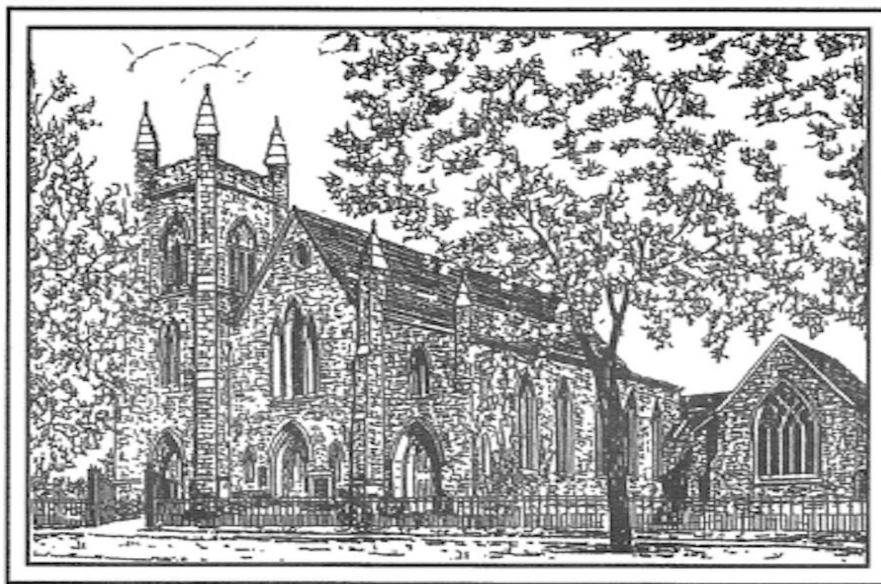


First Congregational Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ

Founded in 1680



Living the Love and Justice of Jesus

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 4, 2025 ~ 10:00 am

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

Introit *“This Is The Day”*

Bringing Forth the Light of Christ

Acolytes

***Call to Worship**

One: You'd think, by now, we'd get used to Jesus showing up like this,

Many: inviting us to cast the net deeper and wider,

One: showing us the way to abundance as we lean into new possibilities.

Many: We are starting to open ourselves to his appearances,

One: encouraging us to share what we have and watch it multiply,

Many: showing us the way to flourish together.

One: We are learning to recognize this Jesus in his new form, asking about love,

Many: calling us to tend and nourish each other,

One: showing us the way to new life and solidarity.

Many: You'd think, by now we'd get used to Jesus in our midst,

One: welcoming us to worship, which is love in action,

Many: showing us the way to transformation, which is mutual belovedness.

All: Let us worship God because we know in our bones and everywhere we turn, it is the Lord! Amen.

***Invocation**

Is it you, Jesus? Are you really here? Is the message you gave us really true? Did the story turn out like you said? Can we trust it is you in the distance when the night is long, and our nets are empty? Will there be more if we share? Can we find you when we eat together? Do we love you when we feed each other? Amen.

***A Prayer for Transformation**

Generous Creator, forgive us when we believe the lies that scarcity tells us: “if they just worked harder”; “I’ve earned everything I have”; “there won’t be enough if I share”; “I have to protect what’s mine”; “safety comes from holding on to what I have”; “I can’t count on anyone but myself.” Gracious Redeemer, teach us to cast our nets differently. Amen.

***Assurance of God’s Love**

***Hymn**

“Now Is the Time Approaching”

NCH #609

The New Testament Reading

Acts 9:1-6, (7-20)

Lynne Ramos

Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” He asked, “Who are you, Lord?” The reply came, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” The men who were traveling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. For three days he was without sight and neither ate nor drank.

Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” He answered, “Here I am, Lord.” The Lord said to him, “Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.” But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem, and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name.” But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus, and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.”

Reader: For the Word of God in Scripture,
for the Word of God among us,
for the Word of God within us

ALL: **THANKS BE TO GOD!**

After these things, Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he had taken it off, and jumped into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off. When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them, and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them and did the same with the fish.

This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead. When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me."

Reader: For the Word of God in Scripture,
for the Word of God among us,
for the Word of God within us

ALL: THANKS BE TO GOD!

Hymn"Jesus Calls Us, o'er the Tumult"*

PH #323

Message*"Who Will Fasten Your Belt?"*

The Rev. Dr. Nancy Hamlin Soukup

Sharing of Joys and Concerns**The Pastoral Prayer****Our 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

*Lord, listen to your children praying,
Lord, send your Spirit in this place;
Lord, listen to your children praying,
Send us love, send us pow'r, send us grace.*

Offertory Invitation

The Offertory

"When Peace Like a River"

Spafford

*The Doxology PH #515

Old Hundredth

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, ye heavenly host;
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

*Prayer of Dedication

One: For the bread we break, for the nourishment of each other,
Many: we dedicate ourselves and our offerings. Thanks be to God.
One: For dignity and belovedness, for the blessing of being together,
Many: we dedicate ourselves and our offerings. Thanks be to God.
One: For the abundance of love that the world cannot take away.
All: we dedicate ourselves and our offerings. Thanks be to God.

Hymn

"Jesus Took the Bread"

NCH #343

Holy Communion

Invitation to Communion

Words of Institution

Sharing the Elements

Prayer of Thanksgiving Litany

When Peter's three "yeses" to Jesus transcended his three denials, it was Easter day. When the disciples looked from afar at a breakfast of fish on the beach, it was Easter day. When Paul was blinded by the light and the scales fell from his eyes, it was Easter day. When the hungry are fed at the same table as the rich, it is Easter day. When weapons are beaten to ploughshares and peace is a word to be shouted, it is Easter day. When the stranger is welcomed in community and the lonely are restored to relationship, it is Easter day. Amen.

*Closing Hymn

"United and Join Your Cheerful Songs"

NCH #617

*Benediction

One: Beloved community, do you love God?
Many: Yes, you know that we love God.
One: Beloved community, will you keep loving God?
Many: Yes, you know that we will keep loving God.
One: Beloved community, are you blessed by God's love?
Many: The God who knows everything knows that we are blessed by God's love.
One: Then go forth from this place to live and love abundantly, setting a table for all in the spirit of justice, dignity, and mutual belovedness and sharing what you have so that all may flourish.
Many: Thanks be to our risen and rising up God! Amen.

***Benediction Response**

"Hallelujah"

NCH #236

Carrying the Light of Christ into the World

Postlude

"Sonnette Petrarch"

Liszt

*~ Leading Worship today is the Rev. Dr. Nancy Hamlin Soukup ~
~ Our Organist is Nikita Zabinski ~
~ Our lay liturgist today is Lynne Ramos ~
~ Our greeters today are Janine Beausoleil, Eleanor Ingraham & Clifford Gustafson ~*



Prayer List for Sunday, May 4, 2025

As a congregation, we lift up prayers today and throughout the week for the following people.

For those in need of healing on our prayer list:

Kristen, who will be undergoing surgery this week and then undergoing aggressive chemo and radiation therapies; prayers for the best outcome

Marty Costianes

Deb, a friend of the Walsh family, who fell and had surgery this week

Renee that she may find resolutions to issues pressing in on her

Andrew, Charlotte Burnham's brother, who needs help controlling his blood pressure, and for

Charlotte's niece Rebecca, who seeks a cure for her cancer

A sister who needs necessary medical care

Family and friends who seek hope and healing in mind, body, and spirit.

Tom, a neighbor of the Crouse family, who recently fell and is now in hospital

Prayers for all victims of violence

Alma Campbell, who fell and broke her knee

Connie Marino, Cristina Marino's grandmother, who is in a rehab center

Jack and Barbara Ringland

For Roxanne, who is now dealing with breast cancer, and for Janice who recently passed away.

Claudia and her family, as she enters hospice

Kathy, Jen Johnson's cousin, who is recovering from brain surgery and has a long recovery ahead of her

Scott, Brenda, and Cameron, who need divine guidance and strength to follow God's path for them

Max, for healing and freedom, and for his Mom

Robin Vestal, who has Stage 4 Duodenal Cancer, and her husband Ulysses, who are friends of the Grant family

Peter MacDonald, who has Lung Cancer

Rusty, who has Lung Cancer

Benevides Family, who lost their home to a fire here in Bristol

Autumn Quezada-Harrison

Ellie's Dad, who she misses
 Carol, Karen's cousin, who had brain surgery
 Carrigan, who has cancer, and for Carrigan's nurse, Kristen, who is also
 being treated for breast cancer
 Tyler, who is making a steady recovery from a bone transplant
 Mark
 Charlie
 Ken Latham in Leicester, MA, who is on chemotherapy for Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma
 Those who have lost their way may have wisdom, courage, and strength
 Harriet
 Lola, Carolina Bailey's sister with stage 4 Pancreatic Cancer
 Ryan
 Mark E., who has an aggressive form of prostate cancer
 Fred Davis, who has stomach cancer
 Meriel Smith
 Charlotte Griffith
 Kellie and Juan Morales's daughter
 Bruce C., who is in rehab, and Pat P., both friends of Ed Wiacek
 Caregivers in our congregation

Upcoming Birthdays:

| | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Paul Temple 05/07 | Jim Sapp 05/08 | Michael Tyler 05/09 |
| Allen Logan 05/09 | Candace Alesssandro 05/11 | Oliver Crouse 05/11 |
| Chris Frizzell 05/12 | Laura Temple 05/12 | Rev. Mary Aberg 05/14 |
| Mark Dieterich 05/17 | Bob Evans 05/24 | Ray Frizzell 05/24 |
| Dyan Vaughan 05/26 | Gabriel Crouse 05/26 | Cheryl Roger-Ramsay 05/28 |

What's on the Church Calendar

May 04, 2025 Sunday Worship: 10am
 May 06, 2025 Tuesday Prayer Shawl Circle 6:30pm (Guiteras House)
 May 07, 2025 Wednesday FCC Choir Rehearsal 7:00pm (Dimond Room)
 May 08, 2025 Thursday Deacons Meeting 7:00pm
 May 10, 2025 Saturday Bristol's Stone Church Coffee House 7:00pm (DeWolf Room)
May 11, 2025 Sunday Worship: 10am
 May 13, 2025 Tuesday Facility Meeting 7:00pm (DeWolf Room)
 May 14, 2025 Wednesday FCC Choir Rehearsal 7:00pm (Dimond Room)
May 18, 2025 Sunday Worship: 10am
 May 20, 2025 Tuesday Church Council Meeting 7:00pm (DeWolf Room)
 May 21, 2025 Wednesday FCC Choir Rehearsal 7pm (Dimond Room)
May 25, 2025 Sunday Worship: 10am
 May 28, 2025 Wednesday FCC Choir Rehearsal 7pm (Dimond Room)
 May 30, 2025 Thursday Bristol County Choir Rehearsal 7:00pm (Sanctuary)

Please visit our website for more information about the Church
 and its events: fccbristol.org



“Invitation to Share Time, Talent, and Treasure”

When you give to First Congregational Church, you make possible our ministries that serve all God’s people. Your gifts share the love of Jesus all year long. The act of giving is our personal expression of worship and also keeps our church financially healthy. Stewardship is not payment for services rendered. It is an act of faith and devotion to God. You may go to the following link to give now: <https://fccbristol.org/support-us/>.



NCH = New Century Hymnal (black hymnal) and PH = Pilgrim Hymnal (red hymnal)

Sources and Credits: Hymn tune names - as well as composers of the music and authors of the text - are listed in the hymnals with each hymn. CCLI License #1958911 and One License.Net #A-728124.

Sources for this service are written by or adapted from the following: Dr. Sharon R. Fennema, *Building Up a New World—Cast the Net*, Service Prayers for Easter 3C, *Worship Ways*, Easter 3C – May 4 - United Church of Christ; Rev Karla,

<https://revgalblogpals.org/2016/04/09/sunday-prayer-190/>, re: *Worship: Easter 3 Year C*, and Roddy Hamilton, *Mucky*

Paws, <http://www.nkchurch.org.uk/index.php/mucky-paws>,

re: *Worship: Easter 3 Year C*.

Church Office Hours are Tuesday –

Friday 10:00am – 2:00pm

Office e-mail address:

office@FCCBristol.org

Pastoral Office Hours Tuesday –

Thursday, 9am – 1pm

You may also schedule an appointment by contacting Rev. Nancy.

Church office line 401/253-7288 or e-mail

office@FCCbristol.org

Bristol’s Stone Church Coffeehouse Presents

An Evening of Folk and Americana Music Featuring

Mike + Ruthy



Saturday, May 10, 2025

Doors open at 6:45pm

Music starts at 7:30pm

First Congregational Church

300 High Street

(Corner of Bradford and High St)

Bristol, RI 02809

Tickets are \$25.00 for adults; Students are half price; Children 5 and under are free

Seating is Limited and Early Reservations are Recommended.

Please Call 401-253-4813 for reservations or ticket information.



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**BRISTOL'S STONE
CHURCH COFFEEHOUSE**
*Live Acoustic Music Since
2007*



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