await your renewing Spirit as we seek to put aside past failures in the light of who we are yet to become.

Blow upon us the freshness of God's grace and breathe within us the energizing power of New Life.

God, grant us strength to follow your Son in the way of the Cross; for, we pray as he has taught us:

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.

*Hymn

Lift High the Cross

CH # 108

Words: G. W. Kitchin & M. R. Newbolt; Music: S. H. Nicholson

Refrain:

**Lift high the cross; the love of Christ proclaim
till all the world adore his sacred name.**

**1. Come, Christians, follow where our Savior trod,
our King victorious, Christ, the Son of God.
[Refrain]**

**2. Each newborn servant of the Crucified
bears on the brow the seal of Christ who died.
[Refrain]**

**3. O Lord, once lifted on the glorious tree,
your death has brought us life eternally.
[Refrain]**

**4. So shall our song of triumph ever be:
praise to the Crucified for victory!
[Refrain]**

***Charge & Benediction**

Blessings, like God's love, are not one-way experiences.

As you have been blessed with the mark of God's love you are now called to go out from this place and bless others.

May the God who created you create opportunities of serving others.

May the Christ who teaches you teach you during Lent how to love all.

And may the Spirit of Gentleness be your companion along this Lenten journey. Amen.

Postlude

We Go Forth to Serve God and Our Neighbors