

First Congregational Church

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

April 28, 2024



Our Purpose Statement

It is our purpose to joyfully celebrate Christ's presence and God's grace in our lives; to respect one another in love, actively seeking and embracing those who wish to grow with us in faith, hope and love; to follow the example of Jesus, as we minister to the spiritual and physical needs of the community. *Through service we flourish.*



The First Congregational Church in Worcester

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

You are invited to a time of quiet preparation during the Prelude

Welcome

Rev. Jack Jones

Prelude

Largo ~ Handel

Ringling of the Chimes

Call to Worship

Leader: We delight ourselves in the presence of Christ and his love for all creation.

All: Let us open our hearts to receive Christ's abundant love.

Leader: Christ calls us to see him as the vine and for us to become the branches.

All: When we are threatened because of who we are, we can depend on Christ's protection.

Leader: We know Christ, because Christ's tenderness has guided us for generations.

All: Let us seek to produce much fruit in God's Garden where all are welcome.

Leader: Come, let us worship the Master Gardener, Creator of all that was, is and forever will be.

All: Amen and Asè (pronounced "ah-shay" and is Swahili for Amen).

Invocation

Living God, we embrace your presence in our lives. Help us to grow stronger together in your garden of love. Plant us together in your peace. Root us together in your hope. Transform us together by your equal justice for all. In your loving presence, we pray. Amen.

Prayer of Transformation

Creating God, we are grateful for the hope that you offer to us and all creation. Prune us so that we may have a cleansed heart. Help us to grow your garden of love. Water our despair so it can be transformed into your hope. Feed our minds so that all may glean from your wisdom. Nurture our spirits so that we can become more fruitful in our lives. Give us new life, we pray. Amen.

Prayer of Grace

Merciful God, your love for us grows deep and wide. We ask for your forgiveness in those times when we fail to follow your example; when we choose greed over advocating for human rights; and when we choose silence over speaking truth to power. Create in us your power to change our hearts and minds from earthly scarcity to your divine abundance. Renew in us the courage to get into "good trouble" even when the arc of peace and justice is long. Strengthen us to be branches so that all might know of your garden of forgiveness and love. In your mercy, we pray. Amen.

Passing of the Peace

***Hymn of Adoration ~ #228**

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heav'n to earth come down,
fix in us Thy humble dwelling; all Thy faithful mercies crown!
Jesus, Thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love Thou art;
visit us with Thy salvation; enter every trembling heart.

Breathe, O breathe Thy loving Spirit into every troubled breast!
Let us all in Thee inherit, let us find the promised rest.
Take away our love of sinning; Alpha and Omega be;
end of faith, as its beginning, set our hearts at liberty.

Come, Almighty to deliver; let us all Thy life receive;
suddenly return and never, nevermore Thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing, serve Thee as Thy hosts above;
pray, and praise Thee without ceasing, glory in Thy perfect love.

Finish then, Thy new creation; pure and spotless let us be;
let us see Thy great salvation perfectly restored in Thee.
Changed from glory into glory, till in heav'n we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before Thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise.

New Testament Lesson

Acts 8:26

Gospel Lesson

John 15:1-8

Sermon

"Caught, Not Taught"

Rev. Jack Jones

***Hymn ~ Insert**

I Love to Tell the Story

I love to tell the story of unseen things above, of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love;
I love to tell the story, because I know 'tis true, it satisfies my longings as nothing else would do.
I love to tell the story, 'twill be my theme in glory, to tell the old, old story of Jesus and His love.

I love to tell the story, more wonderful it seems than all the golden fancies of all our golden dreams;
I love to tell the story, it did so much for me, and that is just the reason I tell it now to thee.
I love to tell the story, 'twill be my theme in glory, to tell the old, old story of Jesus and His love.

I love to tell the story, 'tis pleasant to repeat, what seems each time I tell it more wonderfully sweet;
I love to tell the story, for some have never heard the message of salvation from God's own holy Word.
I love to tell the story, 'twill be my theme in glory, to tell the old, old story of Jesus and His love.

I love to tell the story, for those who know it best seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest;
And when in scenes of glory I sing the new, new song, 'twill be the old, old story that I have loved so long.
I love to tell the story, 'twill be my theme in glory, to tell the old, old story of Jesus and His love.

Sharing Celebrations and Concerns for Community Prayer & Announcements

Pastoral Prayer

Moment of Silence for Personal 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, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Prayer Response

Into My Heart

Into my heart, into my heart, come into my heart, Lord Jesus;
Come in today, come in to stay; come into my heart, Lord Jesus.

Invitation to Generosity

One: Cultivating God, in your generosity, we receive new blessings with each passing day.

All: Great is your faithfulness, O God.

One: You offer us light from the sun, moon, and stars to guide, nurture, and lovingly shine upon all creation.

All: Great is your faithfulness, O God.

One: Your loving generosity is more than we could ever hope for and beyond imagination.

All: Great is your faithful abundance, O God.

One: Let us give our offerings with a heart of gratitude for God's Garden of blessings and love.

Giving of our Offerings

Offertory

Jesus is My Life ~ Kendall

***Doxology**

Nettleton

For the life that you have given, for the love in Christ made known,
With these fruits of time and labor, with these gifts that are your own;
Here we offer, Lord, our praises; heart and mind and strength we bring;
Give us grace to love and serve you, living what we pray and sing.

***Sending Forth Hymn ~ #8**

Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee

Joyful, joyful, we adore You, God of glory, Lord of love;
Hearts unfold like flow'rs before You, op'ning to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; drive the dark of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day!

All Your works with joy surround You, earth and heav'n reflect Your rays,
Stars and angels sing around You, center of unbroken praise;
Field and forest, vale and mountain, flow'ry meadow, flashing sea,
Chanting bird and flowing fountain praising You eternally!

Always giving and forgiving, ever blessing, ever blest,
Well-spring of the joy of living, ocean-depth of happy rest!
Loving Father, Christ our Brother, let Your light upon us shine;
Teach us how to love each other, lift us to the joy divine.

Mortals, join the mighty chorus, which the morning stars began;
God's own love is reigning o'er us, joining people hand in hand.
Ever singing, march we onward, victors in the midst of strife;
Joyful music leads us sunward in the triumph song of life.

***Benediction**

Great is your faithfulness, O God, our strength and our Redeemer. Without you, nothing would be possible. Without you, there would be no light in the darkness. But, in Christ, we see that all things are possible. In Christ, we are the branches on his vine living according to your divine purpose. Creating God, help us to see your faithfulness as we leave this place of worship. Let us grow in your mercy. Strengthen us as we seek to produce much fruit for the harvest of your love here on earth as it is in heaven. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

***Benediction Response**

Tallis' Canon

Go with us, Lord and guide the way through this and every coming day,
that in your Spirit strong and true our lives may be our gift to you.

Chimes

Postlude

Easter Chant ~ Young

****Please stand in body, or in spirit.
Bold Print ~ Congregation Reads Aloud***

All are welcome to attend Coffee Hour immediately following our worship service in the Parlor. Not sure where to go? Just ask. Any one of us would be delighted to help you!

Want to get more connected with the happenings at First Church? Simply fill out one of our "Welcome Home!" cards located in the pew back in front of you and place it in the offering basket this morning.

Thank you for joining us today!

Prayer Requests

Please continue to hold Pastor Jack in your thoughts and prayers as he works through his health issues. We would like to keep Hampton Bagdasarian in our prayers as he is having trouble with one of his eyes; Connie MacInnes requests prayers for her niece Linda and friend Marie Samuelson who is very ill; Judy Mitchell requests prayers for her granddaughter, Ellanora; Sue & Norman Anderson request prayers for their daughter, Melanie Anderson, Sue's brother, Danny Waskevich, and their friend, Roger Waite. Dawn & Matt Ahaesy request prayers for Gina Ahaesy; The Deacons request prayers for Dolores Trzcinski, Jeanne Fassett, Paul Scherdell, and Joyce & Armand Thienel. Our prayers are also with Normairis Rivera's son, Joey. Kristin Olson requests prayers for Mitch Bourque. Prayers also continue for Erika Vecsey. Please keep Rev. Natalie Maynard in your prayers as she is now in hospice.

If you would like to add a prayer concern or update our list, please email the church office at office@fcc-worcester.org or call the office at 508-752-4635.

The First Congregational Church in Worcester
United Church of Christ

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Announcements

Fellowship ~ Guest Speaker – Catherine Leary from the Alzheimer’s Association

Hospitality ~ Please join us in the parlor for coffee and goodies every Sunday after worship. If you are able to host a coffee hour, there is a sign-up sheet on the table. If you bring the goodies, we provide the coffee and other beverages, and the paper goods. If you’d like, two or more people can sign up together to make it a little easier. **Our thanks to Nancy Taylor and Sue Anderson for hosting today’s Coffee Hour!**

Carpet Fund Collection ~ Our funds are slowly growing for new carpeting in the sanctuary. Please continue to add whatever you can spare to the Teddy Bear jar in the narthex or parlor. Your contributions are greatly appreciated!

Friendly Messenger ~ If you’d like a copy of our newsletter, you can pick one up from the table in the narthex.

Weekly Calendar

Today	10:00am	FCC Worship Service (Sanctuary)
	10:00am	Family Christian Church of God (Hall)
	11:00am	Ghanian Resurrection Ministries (Upper level)
	1:00pm	Iglesia Pentecostal Casa de Vida (Sanctuary)
	6:45pm	AA Meeting (Hall)
Monday	7:00pm	AA Meeting (Hall)
Tuesday	6:30pm	AA Meeting (Hall)
Wednesday	10:30am	Fellowship ~ Speaker – Catherine Leary from the Alzheimer’s Association
	7:00pm	Iglesia Pentecostal Casa de Vida (Sanctuary)
Thursday	6:45pm	AA Meeting (Hall)
	2-5 pm	ESL Class ~ Tom Jones, Pastor Jack Jones & Ketelie Altena (Hall)
Friday	7:00pm	Iglesia Pentecostal Casa de Vida (Sanctuary)
Saturday	10:00am	New Hope SDA (Sanctuary & Parlor)
	12:00pm	Church of God (Hall)
Sunday	10:00am	FCC Worship (Sanctuary) Communion Sunday ~ Gluten Free Communion & Grape Juice are used Carty Cupboard Collection Deacons Fund Collection
	10:00am	Family Christian Church of God (Hall)
	11:00am	Ghanian Resurrection Ministries (Upper level)
	1:00pm	Iglesia Pentecostal Casa de Vida (Sanctuary)
	6:45pm	AA Meeting (Hall)