



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

SUNDAY WORSHIP March 16, 2025 10:00 a.m.

Children are invited to Sunday School at 10:00 a.m. returning to worship for Children's Time. Nursery care is available during worship. We will share joys and concerns during worship. Prayers may instead be submitted in writing. Slips may be given to a deacon before worship or placed in the offering plate.

PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

GATHERING MUSIC Preludes on RATHBUN and HAMBURG

FRAMING WORDS / WELCOME

Rev. Brent Damrow

GATHERING IN WORSHIP

CONTEMPORARY READING

Jon Geldert

Katherine Evensen, from *The Christian Century*

It would be easier if we had a Gospel without difficult words, without Jesus' diatribes on suffering and death, and did away with Lent. It would be easier on everyone if we popped right into Easter.

But we can't. We can't pick and choose biblical verses based on how we want to present God to the world or worry that Jesus might be offensive to people. Ultimately it is not we who interpret the text with its truth claims; it's the text that interprets us.

*CONGREGATIONAL INTROIT *O Lamb of God Most Holy!* vs. 1 Pew #82

*CALL TO WORSHIP written by Roddy Hamilton

Jon Geldert

One: when the world is no longer a paradise and creation shows its full power over us still and we are brought down to size on this small planet of ours

All: we worship

One: when the memories linger of the past and war shapes us beyond our knowing and conflict becomes a story of life,

continued

All: we worship

One: when the way is more barren than beautiful when the path is more a climb than a stroll when the desert expands and the horizon stretches

All: we worship

One: we worship

All: because we can

One: we worship

All: because we hope

One: we worship

All: because we know our vulnerability

One: when things shift and we need to hold on

All: we worship

One: we worship

All: for it gives us strength for the journey - even the long journey of Lent

One: A journey to the cross the tomb and resurrection too

All: Come let us worship!

*HYMN *O Jesus Christ, May Grateful Hymns* See page 6

READING Luke 13:1-9 (The Voice) Rich Geiler

As Jesus said this, some people told Him the latest news about a group of Galilean pilgrims in Jerusalem – a group not unlike Jesus’ own entourage. Pilate butchered them while they were at worship, their own blood mingling with the blood of their sacrifices.

Jesus asked: Do you think these Galileans were somehow being singled out for their sins, that they were worse than any other Galileans, because they suffered this terrible death? Of course not. But listen, if you do not consider God’s ways and truly change, then friends, you should prepare to face His judgment and eternal death.

Speaking of current events, you’ve all heard about the 18 people killed in that building accident when the tower in Siloam fell. Were they extraordinarily bad people, worse than anyone else in Jerusalem, so that they would deserve such an untimely death? Of course not. But all the buildings of Jerusalem will come crashing down on you if you don’t wake up and change direction now.

(following up with this parable, Jesus continued) A man has a fig tree planted in his vineyard. One day he comes out looking for fruit on it, but there are no figs. He says to the vineyard keeper, "Look at this tree. For three years, I've come hoping to find some fresh figs, but what do I find? Nothing. So just go ahead and cut it down. Why waste the space with a fruitless tree?"

The vineyard keeper replies, "Give it another chance, sir. Give me one more year working with it. I'll cultivate the soil and heap on some manure to fertilize it. If it surprises us and bears fruit next year, that will be great, but if not, then we'll cut it down."

TIME OF UNBURDENING/CONFESSION

You are invited into a time of silent reflection and confession. As the choir starts singing, you are invited to bring your slate-colored glass bead and place it at the base of the cross as a symbol of your prayer.

MUSIC *Chorale, J.S. Bach*

*WORDS OF ASSURANCE

*SUNG RESPONSE *In the Cross of Christ I Glory*, vss. 1-2 pew hymnal #84

OFFERING OURSELVES AND OUR GIFTS

CALL TO THE OFFERING

OFFERTORY ANTHEM *A Lenten Meditation, Wagner*

*DOXOLOGY Old 100th

**Praise God throughout these forty days.
Praise Christ, our Lord, whom God did raise.
And praise the Spirit who imparts
God's love in Christ into our hearts.**

*UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION

God of the wilderness, we give these offerings in gratitude, rejoicing in the abundance of your gifts to us. We give these offerings in faith, trusting that you will provide for our needs. We give these offerings in hope, knowing you can use them to spread your love in this world. And with these offerings, we give ourselves; May we live with generous hearts, with open hands. Amen ~ written by Joanna Harader

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, D. Anderegg*

THE GIFT OF THE WORD

SCRIPTURE READING Luke 13:31-35 Rich Geiler

At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, 'Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.' He said to them, 'Go and tell that fox for me, "Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed away from Jerusalem." Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord." '

SERMON *Longing* Pastor Brent

*HYMN *When Peace, Like a River* See page 7

PRAYER OF GRATITUDE *Overwhelmed by Promise, Walter Brueggemann*

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Once the choir starts singing, you may bring up your colorful glass bead and place it at the foot of the cross as a symbol of your gratitude.

MUSIC *Chorale, J.S. Bach*

TIME WITH CHILDREN *Foxes and Hens – Right Side Up World* Pastor Brent

*SHARING OF THE PEACE

GOING FORTH INTO THE WORLD

*HYMN *In the Cross of Christ I Glory* vss. 3-5 pew hymnal #84

*INVITATIONS

*SENDING SONG *Lift High the Cross*, verse 2

Refrain:

Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim;

Let all adore that sacred name.

2 Each newborn servant of the Crucified

bears on the brow the seal of Christ who died. [Refrain]

*BENEDICTION

Pastor Brent

POSTLUDE CRUCIFER, arr. John Carter

Music Notes ~ Tracy Wilson, Minister of Music pro tem

Today, the choir will be singing two variations of the famous Passion chorale (familiar to us as *O Sacred Head Now Wounded*) which was composed around 1600 by Hans Leo Hassler. This was one of Bach's favorite chorales, and he used it multiple times in his St. Matthew Passion. Premiering in St. Thomas Church in Leipzig – where Bach was the Kapellmeister (leader of musical activities) – at the Good Friday vespers service in 1727, the St. Matthew was the culmination of a long tradition in Germany of reciting the Passion story of Christ's Crucifixion – found in the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John – during Holy Week before Easter. With Martin Luther's Reformation in the early 16th century, the Bible and the Mass were translated into German. A composer himself, Luther launched the writing of stately German-language chorales, which, sung by Protestant congregations, became a centerpiece of the worship service along with the sermon.

*Matt. 23:37-39; Luke 13:34-35**Bradford Gray Webster, 1954; alt.*

1 O Je-sus Christ, may grate-ful hymns be ris - ing, in ev - ery
 2 Grant us new cour - age, nev - er proud, but hum - ble, strong in your
 3 Show us your Spir - it, brood-ing o'er each cit - y, as you once

cit - y for your love and care; In - spire our wor - ship, grant the
 strength to ven-ture and to dare; To lift the fall - en, guide the
 wept a-bove Je - ru - sa - lem, Seek-ing to gath - er all in

glad sur - pris - ing that your blessed Spir - it rous - es ev - ery - where.
 ones who stum - ble, seek out the lone - ly and God's mer - cy share.
 love and pit - y, and heal - ing those who touch your gar - ment's hem.

This text, written for a Convocation of Urban Life in America, was chosen by The Hymn Society for publication in Five New Hymns on the City. Bradford Webster, a Methodist minister, served churches in his native New York state for forty years.

Tune: CHARTERHOUSE 11.10.11.10.
 David Evans, 1927

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The New Century Hymnal (1995)

When Peace, Like a River

(It Is Well with My Soul)

Ps. 146; Col. 1:19-23; 2:13-14; 3 John 1:2

Horatio G. Spafford, 1873; alt.

1 When peace, like a riv - er, up - holds me each day, when
 2 Though e - vil should tempt me, though tri - als should come, let
 3 My sin— oh, the bliss of this glo - ri - ous thought— my
 4 O God, speed the day that is filled with your light, when

sor - rows like sea bil - lows roll, What - ev - er my lot, you have
 this blessed as - sur - ance con - trol, That Christ has re - gard - ed my
 sin— not in part, but the whole— Is nailed to the cross and I
 clouds are rolled back as a scroll; The trum - pet shall sound and the

Refrain

taught me to say, "It is well, it is well with my soul."
 help - less es - tate, and has paid life and blood for my soul; It is
 bear it no more. Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul!
 Lord shall ap - pear, "e - ven so"— it is well with my soul.

well with my soul, it is well, it is well with my soul.
 It is well with my soul.

This hymn was written out of grief over the loss of the author's four daughters in the sinking of the SS Ville du Havre. After leaving his Chicago law practice, Horatio G. Spafford and his wife settled in Jerusalem.

Tune: VILLE DU HAVRE 11.8.11.9. with refrain
 Philip P. Bliss, 1876

The New Century Hymnal (1995)

Thank you to all who helped with today's service, including Deacons Helen McCormick and Sarah Conly; readers Rich Geiler and Jon Geldert; ushers Jo Ann Levitt and Susan Moor; fellowship Joanne Conroy and Martha Floyd; storytellers Megan Kolano and Jeremy Ridenour. Will Curtiss is running the Livestream and Scarlett Ritcher and Rae Geddes are in the nursery.

This Lent we encourage you to engage a daily practice. We are pleased to offer you two different resources. Feel free to pick one or use both!

Into the Deep is the theme for this year's UCC Daily Devotional. Each day offers a short reading, reflection, and prayer. The Devotionals are written by clergy and leaders within our denomination. Copies are available in the J.E. Room or by contacting Will Garrison in the Church Office.

The second resource comes from Brother David Steindl-Rast's website Grateful.org. This **Daily Practice** encourages wholeness by discovering the meaning in every moment. We will be using many of Brother David's prayers and materials in worship. His books are also available to check-out. Both can be found in the J.E. Room. The resource is also available on our website, in the "news" section.

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 worshiping 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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