



First Congregational Church of Lebanon

United Church of Christ – Open and Affirming

The Fourth Sunday in Lent – Laetare Sunday

March 22, 2020

“Lent is a time for discipline, for confession, for honesty, not because God is mean or fault-finding or finger-pointing but because he wants us to know the joy of being cleaned out, ready for all the good things he now has in store.”

–N. T. Wright

Call to Worship (Psalm 23)

Leader: The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

People: **He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.**

Leader: He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

People: **Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.**

Leader: Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

People: **Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.**

Hymn 6 (Pilgrim Hymnal) *O Worship the King, All Glorious Above*

Lyons

Prayer of Invocation

God, we welcome your Spirit among us today. Endow us with the strength to persevere, and breathe life into our prayers, our worship, our service, and our fellowship, now taking on new forms. Though we may not be gathered in person, we give thanks that we are still united as the Body of Christ. In your Son's name we pray. Amen.

Lenten Prayer of Confession

Merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart and mind and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. Open our hearts to you, that we may receive your forgiveness and be redeemed by your reconciling love. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Know that all who come before God with an open and contrite heart, that all who sincerely repent, are forgiven.

Gloria

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Words of Welcome; Our Ministry and Mission

During this time, we are not meeting in person. All are encouraged to stay in touch with one another by phone, email, or written cards. If you would like to organize a Zoom teleconference or telephone meeting, please be in touch with the Rev. Steve Silver (603-448-4281/silver@fccleb.org), and he'll get you set up and ready to go.

Children's Moment

Today, the fourth Sunday in Lent, is also known as *Laetare Sunday*. "Laetare" is Latin for "Rejoice!" That's right—a command to celebrate in the middle of Lent. The church knows that we can go overboard in whatever we do, and that includes Lent, which has a reputation for being a gloomy time. When we repent, it's not to punish ourselves. God does not call us to feel bad about ourselves. Instead, God wants us to be the best people we can be; sometimes that means changing our behavior. So during this season of Lent, we rejoice today—for the love of God; for Jesus, who came to be with us; for the Holy Spirit who comforts us; and for the people in our lives whom we love. Rejoice today!

Hymn 349 (Pilgrim Hymnal) *O for a Closer Walk With God*

Caithness

Scripture Lessons

1 Samuel 16:1-13. The Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons." ²Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me." And the Lord said, "Take a heifer with you, and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.'" ³Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you." ⁴Samuel did what the Lord commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, "Do you come peaceably?" ⁵He said, "Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

⁶When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is now before the Lord." ⁷But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance

or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.”⁹ Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.”¹⁰ Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, “The Lord has not chosen any of these.”¹¹ Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all your sons here?” And he said, “There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.” And Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.”¹² He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, “Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.”¹³ Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

John 9:1-41. As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth.² His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”³ Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him.”⁴ We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work.⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”⁶ When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes,⁷ saying to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.⁸ The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?”⁹ Some were saying, “It is he.” Others were saying, “No, but it is someone like him.” He kept saying, “I am the man.”¹⁰ But they kept asking him, “Then how were your eyes opened?”¹¹ He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ Then I went and washed and received my sight.”¹² They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”

¹³ They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind.¹⁴ Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes.¹⁵ Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, “He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.”¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?” And they were divided.¹⁷ So they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened.” He said, “He is a prophet.”

¹⁸ The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight¹⁹ and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?”²⁰ His parents

answered, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; ²¹but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.” ²²His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. ²³Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.” ²⁴So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, “Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.” ²⁵He answered, “I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” ²⁶They said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” ²⁷He answered them, “I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?” ²⁸Then they reviled him, saying, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.” ³⁰The man answered, “Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. ³¹We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. ³²Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. ³³If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” ³⁴They answered him, “You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?” And they drove him out. ³⁵Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” ³⁶He answered, “And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.” ³⁷Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.” ³⁸He said, “Lord, I believe.” And he worshiped him. ³⁹Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.” ⁴⁰Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, “Surely we are not blind, are we?” ⁴¹Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.

Sermon “*Perfect Vision*” (*available online or in print*) Stephen R. Silver

Hymn 68 (Pilgrim Hymnal) *I Sing the Mighty Power of God* Ellacombe

Sharing of Joys and Concerns; Pastoral Prayer

On this day we offer our ongoing prayers for Pete, Lloyd, Jessica, Martha, Micah, Joanne, Max, Kelee, Janice, Tammy, Arlene, Ruth, Ryle, Emily, John, Shirley, Dan, Roger, Jim, Beth, Evelyn, Susan, Barbara, and Max. We pray for Jon Scott, who is dealing with some health issues. We also pray for all those whose employment and income have been reduced or lost entirely as a result of public-health precautions.

This day we offer a prayer, taken from the 1928 *Book of Common Prayer*, which speaks to our current moment:

O most mighty and merciful God, in this time of grievous sickness, we flee unto thee for succor. Deliver us, we beseech thee, from our peril; give strength and skill to all those who minister to the sick; prosper the means made use of for their cure; and that, perceiving how frail and uncertain our life is, we may apply our hearts unto that heavenly wisdom which leadeth to eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

We pray all this, and the joys and concerns we hold in our hearts, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The 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 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.

Offering of Gifts

In times like this, it is especially fitting that we remember those who are without, those who are often ignored, those who are in need. In this spirit, we invite your support of this church, its mission, and its ministry. Please mail in your offering as you are able, in support this church's continuing work in and for the community.

Doxology

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him, all creatures here below,
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer of Dedication

Dear God: In Jesus you have granted us a fresh start, a second chance, a new life. In gratitude, we offer our prayers and songs, our time, talents, and money. We pray that all of these gifts will transform both those who receive them and those who give them, all in the service of the Good News of love with which we are blessed. In the name of Christ we pray, Amen.

Hymn 391 (Pilgrim Hymnal) *Be Thou My Vision*

Slane

Benediction

My friends, life is short. We do not have much time to gladden the hearts of those who walk with us. So, be swift to love, and make haste to be kind.

Go forth with the love of God, the grace of our lord Jesus Christ, and the companionship of the Holy Spirit this day and forevermore. Amen.

Please note that we will NOT be gathering for worship next Sunday, March 29. We will follow recommendations and guidelines from the government and medical authorities to decide when to resume corporate worship.

Joys, Concerns, and Prayer Requests

If you wish to have a joy, concern, or prayer request lifted up in the service, or if you know of anyone who may need special prayers, a card or phone call, or some other form of pastoral care, please email prayer@fccleb.org, or contact the church office or the Rev. Steve Silver directly.

349

O for a Closer Walk With God

First Tune

William Cowper, 1731-1800

CAITHNESS C.M.
"Scottish Psalter," 1635



1 O for a clos - er walk with God, A calm and heav - en - ly frame,
2 Where is the bless - ed - ness I knew When first I saw the Lord?
3 Re - turn, O ho - ly Dove, re - turn, Sweet mes - sen - ger of rest!
4 The dear - est i - dol I have known, What - e'er that i - dol be,
5 So shall my walk be close with God, Calm and se - rene my frame;



A light to shine up - on the road That leads me to the Lamb!
Where is the soul - re - fresh - ing view Of Je - sus and his word?
I hate the sins that made thee mourn And drove thee from my breast.
Help me to tear it from thy throne, And wor - ship on - ly thee.
So pur - er light shall mark the road That leads me to the Lamb. A - men.



O Worship the King, All Glorious Above

6

Based on Psalm 104

Robert Grant, 1779-1838, alt.

LYONS 10.10.11.11.

Arr. from J. Michael Haydn ?, 1737-1806

1 O wor - ship the King, all glo - rious a - bove,
 2 O tell of his might, O sing of his grace,
 3 The earth with its store of won - ders un - told,
 4 Thy boun - ti - ful care, what tongue can re - cite?
 5 Frail chil - dren of dust, and fee - ble as frail,

O grate - ful - ly sing his power and his love;
 Whose robe is the light, whose can - o - py space;
 Al - might - y, thy power hath found - ed of old,
 It breathes in the air, it shines in the light;
 In thee do we trust, nor find thee to fail;

Our Shield and De - fend - er, the An - cient of Days,
 His char - iots of wrath the deep thun - der - clouds form,
 Hath stab - lished it fast by a change - less de - cree,
 It streams from the hills, it de - scends to the plain,
 Thy mer - cies how ten - der, how firm to the end,

Pa - vil - ioned in splen - dor, and gird - ed with praise.
 And dark is his path on the wings of the storm.
 And round it hath cast, like a man - tle, the sea.
 And sweet - ly dis - tills in the dew and the rain.
 Our Ma - ker, De - fend - er, Re - deem - er, and Friend! A - men.

Alternative tune, HANOVER, No. 206

ADORATION AND PRAISE

I Sing the Mighty Power of God

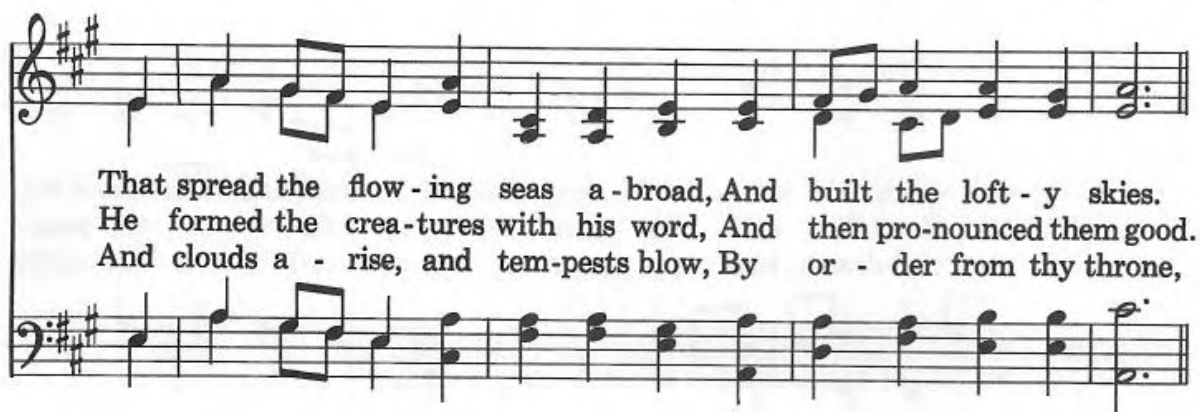
68

Isaac Watts, 1674-1748, *all.*

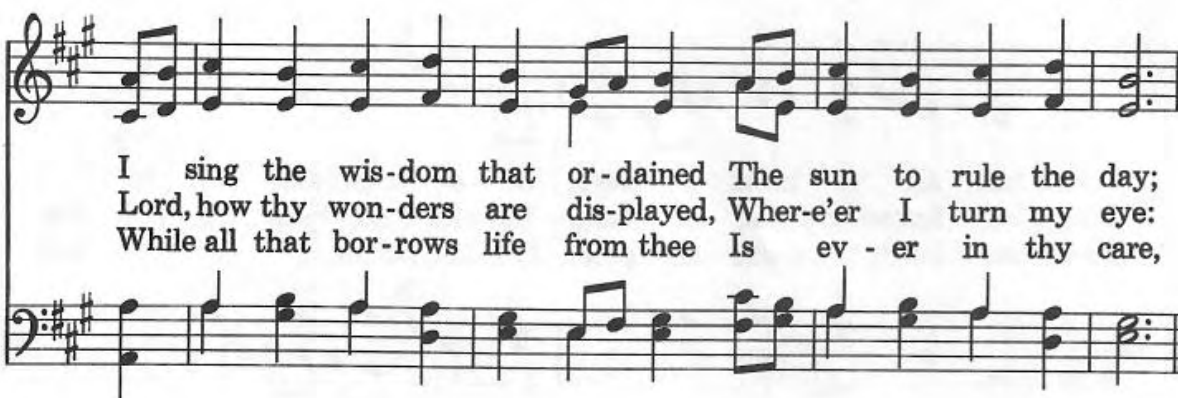
ELLACOMBE C.M.D.
"Gesangbuch," Wirttemberg, 1784



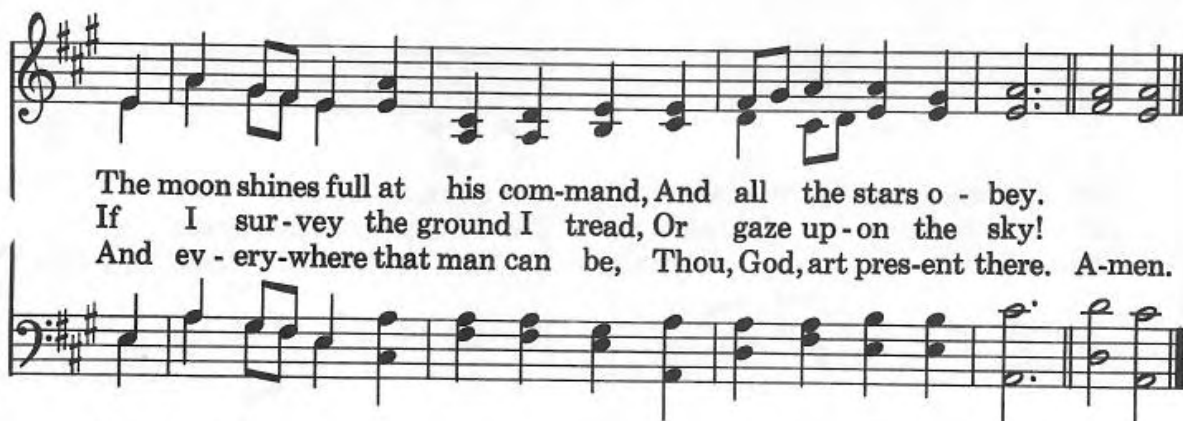
1 I sing the might-y power of God, That made the moun-tains rise,
2 I sing the good-ness of the Lord, That filled the earth with food;
3 There's not a plant or flower be - low, But makes thy glo - ries known;



That spread the flow - ing seas a - broad, And built the loft - y skies.
He formed the crea-tures with his word, And then pro-nounced them good.
And clouds a - rise, and tem-pests blow, By or - der from thy throne,



I sing the wis-dom that or-dained The sun to rule the day;
Lord, how thy won-ders are dis-played, Wher-e'er I turn my eye:
While all that bor-rows life from thee Is ev - er in thy care,



The moon shines full at his com-mand, And all the stars o - bey.
If I sur-vey the ground I tread, Or gaze up-on the sky!
And ev - ery-where that man can be, Thou, God, art pres-ent there. A-men.

A higher setting may be found at No. 459

WORKS IN CREATION

*Ancient Irish**Tr. by Mary E. Byrne, 1880-1931**Versified by Eleanor H. Hull, 1860-1935*

SLANE 10.10.9.10.

*Traditional Irish Melody**Harm. by David Evans, 1874-1948**In unison*

1 Be thou my vi - sion, O Lord of my heart;
 2 Be thou my wis - dom, and thou my true word;
 3 Rich - es I heed not, nor man's emp - ty praise,
 4 High King of heav - en, my vic - to - ry won,

Nought be all else to me save that thou art.
 I ev - er with thee and thou with me, Lord;
 Thou mine in - her - it - ance, now and al - ways;
 May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heav - en's Sun!

Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
 Thou my great Fa - ther, I thy true son;
 Thou and thou on - ly, first in my heart,
 Heart of my own heart, what - ev - er be - fall,

Wak - ing or sleep - ing, thy pres - ence my light.
 Thou in me dwell - ing, and I with thee one.
 High King of heav - en, my treas - ure thou art.
 Still be my vi - sion, O Rul - er of all. A - men.

CONSECRATION

HOLY WEEK AT FCC

All scheduled events are tentative, pending appropriate public-health recommendations.

Sunday, April 5—Palm Sunday

10 am: Liturgy of the Palms, Children's Procession (*Sanctuary*)

April 9—Maundy Thursday

7 pm: Service of Tenebrae, Stripping of the Altar (*Sanctuary*)

April 10—Good Friday

12-3 pm: Quiet Meditation on the Seven Last Words (*Sanctuary*)

7 pm: Service of the Word and Prayer (*Sanctuary*)

Sunday, April 12—EASTER SUNDAY

6 am: Ecumenical Sunrise Service (*Colburn Park*)

6:30 am: Community Breakfast (*Parish Hall; Beneficiary TBD*)

10 am: Festival Worship Service (*Sanctuary*), Easter Egg Hunt

Do Your Part to Fill the Cart!

Lebanon and surrounding communities have been struggling with rising poverty and food insecurity for some time, but these challenges have only increased as COVID-19 precautions have threatened job security and reduced income. Now more than ever, our shopping-cart collection of donations in the Parish Hall helps address this need.

During the month of March, we are still collecting non-perishable and personal-care items for the **UPPER VALLEY HAVEN**. Current needs include: hand sanitizer, toilet paper, paper towels, toothbrushes/paste, hand soap, diapers, feminine hygiene products, electric blankets, sweatpants, grocery bags, cereal, peanut butter, tuna, pasta, canned vegetables/fruit, canned soups/sauces, red kidney beans. Donations may be brought to the church during the week.

Thanks to all for fighting local poverty and food insecurity.

One Great Hour of Sharing: "Invest in Futures"—Special UCC Mission Offering

This nationwide UCC offering funds mission initiatives around the world. It supports healthcare, education, agriculture, refugee assistance, and emergency relief in over 130 countries. OGHS funds are leveraged with local, national, and global partners to maximize their impact.

Please consider a contribution as you are able, and thanks!

(Payable to FCC, with "OGHS" in the memo line.)



First Congregational Church of Lebanon

PO Box 230
10 South Park St
Lebanon NH 03766

Weekly Worship Resources Enclosed!

DATED MATERIAL—Please Deliver Promptly

Do you use email? Contact church@fccleb.org to receive this and other communication by email.

Welcome!

We are a Christ-centered community that celebrates the love of God. Although we are of varied minds, with varying measures of belief and unbelief, we are one body, bound together in Christ. We recognize the uniqueness of every individual as God's beloved child. We seek to respond faithfully to God's call for justice for all creation. We strive in word and deed to be faithful to Jesus' model of loving acceptance. We seek to create a sanctuary where all will know they are welcome and included.

No matter your age, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, race or ethnicity, physical or mental ability, or economic circumstance, you are invited into the full life and ministry of First Congregational Church of Lebanon, including its worship, sacraments, and rites.

Join us as we grow together in God's love.

First Congregational Church of Lebanon

The Rev. Stephen R. Silver, Pastor

Susan Sorensen, Interim Organist and Choir Director • Nancy Parsons, Church School Superintendent

Barbara Teeter, Chair of Deacons • Linda Jacobs, Chair of Church Council • Barbara Jones, Moderator

Brian Clancy, Church Administrator

Church Office Hours: Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, 9:00-12:00 (or by appointment as needed)

603-448-4281 • church@fccleb.org • prayer@fccleb.org • music@fccleb.org • www.fccleb.org