First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Ellsworth, Maine



Come with hope or despair,
expectation, or disappointment, and
seek God even as God seeks you.

Hearing devices and large print hymnals are available—
please ask an usher if you require them.
Thank you for silencing electronic devices before worship begins.

***Please stand as you are able**.*

ORDER OF WORSHIP
TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

November 15, 2026 **10 a.m.**

PRELUDE *10,000 Reasons* arr. Cumberland
Be Thou My Vision trad. Irish

WELCOME

ORGAN INTROIT *O God, our help in ages past* Croft

CALL TO WORSHIP (responsively)

One: God calls us beyond our fears and into a future filled with possibility.
All: We come with open hearts, ready to trust and ready to grow.
One: God has placed within each of us gifts meant to be shared, not hidden away.
All: We will not bury our gifts beneath doubt or fear.
One: Like Deborah, may we find the courage to rise. Like faithful servants, may we put our faith into action.
All: For faith was never meant to be buried. It was meant to come alive!
One: Come, people of God, let us worship with courage, hope, and joy!
All: Let us worship the God who calls us to something greater!

*HYMN *Take my gifts* (vs 1&2) 381

*GATHERING PRAYER (unison)

God of courage and possibility, you have filled our lives with gifts, purpose, and promise. Yet too often, we allow fear and uncertainty to hold us back. Awaken within us the courage to trust, the strength to act, and the faith to step beyond what is comfortable. Remind us that you are not finished with us, and that even now, new possibilities are waiting to unfold. May our faith never be buried beneath our fears, but come alive through our words, our actions, and our love. Amen.

SPECIAL MOMENTS

DUET *The Shepherd Psalm* Carter

The Lord is my shepherd, there's nothing more I'll ever need;
I'll lie down to dream in a pasture of green,
I'll follow wherever he leads me. The Lord is my shepherd,
Beside the still waters I go; my soul is restored, I walk with my Lord,
His righteousness 'round me will flow.
And if I should walk in the shadow of death, I will not be afraid;
My shepherd, the Lord, goes wherever I go,
His rod and his staff are my comfort. I know that the Lord is my shepherd,
I'll sit at his table to dine; his goodness and mercy will follow my days,
And heaven will surely be mine; heaven will always be mine.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION (unison)

Gracious God, open our hearts and minds to the wisdom of your Word. Give us ears to hear your calling, courage to embrace your truth, and faith to follow where you lead. May these scriptures awaken new possibilities within us and inspire us to live boldly in your love. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Old Testament	Judges 4:1-7	pew Bible p.204 OT
Gospel	Matthew 25:14-30	pew Bible p.24 NT

SERMON **Faith Was Never Meant to Be Buried**

*HYMN *Take my life, and let it be consecrated* 609

MORNING PRAYERS

Joys & Concerns

Prayer for those Celebrating Birthdays & Anniversaries: Cindy, Mike & Sue

Silent Prayer & Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer (unison)

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.

Organ Response *Here I Am, Lord* Schutte

OFFERING OUR GIFTS & TITHES

OFFERTORY *Lord, We Come to Ask Your Blessing* Landes

*DOXOLOGY 46

*DEDICATION

*HYMN *Joyful, joyful, we adore thee* 2

*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Trumpet Tune* Giamanco

The Shepherd Psalm, text Ps 23 paraphrased Mary Beall, music John Carter
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The book of Joel stands out among the minor prophets. While it carries familiar themes of warning, judgment, and hope, Joel never tells us exactly why a prophetic word is needed or what the people have done wrong. There is no named king, no historical moment pinpointed, no clear sin to blame.

Instead, Joel describes a locust plague. What begins as a natural disaster ripples outward into hunger, poverty, and despair. Joel's message invites us to see not only this ancient tragedy but every place—near and far—where communities are brought low by disaster, violence, injustice, or exploitation.

In the face of uncertainty, destruction, and grief, Joel's insight is strikingly simple: God does not demand offerings the people do not have.

Instead, the prophet calls them to offer themselves; he invites them into a communal reorientation toward compassion, solidarity, and shared commitment.

Perhaps you are part of a congregation in crisis. What would it look like for you to seek God and one another in honest lament, trusting that God can work through your shared care?

Perhaps you are part of a congregation with a wealth of resources. How might you be called into solidarity, recognizing that suffering is rarely felt equally and that God's people are to notice, respond, and stand with those most affected?

Joel reminds us that God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and rich in steadfast love, while inviting us to trust that God's mercy creates room for hope and a path to flourishing for all.

THE WELCOME TABLE SERVED 140 MEALS ON NOVEMBER 11.

Our free community meal serves take-out only on Wednesdays from 2-3:30 p.m. Please call the church on Wednesdays **before 11 a.m.**, 207-667-8321, to reserve a meal.
Donations always gratefully received.

First Congregational Church UCC – Founded 1812
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