



*The First Congregational Church
of the United Church of Christ
Stockbridge, Massachusetts*

PROPHET AND BAPTISM SUNDAY

January 19, 2025 – 10:00 a.m.

Children are invited to Sunday School at 10:00 a.m. returning to worship after the offering. Nursery care is available during worship; please ask an usher.

Note: We will lift prayers of joy and concern this morning in worship. Prayers may also be submitted in writing. Please give to any Deacon before the time of prayer.

PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

GATHERING MUSIC *Melodie*, by Arthur Foote
Laura Wilkins, flute; Doug Wilkins, piano

FRAMING WORDS / WELCOME Rev. Brent Damrow

GATHERING IN WORSHIP

INTROIT *Just a Closer Walk with Thee*, traditional Choir

*CALL TO WORSHIP Margo Davis

One: Sisters and brothers, rejoice.

We live sustained by God's presence and love.

All: Thanks be to God.

One: As we mourn the wounds of God's children,

All: God weeps with us.

One: As we give thanks for brothers and sisters who have lived in faith,

All: God gives thanks with us.

One: As we struggle for justice,

All: God struggles with us.

One: As we strive for peace,

All: God strives with us.

continued

One: As we work to build the beloved community,

All: God works with us.

One: As we offer our gifts to all,

All: God blesses us.

One: When hope seems to be slipping through our fingers

All: God's gift of incarnate love renews our hope.

One: Sisters and brothers, rejoice.

All: Sustained by God's presence and love we gather to worship.

From Presbyterian Church USA website for Rev. Dr. MLK Jr. Day

*HYMN

Live Into Hope

See page 7

CONTEMPORARY READING *A prophet without honor*

Margo Davis

Throughout history God has sent us prophets who have spoken the word, but who have seldom been heeded. In essence, they were forced to prophesy in a vacuum. That's why Jesus said, "A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country." (Matt. 13:57) It was, and in some cases still is, very difficult for America to find a real place for Martin Luther King Jr. We fear the prophet. We ridicule the prophet. We jail the prophet. We even kill the prophet. But we have no problem making the prophet merely a dreamer. Let's face it, there are some people in power who have no intention of allowing my dad's dream to become a reality.

~ From *Hard Questions, Heart Answers*, by the Rev. Bernice A. King

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Parents: Anna Shippee and Kameron Spaulding and their daughter, Elsie

Godparents: Hillary Shippee and Mattison Clements

One: We are gathered to present Elsie to the church and to dedicate her to God. What can we affirm about her?

Many: That she is a child of God and made in the image of God.

One: As she grows in our congregation, how will she know that she is a child of God, made in God's image?

Many: We will give her our love and include her in the life and ministry of this congregation.

One: How will she learn of the Christian faith?

Many: **Together we will remember Abraham, the father of our faith; Sarah, the mother of Isaac; Moses and Miriam who led our ancestors out of bondage; Ruth's example of faithfulness; Mary and Joseph's openness to mystery; the Savior, Jesus, and the history of the church as the people of God.**

One: And what, in turn, will we expect of her?

Many: **We look forward to sitting with her at the Lord's Table, sharing with her the costs and joys of discipleship, learning and growing with her in the Christian pilgrimage, and declaring with one voice our faith in God and God's son, Jesus.**

QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS/GODPARENTS

Pastor Brent

QUESTIONS FOR THE CONGREGATION

Elizabeth Young

PRAYER/ACT OF BAPTISM

CONGREGATIONAL WELCOME

Helen McCormick

SUNG WELCOME *Come Here By the Waters*, text: Richard Floyd

Choir

THE GIFT OF THE WORD

SCRIPTURE READING Luke 4:16-38 (see page 6)

Jo Ann Levitt

SERMON *Prophets*

Pastor Brent

*HYMN *Precious Lord, Take My Hand*

See page 8

OFFERING OURSELVES AND OUR GIFTS

BRINGING OUR PRAYERS

The Lord's Prayer

Our God, 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. 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 *Amen* by McNeil Robinson Choir

CALL TO THE OFFERING

OFFERTORY ANTHEM *How Lovely are the Messengers*, from “Saint Paul,”
Mendelssohn

*DOXOLOGY Tune: Old 100th

**Praise God for gifts of hope and peace
Praise God for gifts of joy and love
Praise God for sending Christ to dwell
On earth for us – Emmanuel. Amen.**

*BLESSING OF THE GIFTS

INVITATIONS

CELEBRATING 200 YEARS

TIME WITH CHILDREN *Anniversaries and Birthdays* Pastor Brent

*SHARING OF THE PEACE

*LITANY OF CELEBRATION AND BLESSING

One: For two hundred years this room has welcomed people into a place of truth, beauty, faith, and hope.

All: For two hundred years, God’s beloved children have come through the doors to form community and family.

One: Here durable pews stand loyally to offer a place of rest.

All: Here swirled glass filters the light gently and gracefully sending the shadows of fear and death to flight.

One: Here table and font have central place uniting us in the mysteries of life and death.

All: Here pulpit and organ equip us to mine the stories of our faith ever more deeply.

One: Here we have gathered for moments of faith – the bonds of worship, the joy of weddings, the hope of baptisms, the consolation of funerals.

All: For two hundred years this room has been our hope and home.

One: In this moment we give thanks.

All: In this moment we pause to remember.

One: In this moment we offer a blessing.

All: That for two hundred more years this room may still be a blessing.

One: We stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before.

All: Recognizing that some day others will stand on ours.

One: For all that has been – God of love and life...

All: For all that will yet be, God of hope and possibility...

One: For this remarkable room, this sturdy ship...

All: We give you thanks and lift our voices in praise.

GOING FORTH INTO THE WORLD

*HYMN

It's The Old Ship of Zion

See page 9

*BENEDICTION

Pastor Brent

POSTLUDE

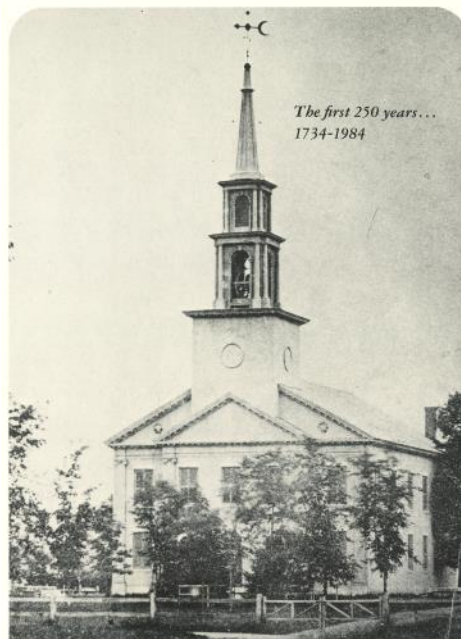
A Blarneying Bit, by Henry Cowell

Laura & Doug Wilkins

The budget and solar panel Q&A will begin at 11:20 in the sanctuary and on Zoom.

Feel free to get a snack before the Q&A session. There will be a special 200th birthday cake. And it's a chance to meet Elsie and her family.

Be sure to get your copy of the new history of the church: *How Firm a Foundation: A History of the First Congregational Church, Stockbridge, Massachusetts on the Occasion of the 200th Anniversary of the Brick Church.* Available in the JE Room.



The cover of an earlier history of the church.

SCRIPTURE READING Luke 4:16-38

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 favour.’

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 home town 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 home town. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up for 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.

He went down to Capernaum, a city in Galilee, and was teaching them on the sabbath. They were astounded at his teaching, because he spoke with authority. In the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Let us alone! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.’ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be silent, and come out of him!’ When the demon had thrown him down before them, he came out of him without having done him any harm. They were all amazed and kept saying to one another, ‘What kind of utterance is this? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and out they come!’ And a report about him began to reach every place in the region.

After leaving the synagogue he entered Simon’s house. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked him about her.

Live Into Hope

332

TRURO LM

Thomas Williams, 1789

Harm. Lowell Mason (1792-1872)

Jane Parker Huber, 1976

1. Live in - to hope of cap - tives freed, Of sight re -
2. Live in - to hope the blind shall see With in - sight
3. Live in - to hope of lib - er - ty, The right to
4. Live in - to hope of cap - tives freed From chains of

gained, the end of greed. The op-pressed shall be the
and with clar - i - ty, Re - mov - ing shades of
speak, the right to be, The right to have one's
fear or want or greed. God now pro - claims our

first to see The year of God's own ju - bi - lee!
pride and fear — A vi - sion of our God brought near.
dai - ly bread, To hear God's word and thus be fed.
full re - lease To faith and hope and joy and peace.

The musical score is written in 3/2 time. It features a treble and bass clef staff. The lyrics are arranged in four systems, each with a corresponding line of music. The first system includes four numbered verses. The second system continues the lyrics with a bridge. The third system concludes the lyrics with a final line. The bass line includes a double bar line with a repeat sign at the end.

Thank you to all who helped with today's service, including musicians Laura and Doug Wilkins; Deacons David Anderegg, Helen McCormick, and Elizabeth Young; readers Margo Davis and Jo Ann Levitt; usher Susan Moor; storytellers Vicky Cooper and Ted Randolph. Will Curtiss is running the Livestream, and Scarlett Ritcher and Rae Geddes are in the nursery.

Precious Lord, Take My Hand

472

Thomas A. Dorsey, 1932; alt.

1 Pre-cious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand,
2 When my way grows drear, pre-cious Lord, lin-ger near,
3 When the shad - ows ap - pear and the night draws near,

I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;
when my life is al - most gone,
and the day is past and gone,

Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light:
Hear me cry, hear my call, hold my hand, lest I fall:
At the riv - er I stand, guide my feet, hold my hand:

Refrain

Take my hand, pre - cious Lord, lead me home.

Thomas A. Dorsey was known as "Georgia Tom" when he played piano for blues singer Ma Rainey. He started writing gospel songs after what he called "a definite spiritual change." This inspirational song, composed following the deaths of his wife, Nettie, and a newborn child, derives from the tune Maitland.

Tune: PRECIOUS LORD Irr. with refrain
Thomas A. Dorsey, 1932

The New Century Hymnal (1995)

It's the Old Ship of Zion

310

African-American spiritual

Refrain

It's the old ship of Zi - on, it's the old ship of Zi - on,

Last time, end

It's the old ship of Zi - on, get on board, get on board.

Leader *All*

1 It has land-ed man-y a thou-sand, it has land-ed man-y a thou-sand,
2 There's no dan-ger in the wa - ter, there's no dan-ger in the wa - ter,

to Refrain

It has land-ed man-y a thou-sand, get on board, get on board.
There's no dan-ger in the wa - ter, get on board, get on board.

- 3 It was good for my dear moth-er, . . . Get on board.
- 4 It was good for my dear fa-ther, . . . Get on board.
- 5 It will take us home to Glo-ry, . . . Get on board.

The image of the ship is like the image of the train in many other spirituals, where the same train that carried relatives of the enslaved to freedom would return tomorrow. In each instance, everyone is encouraged to "get on board."

Tune: OLD SHIP OF ZION 8.8.8.6. with refrain
African-American spiritual

The New Century Hymnal (1995)

To all members of The First Congregational Church,
United Church of Christ,
Stockbridge, Massachusetts

In accordance with the Bylaws of the Church, I hereby call the Annual Budget Meeting of the Church for Sunday, Feb. 2, 2025, at 11:00 a.m.

The business to be transacted is as follows:

To act upon the budget for the fiscal year 2025.

To act upon any other business that may legally come before the meeting.

Charlotte Rodgers, Clerk



To prepare for the meeting, there will be a Question & Answer session after worship today.

ESCAPE ROOM! - A Youth Group Event - Save the Date

Sunday, February 2

Dinner at 5:00 pm

Group games & escape room 6:00-8:00pm.

Youth will need to work in teams to solve puzzles, hoping avoid the lions!



Music Notes

Three of the hymns for this Sunday morning come from the African-American tradition, and two were particular favorites of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Just a Closer Walk with Thee" is a traditional gospel song and jazz standard that has been performed and recorded by many artists. Performed as either an instrumental or vocal, "A Closer Walk" is perhaps the most frequently played number in the hymn and dirge section of traditional New Orleans funerals. The title and lyrics of the song allude to the Biblical passage from 2nd Corinthians 5:7 which states, "We walk by faith, not by sight"[1] and James 4:8, "Come near to God and He will come near to you."

"Precious Lord" was said to be Dr. King's favorite hymn. The life of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. was taken on April 4, 1968. His last words before he was shot were spoken to Ben Branch, a musician who was to lead the music that night at a fund raiser. They would sing a special song since it was his favorite and Dr. King said, "Ben, play "Precious Lord" in the meeting tonight. Play it real pretty."

Rev. Kings' favorite song was composed by Thomas Andrew Dorsey – not to be confused with the famous bandleader, Tommy Dorsey. He was born in Villa Rica, Georgia, on July 1, 1899. He wrote this song after he experienced the loss of his wife who died shortly after childbirth, as did the baby boy, while he was away. Since then, the whole world has been touched by its majesty – the power of prayer set to music. It has been translated into more than fifty languages. Many watched on television on April 9, 1968, as the late Mahalia Jackson sang at this hymn at his funeral.

Our closing hymn "It's the Old Ship of Zion" dates back to 1899 but it is likely that it goes much further back.

~ Tracy Wilson, Minister of Music pro tem

News and Upcoming Events

All-Church Birthday Party

Sunday, January 26 - Does your birthday fall somewhere within the calendar year 2025? We're having a (potluck) party for you! Please sign up in the JE Room, or check your weekly email for more information and an online form. Please remember we cannot serve any food containing nuts.

Today is the last day to sign up for the **Supper Book Club!** We are kicking off this new venture with former local pastor Mark Longhurst's wonderful new book, *The Holy Ordinary*.

Copies of the book are available in the church office. We will gather for a potluck meal on Wednesday January 22 at 6:00pm to cover the first two sections of the book. Give Pastor Brent a call to learn more.

Applause is a wonderful reaction to events that bring us joy, and is often given in recognition of being entertained. In church, where we are worshipping God, however, applause can be a distraction from the celebration of the Holy Spirit. To express appreciation for music that is part of worship, we ask that applause be saved until after the postlude (when worship is over).

We do encourage applause as an expression of joyful approval following some activities that occur during church service, such as welcoming new members, recognizing significant milestones (birthdays, anniversaries), or appreciating a special gift to the congregation. At these moments, the pastor will encourage applause, or ask "Do I hear an Amen?"

We are pleased that you are with us today and are grateful for your presence during this worship service.

Welcome! We are Open and Affirming, which means that we invite persons of every sexual orientation, gender identification and expression, racial and cultural identity, age, physical ability, economic circumstance, faith background and family structure to share fully in the ministry, leadership and fellowship of this congregation's life in Christ.

As followers of Christ and committed to Isaiah's charge to "maintain justice and do what is right," we acknowledge with gratitude and humility that we are learning, speaking, gathering, and worshipping on the ancestral homelands of the Mohican people, who are the indigenous peoples of this land. Despite tremendous hardship in being forced from here, today their community resides in Wisconsin and is known as the Stockbridge-Munsee Community. We pay honor and respect to their ancestors past and present as we commit to building a more inclusive and equitable space for all.

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