

**Second Congregational Church in Newcastle,
United Church of Christ
Newcastle, Maine**

**Fourth Sunday in Lent
Again & Again: God Loves First
One Great Hour of Sharing Sunday
Online Worship – March 14, 2021, 10:00 AM**



INVITATION

Welcome to Virtual Worship with the community of Second Congregational Church in Newcastle, United Church of Christ in Newcastle, Maine. From our various spaces, on our various devices, we enter sacred time together. No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here. God meets us everywhere and in all our humanness. Be here in this sacred moment. God is with you. God is with us. May this worship of saints be blessed, be nourishing, be comforting, be church.

One Great HOUR OF SHARING

****NEW TODAY** THE ANNUAL UCC**

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING OFFERING:

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS), part of Our Church's Wider Mission, is the special mission offering of the United Church of Christ (UCC) that carries God's message of love and hope to people in crisis. This special offering supports domestic and international ministries for disaster preparedness and response. One example close to home: Funding from OGHS has supported the Maine UCC Conference's Hurricane Recovery Service Trips to Puerto Rico in February 2019 and 2020, of which

Pastor Char is the trip co-leader. OGHS also helps to fund our larger UCC Church to work with partners in the US and all over the world to provide sources of clean water, food, education and health care, small business micro-credit, advocacy and resettlement for refugees and displaced persons, and emergency relief and rehabilitation.

There are three options for giving today:

- 1) **Through our website www.secondcongo.org/**: Click on the Givelify App button and make a donation with "OGHS" in the memo;
- 2) **Make a check payable to Second Church**, PO Box 243, Newcastle, ME 04551, with "OGHS" in the memo; or
- 3) **Donate directly to OGHS at <https://www.ucc.org/giving/donate-now/>**, selecting OGHS as your designated gift and writing in "Second Congregational Church in Newcastle, ME" is your affiliated church.

****NEW** PREPARING FOR WORSHIP DURING LENT:**

Lent is a 40-day church season of soul-searching, reflection and spiritual practice, particularly those of reflection, prayer, fasting (if it's safe for you to do so) and repentance. By observing the 40 days of Lent, we imitate Jesus' withdrawal into the wilderness after his baptism. In the earliest days of the Church, the Lenten season was a preparatory time for Easter, when the faithful rededicated themselves and converts were instructed about the faith and prepared for baptism. Lent always begins on a Wednesday because the 40-day season does not include the Sundays, which are always a celebration of the Resurrection. Like most churches, our pulpit decorations (paraments) are purple, the royal color, symbolic of the majesty of Christ.

As we gather for worship together, please be sure that your device (computer, phone or tablet) is in the mute mode to avoid feedback and background noise. You are encouraged to use the "chat" or "comment" features to offer prayer requests at any time during the service.

Before the time of the service, you may want to prepare a simple worship space. Perhaps you can light a candle, have a Bible with you, set your table with a small bowl of ash, place your 2021 star gift on the table before you or put in place some other symbol of faith that brings you comfort. Perhaps an outdoor element – a flower, potted plant or branch - helps you to spiritually focus. Include the photograph of someone you wish to bring into the circle of faith. Whatever it is, follow your heart.

Thank you for your preparation.

Let us now be present to the Spirit, which brings us together and loves us wherever we are!

+ + + + +

GATHERING MUSIC

“Come With Us, O Blessed Jesus”
Jane Wilmot, organist

Sigfrid Karg-Elert

[Link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/12oMr8tTHEpaTwrDD7q4HKgvCyJp06R-j/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/12oMr8tTHEpaTwrDD7q4HKgvCyJp06R-j/view?usp=sharing)

WELCOME & CENTERING MOMENT

CALL TO WORSHIP:

One: Before we were born,

All: Before we took our first breath,

One: Before the week started,

All: Before this Covid year started,

One: Before we said, “I love you,”

All: Before we said, “I’m sorry,”

One: Before we figured out who we really are,

All: Before we figured out who we want to be,

One: Before it all –

All: God loved us.

One: Unconditionally and freely,

All: Fully and honestly –

One: God loves us still.

All: Again and again, God loves first.

One: Again and again, this is where our story begins.

All: Let us worship God!

OPENING HYMN**“Now the Green Blade Riseth”**
Second Singers, song leaders

Noel Nouvelet

We will remain muted to avoid audio feedback and lags. Please sing aloud at home or follow along as best as you are able. Remember, it's our spiritual intention that matters!)

Link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RifjJS0h2UO3SM_N67YQ1000pdl-Tf7/view?usp=sharing

Now the Green Blade Riseth

1. Now the green blade ris - eth from the bur - ied grain,
 2. In the grave they laid him, Love whom hate had slain,
 3. Forth he came at Eas - ter; like the ris - en grain,
 4. When our hearts are win - try, griev - ing or in pain,



wheat that in dark earth man - y days has lain;
 think - ing that nev - er he would wake a - gain,
 he that for three days in the grave had lain,
 thy touch can call us back to life a - gain,



love lives a - gain that with the dead has been:
 laid in the earth like grain that sleeps un - seen:
 quick from the dead my ris - en Lord is seen:
 fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:



Love is come a - gain like wheat that spring - eth green.

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PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION:

God of the here and now, we have heard the words, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only son” time and time again. We have read them on billboards, heard them in worship, and seen them on signs. And yet we know, there is a difference between hearing those words in passing and truly, deeply listening. We long to listen, God. We long to hear your truth. We long to know your love. Open our hearts and minds. We are listening. Amen.

THE LORD’S PRAYER *(said out loud together but muted):*

(Second Church follows the version of the Lord’s Prayer that is offered below. However, you are invited to say this prayer aloud in the tradition that brings you the most comfort: debt/debtors; sins/sin; trespasses/trespass).

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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from Evil: for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS (*New Revised Standard Version*):**Numbers 21:4-9:**

⁴ From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. ⁵ The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food." ⁶ Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. ⁷ The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. ⁸ And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." ⁹ So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

John 3:14-21:

¹⁴ And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶ "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷ "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.

²⁰ For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. ²¹ But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."

SERMON:**One Great Love to Share**

Rev. Char Corbett

Prayer: God, may we strive to meet you exactly where you meet us today as we hear your Word, ponder Your wisdom and truth, seek to discern You in our lives. Again and again, O God, we endeavor to follow Your ways. Help us to listen. Amen.

Well, today is the fourth Sunday of Lent. Last year as we journeyed into and through Lent, my colleagues and I said it was the Lentiest Lent ever, as Covid-19 swept across the globe and forced country after country into lockdown. The United States was one of the last to do so. Here at Second Church, we didn't close the church doors and suspend all gatherings until the Governor's orders were given on Friday, March 13, 2020.

And of course, we were afraid, but we were also hopeful:

- We told ourselves and one another that this strange illness and all these extreme measures would only last a few weeks.
- We reassured each other that we would be back together for Easter.
- We did not know what was ahead for us and for the world.

- We did not know the extent of the disease, the death, the loss, the grief, the discomfort, the isolation, the disparities that would be revealed and felt over the next 12 months – and longer still.
- We did not know that when we gathered for worship on March 8, 2020 that it would be our last time in the sanctuary singing hymns together – “Guide Me, O though Great Jehovah,” “’Tis the Gift to be Simple” and “Peace Before Us.” *Oh, how these hymns still sing to us!*

Yes, we simply did not know. And isn't it true, that we never really do know? The only truth we do know, can know, is that God loves us unconditionally and that if we believe in this endless, fluid, all-enfolding love of God, life is eternal, even in death and beyond death. God's love flows, even beyond what we know and can know in this lifetime. God loves us so much that he sent his Love to be incarnate among us, to walk with us as the Son of Man, as Jesus. Jesus, who lived, taught and died to teach us God's path to love – of God, self and neighbor. God loves us first, loves us last, loves us now and in death, loves us forever, eternally. The life and the spirit of God's love never ends and made in God's image, we are part of that everlasting life of love.

And so today we remember that, seeking and believing in that Love, it was one year ago today that we gathered together for Sunday worship for the first time not in our sanctuary, but through “virtual church.”

Bound by our love of God and one another, and still with the purpose of dousing ourselves weekly in that love through worship so we can be strengthened to share God's love in the world, we did something new and awkward, weird and wonderful to keep that love flowing. And we're still doing it!

Thinking back on that first Sunday we experienced worship beyond the walls and through the internet – well, it feels like it was an eternity ago. And boy, were we green at it! That Sunday's worship service was just an emailed bulletin with a recording posted to our website and YouTube channel later the following week because the staff and I hadn't yet fully learned Zoom and Facebook Live and all the recording programs and link creators we'd need.

This is the email I sent to Bill, Jane, Carl and the Deacons that Sunday morning, which included the day's worship bulletin:

Hi - Attached is the yet again revised order of worship for today. Everything is in print: call to worship, meditation, prayers, hymn music. Do we can send it out through the Snippets email today? Monday? Or attach to the website?? I'm clueless what to do next!

Jim and I are going to the church this morning with the hope of recording something that can then be put online at some point. Bill?? It will not be livestreamed - I'm just too freaked out to take that on too. Maybe with more practice this week. I need a LOT of re-dos. I'm not sure if the music will video well or how to even record it. Jane, any thoughts? We'll try, we'll see. We'll fail. We'll try again. Something new learned every day, right? God...help us! :)

One year ago, we worshipped together – separated but one in Spirit. We prayed and read scripture and perhaps eventually watched that first awkward video from our homes, vaguely aware of the changes and fears growing around us. We clung to our usual ways of being together, hopeful for the return to “normalcy.” We were ignorant of the rapidity of change, ignorant of the fragility of our lives and the lives of others.

One year ago, pandemic swept across the globe. Little could we have imagined what would change, how fast it would change, how strange it would feel, and just how long it would go on. One year on, it seems important to pause, to give space to notice not only where we have come from, but where we are and where we are going:

We pause to remember the 2,640,000 million people who have died from Covid 19 and all the families and communities that these deaths impact.

We pause to remember the 534,000 people who have died from Covid-19 in the United States and to remember their families, friends, coworkers and communities.

We pause to remember the 734 people who have died from Covid-19 in the state of Maine and to remember their families, friends, coworkers and communities.

We pause to name our own losses and griefs.

We pause to acknowledge our anger, our fatigue, our frustration, and our fear.

We pause to remember what is missing, what has been altered, the things we long for.

We pause to name the lessons we have learned, the new skills, values, and abilities that have come with adaptability.

We pause to look around, to be reminded of what is most precious, the values that we have recovered, the spaces we have found anew, the reminders of what really matter most in this life.

Words of Hope *by National Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman*

I thought I'd awaken to a world in mourning.
Heavy clouds crowding, a society storming.
But there's something different on this golden morning.
Something magical in the sunlight, wide and warming.

I see a dad with a stroller taking a jog.
Across the street, a bright-eyed girl chases her dog.
A grandma on a porch fingers her rosaries.
She grins as her young neighbor brings her groceries.

While we might feel small, separate, and all alone,
Our people have never been more closely tethered.
The question isn't if we will weather this unknown,
But how we will weather this unknown together.

So on this meaningful morn, we mourn and we mend.
Like light, we can't be broken, even when we bend.

As one, we will defeat both despair and disease.
We stand with healthcare heroes and all employees;
With families, libraries, schools, waiters, artists;
Businesses, restaurants, and hospitals hit hardest.

We ignite not in the light, but in lack thereof,
For it is in loss that we truly learn to love.
In this chaos, we will discover clarity.
In suffering we must find solidarity.

For it's our grief that gives us our gratitude,
Shows us how to find hope, if we ever lose it.
So ensure that this ache wasn't endured in vain:
Do not ignore the pain. Give it purpose. Use it.

Read children's books, dance alone to DJ music.
Know that this distance will make our hearts grow fonder.
From a wave of woes our world will emerge stronger.

We'll observe how the burdens braved by humankind
Are also the moments that make us humans kind;
Let every dawn find us courageous, brought closer;
Heeding the light before the fight is over.

When this ends, we'll smile sweetly, finally seeing
In testing times, we became the best of beings.

Let us pray: Oh God, we are reminded how far we have come by faith alone; through our tired trudging and our cheeks damp with tears we catch a glimpse of your presence. We know your love and seek your hope. We pause to catch our breath, to rest a moment before continuing the journey.

While we grieve, we are grateful. While we weep may we also dance, as we look to the promises you reveal to us through Jesus and his teachings. Today, give us the strength we need to continue the journey together in faith. Help us to lean into your love eternal.

Gracious God, you led your people through the wilderness and brought them to the promised land. You loved the world so much that you gave your son, that we might have eternal life. Through your love, you have promised us life and love and healing. As we follow Jesus' way, we may walk the wilderness of this world toward the glory that is yet to come. Guide and strengthen our steps as we lean upon you. As we walk through the valley, lift our eyes to the mountains; unite us, connect us, strengthen us, and guide our footsteps, we pray. Amen.¹

¹ Prayers adapted from: *The Worship Sourcebook*

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SILENT PRAYERS AND PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE:

[NOTE: You are invited to type your prayer requests in the "Chat" or "Comment" features of your online device or to name those you pray for aloud in your own sacred space. PLEASE BE PRUDENT and do not share last names or specific, sensitive information on on-line platforms, as we can unknowingly increase an individual's vulnerability in our stated care].

Eternal God, we bow this day on our Lenten journey. We are very aware of our need to retool our souls. Like the ancient people we struggle with the same issues with which they struggled. We too are impatient. We too want things to go our way, now. We don't want to invest the time it takes to provide the nurture our spirits need to grow. We fail to see the slow and small ways which you provide for our growth.

Help us to trust in you when our way is not clear. Help us to walk by faith. Help us to risk when we are fearful and to temper our impatience.

Like the ancients we are also a very grumbling and complaining people living in a negative culture. It is easy to complain, O God. It is easy to be negative. Forgive us for taking the easy road.

Help us to look upon life as good. Help us in hard times to see the glass of life as half full rather than half empty. Help us to rejoice as we live and walk in your beautiful world. Help us to see the world afresh as a child sees it: with excitement and wonder and joy. Help us to see in every challenge not an obstacle but a possibility for achievement. Refashion and mold our spirits and make us positive people who can make an impact upon our world.

We pray for those troubled places of the earth where violence reigns and people suffer. Help us to rise above our human tendencies to harm, to hoard, to hide and instead to share with everyone the promises of hope and life you bring.

Therefore, O God, we pray...*(PASTOR CHAR WILL ADD IN PRAYERS COLLECTED THROUGHOUT THE WEEK AND VIA ZOOM CHAT/FACEBOOK COMMENTS).*

A MOMENT OF REMEMBERING AND GIVING THANKS

Spirit of new life, new breath, new direction, we give You thanks for all that we have received this week and for all that we let go. We dedicate the gifts we bring, both for our local mission and for our wider One Great Hour of Sharing mission, to Your work and ask You to strengthen us with Your vision and to continue our ministries of love and compassion. Great Spirit, work within us and among us to carry your good news into the world. Amen.

DOXOLOGY: ***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God, for all that love has done;
Creator, Christ and Spirit, One. Amen.***

(Music is pre-recorded by Peter Asche with the Second Singers Choir and Jane Wilmot on Organ. We will remain muted to avoid audio feedback and lags. Please sing aloud at home or follow along as best as you are able. Remember, it's our spiritual intention that matters!).

Link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zf9vXKaxxAb6dJhE3Z67dlc0oJK5rC3W/view?usp=sharing>

CLOSING HYMN "What Wondrous Love is This" Wondrous Love

We will remain muted to avoid audio feedback and lags. Please sing aloud at home or follow along as best as you are able. Remember, it's our spiritual intention that matters!

Link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1f-hAqLXzgbNju_1fF4Y333Pr16wrfksa/view?usp=sharing

BENEDICTION:

Let us rejoice: God so loves the world!
 May God your Maker
 send you back into the world with creative energies refreshed.
 May Christ the Light
 illuminate your fearful moments.
 And may the Holy Spirit of steadfast love
 guide you until we worship together again.
 This day and forevermore. Amen!

VIRTUAL COFFEE HOUR CHECK IN (ZOOM ONLY)

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What Wondrous Love Is This?

1. What won - drous love is this, O my soul, O my soul!
 2. To God and to the Lamb I will sing, I will sing,
 3. And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on,

what won - drous love is this, O my soul! _____
 to God and to the Lamb, I will sing; _____
 and when from death I'm free, I'll sing on! _____

What won - drous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss to
 to God and to the Lamb who is the great I Am, while
 And when from death I'm free, I'll sing and joy - ful be, and

bear the heav - y cross for my soul, for my soul,
 mil - lions join the theme, I will sing, I will sing,
 through e - ter - ni - ty I'll sing on, I'll sing on,

to bear the heav - y cross for my soul! _____
 while mil - lions join the theme, I will sing. _____
 and through e - ter - ni - ty I'll sing on. _____

Today's Worship has been prepared, sent out, offered and led by:

- ▶ **Peter Asche**, Recording Support; Piano
- ▶ **Bill Bausch**, Communications & Technology Support; Snippets Meister
- ▶ **Rev. Char Corbett**, Pastor
- ▶ **Jim Corbett**, Videographer and Technical Support
- ▶ **Second Singers**, Song Leaders
- ▶ **Jane Wilmot**, Minister of Music, Organ and Piano

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Unless otherwise noted, all liturgy for today's service has been adapted from or written by Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org. | Used with permission, 2021 Licensing Agreement.

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Have a question about Second Church or today's service? A concern or a joy to share? A prayer request? We're here to listen and respond! Contact our Pastor, Deacons or Pastoral Relations Committee:

- ▶ **Lonnie Andersen**, Deacon: lonnieba@gmail.com
- ▶ **Bill Bausch**, Pastoral Relations Committee: wbausch@gmail.com
- ▶ **Kristin Brown**, Deacon: kristinbrown222@gmail.com
- ▶ **Rev. Char Corbett**, Pastor: pastor@secondcongo.org
- ▶ **Pam Gormley**, Deacon/Chair of the Spirit (Worship) Team: pgormley825@gmail.com
- ▶ **Rick Hagen**, Deacon/Pastoral Relations Committee: rickhagenmaine@gmail.com
- ▶ **Judy Jones**, Deacon: judy.t.r.jones@gmail.com
- ▶ **David Lawrence**, Pastoral Relations Committee: lawrence@tidewater.net
- ▶ **Carl Nord**, Moderator: chnord@twc.com
- ▶ **Rev. Ann Roundy**, Pastoral Relations Committee: revaroundy@gmail.com

**One Great
HOUR
OF SHARING**