**+ FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**

**An Open and affirming congregation of the**

**United Church of Christ, Saugus, Massachusetts**

**Service of Worship & Welcome to Sunday School 10 a.m.**

**15th Sunday after Pentecost, September 17, 2017**

**\*Indicates for those who are able to, please stand.**

**Bold print indicates congregational response.**

**NCH = New Century Hymnal (black cover)**

**HOP = Spiral bound cover**

*Scripture reader is Betty Neth.*

*Greeters & Ushers are Betty Neth & John Gilmore.*

*Coffee Hour Hosts are the Welches & the Decareaus.*

*Deacon is Susan Dunn.*

PRELUDE: “Hymn Sing”  Mae Stroshane

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS Rev. Martha Leahy

LIGHTING THE CANDLE OF PEACE HOP 119

*“Make Me a Channel of Your Peace”*

***Make me a channel of your peace/Where there is hatred***

***Let me bring your love/Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord/And where there’s doubt, true faith in you.***

CALL TO WORSHIP (“God, we’re here!”):

L: Come, make way for God today! God is coming through!
**P: God arrives among us today!**L: Come, get ready for the spectacular sights and sounds of God at work in the world!
**P: God proclaims the old ways are gone and there is nothing but new growth planned for us!**L: Come see the waters part and the angels sing as God rescues God’s people once again!
**P: God has done miracles in the past and is doing them still for all to see!
All: God arrives to break down walls and build up God’s kingdom here on Earth!**

**\*OPENING HYMN: “I Sing the Mighty Power of God” HOP21**

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE: “Blessing of Backpacks and…..”

\*PRAYER OF CONFESSION (“God, we’re sorry”):  **God of Creation, we confess that we pay too much attention to our own small worlds and not enough attention to your “big picture.” We know we should care about what’s happening to the health of your planet, but we are at a loss of what to do. Forgive us when we give up trying. Help us to find ways – even small ones – that can restore healthy relationships between your people and your planet. Amen.**

**CHORAL RESPONSE: *Glory to God, Glory to God/In excelsis deo/Gloria, Gloria/Alleluia, Alleluia.***

**\***ASSURANCE OF PARDON (“God forgives us”), in unison:

**Forgiving God, we are grateful that you rescue us when we are in need and love us enough to let us start over again. We are blessed that you are with us in wind and rain, and in sunshine and warmth. May it always be so. Amen.**

\*GLORY TO GOD “Holy, Holy, Holy” NCH #277

***Holy, holy, holy, God the Almighty! Early in the morning we praise your majesty./ Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty/ God in three persons/ blessed Trinity!***

SCRIPTURE: Exodus 14:10-31 (SP50, LP108)

(SP=Small print Bible; LP=Large print Bible)

MESSAGE: “Who Will Part the Seas for Us?” Rev. Martha Leahy

**PRAYER INTRO: “Sanctuary” HOP 135**

***Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary/pure and holy,***

***tried and true./With thanksgiving, I’ll be a living***

***sanctuary for you.***

PASTORAL PRAYER & 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

**PRAYER RESPONSE:** “**Take My Life & Let it Be” HOP 129** ***Take my life and let it be/Consecrated Lord, to thee./ Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of thy love/ At the impulse of thy love.***

OFFERTORY INVITATION (“God, we give back”), in unison:

**Holy God, we have made a covenant with you, that you will be our God and we will be your people. Today we keep that covenant, as we pour out our offerings upon your altar, as generously as you pour out your gifts on us. Amen.**

**OFFERTORY: “Be Not Afraid” HOP 66**

\*DOXOLOGY: NCH #778

***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.***

\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION FOR OUR GIFTS & PLEDGES (“God bless our gifts”), in unison: **God of Storm and God of Peace, we bring our gifts to your altar for your blessing, praying that you will help us to use them for healing the wounds of the suffering and for caring for this good, green Earth you have given us. Amen.**

**\*CLOSING HYMN:**

**“O God, We’ve Prayed in Wind and Rain” (insert)**

\*COMMISSION AND BLESSING (“God, we will try”), in unison:

**God of Miracles, we will try to join you in the healing work you have done through Jesus, and that he has passed on to us. May you give us strength for the journey. Amen.**

BENEDICTION (“God, please bless us”):

L: Come, make way for God today! God is coming through!
**P: God arrives among us today!**L: Come, get ready for the spectacular sights and sounds of God at work in the world!
**P: God proclaims the old ways are gone and there is nothing but new growth planned for us!**L: Come see the waters part and the angels sing as God rescues God’s people once again!
**P: God has done miracles in the past and is doing them still for all to see!
All: God arrives to break down walls and build up God’s kingdom here on Earth!**

**\*CHORAL BENEDICTION: “This Little Light” NCH 524**

***This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine (3x)***

***Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.***

***Everywhere I go, I’m gonna let it shine (3x)***

***Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.***

POSTLUDE Mae Stroshane



**Aerial view of a hurricane**

**“Who Will Part the Seas for Us?”**

**15th Sunday after Pentecost**

**September 17, 2017**

First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ

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**BLESSING OF BACKPACKS**

**& OTHER “TOOLS OF THE TRADE”**

**Sunday, Sept. 17, 2017**

The first day of Sunday School, **we invite all the kids at church to bring their backpacks and school supplies** to church for a blessing.

**We also invite all the grown-ups to bring their “tools of the trade”** for a blessing. These tools might include cooking utensils, paint brushes, knitting needles, Bibles, hymnals, daily devotionals, cell phones, laptops, toolboxes, walking/running shoes – anything you use in your everyday life and work.

In this way, we will step into Fall with God’s blessing for hope, health and happiness, in all the work that we do!

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**Saugus Faith Community Collects**

**for Hurricane Harvey Relief Effort**

The Saugus Faith Community is asking for donations to help the citizens of Texas recover from the devastation caused by Hurricane Harvey.

Our individual houses of worship will be taking up collections and bringing them to the SFC’s September 20 meeting at First Congregational Church. We will pool our contributions and make one large donation.

**Donations can be made by mailing your check made out to “Saugus Clergy Association” to First Congregational Church UCC, 300 Central St., Saugus, MA 01906, Attn: Rev. Martha Leahy. Please write in on the memo line “Hurricane Relief.” The deadline to receive checks is Sept. 19.**

The SFC will be making the decision on Sept. 20 as to which charity will receive our contribution.  Some charities to be considered are the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, Americares and Feeding Texas.  Thank you for opening your hearts and wallets to our fellow citizens in need.

# “Crossing the Sea”

# Exodus 14:10, 3-18, 21-25 (NIV)

**10**As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the Lord.

**3**Moses answered the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. **14**The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.”

**15**Then the Lord said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. **16**Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground….”

**19**Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel’s army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, **20**coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so neither went near the other all night long.

**21**Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, **22**and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

**23**The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh’s horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea. **24**During the last watch of the night the Lord looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion. **25**He jammed the wheels of their chariots so that they had difficulty driving. And the Egyptians said, “Let’s get away from the Israelites! The Lord is fighting for them against Egypt.”

**26**Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen.”**27**Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the Lord swept them into the sea….  **9**But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. **30**That day the Lord saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians… **31**And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.

**“O God, We’ve Prayed in Wind and Rain”**

***(Tune: O God, Our Help in Ages Past”)***

**O God, we’ve prayed in wind and rain**

**and now we pray once more**

**For those who felt the hurricane and heard the waters roar.**

**We pray for those who watched the storm**

**destroy the life they knew,**

**Who wait in shelters, tired and worn,**

 **and wonder what to do.**

**We thank you, God, for acts of love**

**not bound by race or creed,**

**For hands that reach across the flood to all who are in need.**

**We pray for others far away who’ve seen destruction, too;**

**We look beyond ourselves, for they are also loved by you.**

**We pray that leaders of our land will heed creation’s cry,**

**And bravely care and take a stand for earth and sea and sky.**

**Where rains flood cities, homes and towns**

**may we go out to be**

**A witness that your love abounds in each community.**

Tune: Virginia Harmony, 1831 Arr. Edwin O. Excell, 1900.

Alternative Tune: ST. ANNE CM Attr. William Croft, 1708 ("Our God, Our Help in Ages Past").

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Permission is given for free use in local churches to support the relief efforts.

**“O God, We’ve Prayed in Wind and Rain”** was written in response to severe storms -- Hurricane Harvey in Texas and Louisiana and even more devastating flooding in Nepal, India, and Bangladesh (1,200 deaths and 41 million people impacted in the Asian storms). We pray for those who are suffering, give thanks to the many who have responded, and pray for continuing efforts to help in comforting and rebuilding.

LETTER OF RESIGNATION

September 10, 2017

Dear Music Committee,

After much thought and prayer, I’ve decided to accept a position at another church. Rich and I are in a new stage of our lives and interested in possibly retiring to Worcester, Mass.  The UCC church there is very diverse and active in urban ministry. They are looking for a music minister who can build up a music program for all ages, and I would enjoy meeting that challenge. My last day with you will be November 5th, 2017, Communion Sunday.

It is with great regret that I say farewell to you here at First Church Saugus. We have had so many joyful celebrations of God’s presence among us, as well as occasions of sheer fun, such as the Mardi Gras Night and the Ice Cream Social. I appreciate your staunch support and willingness to take this journey together over the past three years.

With many blessings,

Mae Stroshane

Music Minister