



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH “Center Church”



United Church of Christ - ONA
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We, the congregation of the First Congregational Church of South Hadley, MA, UCC, also known as Center Church, declare ourselves to be Open and Affirming. Our congregation is welcoming to all, embracing those of differing sexual orientation, transgender/gender identity and expression, marital status, age, mental and physical health and ability, racial and cultural background/identity, and educational/socioeconomic status. We are open to all to share in Christ's bountiful love through life, leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities, blessings, and joys. In the spirit of Paul in Galatians, we celebrate the diversity in which God has created us!



**** The two center sections of the sanctuary are equipped with a hearing loop.
Turn on the T-coil in your hearing aid and sit in one of these sections
for better hearing**

April 6, 2025

Sometimes it's worth getting lost to see who will come looking for us.

Robert Breault

PRELUDE

Two settings of *Finlandia*
When I Survey the Rugged Cross

J.W. Kerr, R.J. Powell
T. Smith & D. Hustad

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PASSING OF THE PEACE

CHORAL INTROIT

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: The path of life is rarely clear or straight-forward. We find ourselves lost in a Dark Wood,

People: **Unclear which direction to go, perhaps having strayed from the path we thought we were on.**

Leader: It is at these times that the gift of getting lost is that we begin to pay more attention than we usually do.

People: **Perhaps we are looking for blatant signs when the subtle nudges of Spirit are already right there.**

All: **Our Lent journey invites us to get quiet and open wide our senses.**

***HYMN**

Be Still, My Soul

black #488

At the conclusion of the hymn, the children will leave to go to "The Promised Land " as the congregation sings the first verse of On River Jordan's Banks I Stand.

*On River Jordan's banks I stand, and cast a wishful eye,
Upon the fair and happy land where my possessions lie;
I am bound for the promised land, I am bound for the promised land,
Oh, who will come and go with me? I am bound for the promised land.*

JOYS AND CONCERNS OF THE PEOPLE

MORNING PRAYERS

Prayer of Confession (unison)

Leader: For plunging ahead without listening to You,

People: **Forgive and restore us, O God.**

Leader: For not recognizing Your still small voice within us,

People: Forgive and restore us, O God.

Leader: For forgetting to ask for assurance—your greatest gift,

People: Forgive and restore us, O God.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Lost is not lost to God. You are not lost to God. God is with you,
forgiving and restoring you to wholeheartedness

Pastoral Prayer

Silence

Lord's Prayer (debts)

Our Creator/Father/Mother, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your Kingdom come; your 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 yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen

Congregational Response



Lift high the cross, the love of Christ pro- claim: Let



all a- dore_____ and praise___ that sa - cred name.

READING FROM THE SCRIPTURES

Matthew 15: 1-7

page 908

SERMON

THE GIFT OF GETTING LOST

***HYMN**

As Pants the Hart for Cooling Streams

page 481

OFFERING

Invitation

Offertory

Gracious Spirit, Dwell with Me

K. Lee Scott

***Doxology**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,

Praise Christ the Word in flesh born low,

Praise Holy Spirit evermore,

One God triune whom we adore. Amen

Prayer of Dedication

***HYMN**

Be Known to Us in Breaking Bread

black # 342

COMMUNION

Invitation

Communion Prayer

Words of Institution

Distribution of the Bread and Cup

*It is our tradition to hold each of the elements until all are served
so that we may partake together.*

[Rice cake pieces are offered for those with allergies to gluten.]

Prayer of Thanksgiving (unison)

**Bread of Life, Cup of Hope, you restore us to wholeness
when we turn to you and confess what separates us from
you. We are grateful for how, over and over, you bless us with
new beginnings, especially this Easter Day. Now may we be
courageous in sharing Jesus' peace, truth and light. Amen**

***HYMN**

Guide My Feet

black # 497

BENEDICTION

BENEDICTION RESPONSE

Threefold Amen

POSTLUDE

Martyrdom

H. Willan

We invite you to remain quietly and celebrate the conclusion of worship in the postlude.

**Please stand if you are comfortable.*



*We hope that you find your worship experience meaningful.
If you are new to the community, we invite you to make this your church home.*

*Please stay after worship for refreshments and fellowship
downstairs in the Fellowship Hall.*

In our Service Today

Preacher:	Rev. Lori J. Souder
Scripture Reader:	David Morrell
Organist/Pianist:	Larry D. Schipull
Organist (final prelude)	Cynthia J. Morrell
Choir Director	Mallory Coakley
Deacon:	Martha Guild

Today we continue our journey in this season of Lent. Our Lenten worship series, “Gifts of the Dark Wood”, is about “seeing life through new eyes.” When we allow ourselves to accept the journey within the Dark Woods, the Holy Spirit Guide tends to nudge us, awaken us, to a fuller life. But life is messy. Life is uncertain. Rather than a problem to be solved, what if we saw uncertainty, failure, emptiness, and getting lost as gifts? What if we saw how these uncomfortable times can actually help us let go of all we cannot know so that we can live more wholeheartedly?



If you are visiting with us today, **WELCOME**. At the close of the service, please take a small welcome gift found in the baskets located at the sanctuary narthex and crossway doors. It is our token of saying “thank you for sharing worship with us, we truly feel blessed and we hope to see you again soon.”

This Week at Center Church

Wednesday	Breakfast and Conversation 8am	Trustees 7pm
Thursday	AA 1:30pm	Dance 6pm
Friday	Church Office CLOSED	NA 7:30pm
Sunday	Worship 10am	Palm Sunday
	Deacon Meeting 11:15	

PLEASE KEEP THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE IN YOUR PRAYERS

Continual:

Joan Duffy
 Martha Guild’s mother, June
 Eileen Halkyard
 Tom Hazen
 Eunice Howes
 Fay Paquette
 Art Stanley
 Nikki Wolf, Linda’s granddaughter
 Those struggling with addiction



Situational:

Barbara Blank, recovering
 Leila Mulder, attending boarding school
 Joanne Santos grandfather, Edwardo, with cancer
 Vicki Scherer's grandfather
 Kendall Johnson-Smith, Preston Smith’s daughter, with cancer

If you have submitted one of these requests for prayer, please let us know when it is time to remove someone’s name from the list.

Center Church Announcements

Please sign up to read Scripture during Sunday worship. There is a sign-up sheet on the table in the Bock Crossway. Also, please consider being a greeter as folks come into the Sanctuary – signup sheet also in Crossway.



One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ and other denominations, which help in disaster, refugee/immigration, and development ministries throughout the world. “You’re here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world.” Matthew 5:14 (MSG). Center Church’s annual OGHS offering was collected on March 30, 2025, but donations will be accepted through Easter Sunday.



This morning, we will have a special collection for the Peterson Memorial Scholarship Fund. This fund was established by the Peterson family after the death of Rev. Gus Peterson, who served in the capacity of the voluntary Minister of Missions from 1990-2006. Contributions to this fund may also be sent to the church office. Applications for one of these scholarships are available in the church office. Deadline for submission of the application is May 9th.



Coffee with a Cop Chief of Police, Jennifer Gunderson, will join us TODAY following worship, in Meeting House Room for questions and conversation. Grab a cup of Coffee in Fellowship Hall and head to the Meetinghouse Room.



Breakfast and Conversation

– Wednesday April 9th 8 – 9am in Fellowship Hall

All Views are encouraged -

We will discuss an article that a classmate of mine, Chris Hedges wrote recently. We graduated from Harvard Divinity School with the same degree; however, his path led him into journalism and covering wars. The article is about Surrendering to Authoritarianism. Lori sent out copies to those who often attend but if you would like to pick up the article, you will find it on the table at the Church Street entrance. Lori has included some thought-provoking questions that may lead to discussion.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, Imam Mirza Yawar Baig is unable to preach on April 27th as previously planned.



Spring has arrived and our **English Spring Tea, Saturday, May 3rd, 11:30 – 2:30**, is on the horizon! “Take time for Tea” is our theme this year and we hope you have marked your calendars and plan to attend. Call the church office, 413-532-2262 for reservations and tickets. This project supports the church, our fellowship, and Allianza, a local support organization providing rescues for Mothers and Children in abusive situations. Spread the word and invite a guest or two and reserve your table!



Silver Lake Church Summer Camp transforms lives. It is our UCC camp located in the Northwest corner of CT.

Registration is open for one-week overnight camp sessions for youth and families.

Information and registration can be found at <https://www.silverlakeect.org/>

Silver Lake Camp Scholarships are available for Center Church member youth, for up to \$300 per applicant. Speak with Brian Lapis, Julie Burke or Rev. Lori, to learn more. Consider sending your child/youth to a fun week of camp!



Showcase South Hadley returns over the weekend of April 26 & 27 with two days of arts, cultural and family activities all over town. In particular, much of the activity on Saturday, April

26th will take place at Center Church with 3 music performances in the sanctuary, and an Artisan and Craft Fair in Fellowship Hall.

More information and details are still to come. In the meantime, you can learn more on the Showcase website at southhadleyarts.org. If you have other questions, or would like to volunteer over the weekend, please contact Center Church member - and Showcase "chair" - John Anz at anzfam4@gmail.com.

The Activities Team always has an eye on the future and we know it takes planning and preparing for our annual Tag Sale. We can't believe the items flowing into Fellowship Hall already but we have a request. There are three big events planned for Fellowship Hall coming up, a memorial service and a craft fair for the South Hadley Arts Council in April, and the English Spring Tea May 3. If you can **hold off on bringing items for the Tag Sale until after May 3**, we would appreciate your patience. Contact an Activities Team member if you have any questions.

We are actively looking for team members to join our efforts at the English Spring Tea and the Tag Sale in September. Many hands make the work easier, and we'd love to share the fellowship.

Keep in mind the following items do not sell at our Tag Sale event (large Furniture (couch, bed frames), Electronics, most sporting good items, records, reference books) and we can make suggestions for alternative ways to share. We plan a Treasures Room for special items, again, and we have seen a huge increase in support by college students in September, looking for dorm room items.



Palm Sunday April 13

**Worship 10am in Sanctuary -
Fellowship Hour to follow**

Maundy Thursday April 17

Service at Center Church 6pm

Good Friday April 18

Sanctuary open Noon - 1pm for silent time

Easter Sunday April 20

Easter Service 10am

EASTER FLOWERS



Once again, we will celebrate the Easter season by decorating our sanctuary with Easter Lilies, Tulips and Daffodils. If you would like to participate, **the deadline for placing your order is April 10.** Plants will be \$12 each.

Please make your check payable to
"First Congregational Church"
and note **"Easter flower"** in the memo.

Please leave your completed form and your check at the church office or place in the Offering plate before the deadline.

Number of plants you wish to order: Lilies _____ Tulips _____ Daffodils _____

Total payment enclosed _____

In loving memory of or In honor of (circle one)

(name(s))

(name(s))



Please check one of the following choices:

I will pick up after church on Easter Sunday

I would like my plant delivered to a shut-in

Given by _____



THE MINISTRY AT CENTER CHURCH

Ministers: All Church Members

Senior Minister: Rev. Lori J. Souder

Christian Education Program

Children: Kate Hoffman, Director Julie Burke, Emily Mulder

Youth Coordinator: Kenneth Mulder

Nursery Caregiver: Annabelle Burke

Music

Organist: Larry Schipull

Choir Director: Mallory Coakley

Associate in Music: Cynthia Morrell

Office Administrator: Cynthia Jubinville

Sexton: Robert Farman

Be Still, My Soul

Katharina von Schlegel, 1752
 Transl. Jane Laurie Borthwick, 1855; alt.

1 Be still, my soul: for God is on your side; bear pa-tient-
 2 Be still, my soul: for God will un-der-take to guide in
 3 Be still, my soul: the hour will soon be here when we shall

ly the cross of grief or pain; Leave to your God to
 fu-ture days as in the past. Your hope, your con-fi-
 be with God whom we a-dore, with dis-ap-point-ment

or-der and pro-vide; in ev-ery change God
 dence let noth-ing shake; all now mys-te-rious
 gone, no grief nor fear, sor-row re-placed with

faith-ful will re-main. Be still, my soul: your best e-ter-nal
 shall be clear at last. Be still, my soul: the waves and winds still
 joy for-ev-er-more. Be still, my soul: when change and tears are

friend through thorn-y ways leads to a joy-ful end.
 know how Je-sus' pow-er ruled them long a-go.
 past, all safe and bless-ed we shall meet at last.

As Pants the Hart for Cooling Streams

481

A New Version of the Psalms of David,
ed. Nahum Tate and Nicholas Brady, 1696; alt.

Ps. 42

1 As pants the hart for cool - ing streams when
2 Why rest - less, why cast down, my soul? Trust
3 God of my strength, how long shall I, like
4 Why rest - less, why cast down, my soul? Hope

heat - ed in the chase, So longs my soul, O
God, who will em - ploy All grace for you, and
one for - got - ten, mourn, For - lorn, for - sak - en,
still, and you shall sing The praise of One who

God, for you, and your re - fresh - ing grace.
change your sighs to thank - ful hymns of joy.
and ex - posed to my op - pres - sor's scorn?
is your God, your health's e - ter - nal spring.

Both Nahum Tate and Nicholas Brady were Irish. Brady, a priest, held various posts, including that of royal chaplain. Tate made his living writing for the state. This is one of the most enduring paraphrases from their A New Version of the Psalms of David. (A "hart" is a deer.)

Tune: MARTYRDOM C.M.
(AVON)
Hugh Wilson, 1825

Be Known to Us in Breaking Bread

342

James Montgomery, 1825; alt.

Luke 24:30-31, 35

1 Be known to us in break-ing bread, but do not then de - part;
2 Here share with us in love di - vine, your bod - y and your blood;

The first system of music consists of a treble and bass staff in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The treble staff contains the melody for the first two stanzas, and the bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment. The first stanza ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

O Sav - ior, stay with us and spread your ta - ble in our heart.
That liv - ing bread, that heav-en-ly wine, be our im - mor - tal food.

The second system of music continues the melody and accompaniment for the third stanza. It also concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

This hymn is sometimes found as the second and third stanzas of an American hymn, "Shepherd of Souls, Refresh and Bless." Montgomery—Moravian poet, journalist, humanitarian, and author of more than 400 hymns—titled this hymn "The Family Table."

Tune: ST. FLAVIAN C.M.
Day, The Whole Booke of Psalms, 1562

Guide My Feet

497

*African-American traditional; alt.**Heb. 12:1-15*

1 Guide my feet while I run this race, guide my feet
 2 Hold my hand while I run this race, hold my hand
 3 I'm your child while I run this race, I'm your child
 4 Stand by me while I run this race, stand by me

Yes, my God.

while I run this race, guide my feet while I run this race,
 while I run this race, hold my hand while I run this race,
 while I run this race, I'm your child while I run this race,
 while I run this race, stand by me while I run this race,

Yes, my God.

For I don't want to run this race in vain.

This stanza may be added following stanza 1:
 Wheel with me while I run this race . . .

The words and music of some African-American spirituals have been widely adapted during the twentieth century, especially in the civil rights movement of the 1960s. The alternate words were suggested by a fifth-grade church school class to include those who must "run this race" in a wheelchair.

Tune: GUIDE MY FEET 8.8.8.10.
African-American traditional
 Arr. Joyce Finch Johnson, 1992