

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
“Center Church”

United Church of Christ - ONA
One Church Street

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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!

April 12, 2026

PRELUDE

Settings of *St. Christopher & Victory*

W. Held

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PASSING OF THE PEACE

INTROIT

CALL TO WORSHIP (inspired by Psalm 16)

One: Let us say to the Holy One: You are our God,
we have no good apart from you!

**Many: Holy One, you are our God,
we have no good apart from you!**

One: The Holy One is our chosen portion and our cup;
God holds our lot.

**Many: Holy One, you are our God,
we have no good apart from you!**

One: The Holy One provides us protection and refuge,
keeps us in pleasant places, and gives a good heritage.

**Many: Holy One, you are our God,
we have no good apart from you!**

***HYMN**

The Strife Is O'er

black #242

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

Unison Prayer of Confession

Gracious and Eternal God, you never abandon us the way that we sometimes abandon you. We doubt your power and your compassion. We call upon your name, but too often without expectation that you will answer. We blame you for the things we have collectively caused or that life demands. Yet, we give apology devoid of real repentance. We want to be absolved without engaging in repair. Help us to cherish grace as a gift and mercy as a miracle. Have mercy on us, Holy One. Amen.

Words of Grace

Beloved, the Redeemer of our souls meets us in our doubts, uncertainty, and questions. When we call, God responds. When we do not call, God remains present with us. Receive the grace of God to trust the Holy One with our struggles, pain, and brokenness. Have life in the name of the One who came to us, comes to us, and will come to us again and again.

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



READING FROM THE SCRIPTURES

1 Corinthians 15:19-26

But the truth is that Christ *has* been raised up, the first in a long legacy of those who are going to leave the cemeteries. There is a nice symmetry in this: Death initially came by a man, and resurrection from death came by a man. Everybody dies in Adam; everybody comes alive in Christ. But we have to wait

our turn: Christ is first, then those with him at his Coming, the grand consummation when, after crushing the opposition, he hands over his kingdom to God the Father. He won't let up until the last enemy is down—and the very last enemy is death! (The *MESSAGE*)

SERMON

The Brink of Eternity

***HYMN**

Before Your Cross, O Jesus

black # 191

OFFERING

Invitation to Generosity

Through Christ, we receive “an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading.” (1 Peter 1:4) Let us express our gratitude to God by sharing the gifts we receive. Let us bring our material offerings for tangible ministry to spread good news in our community and world.

Offertory

I Come to the Garden Alone

***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**

O God, as with a Potter's Hand

black #550

***BENEDICTION**

Beloved, as you go know that you have been sent
By a Creator who endowed you with every gift you need
By a Loving God who stays with you on the journey
By a Sovereign God who protects and provides
By a Purposeful God who has a role for you in the kingdom
By a Merciful and Gracious God who understands
and anticipates your mistakes
By a Mighty God who offers refuge and hope in the raging storms
By a Kind God who blesses us with community
By a Challenging God who holds us accountable
By a Risen God who laid the path that you might follow
In love and hope, empowered and equipped, for honor and glory. Amen.

***BENEDICTION RESPONSE** *Threefold Amen*

POSTLUDE

Victory

M. Helman

We invite you to remain quietly and celebrate the conclusion of worship in the postlude. *The Deacons are asking you to refrain from clapping. If moved by the postlude or worship, please shout out "AMEN!" We are implementing this to move away from worship being a performance, to sharing a sentiment of having been filled by worship/music.*

(Prayers in today's service were written by the Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology for the United Church of Christ.)

**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. Randall Hyvonen
Scripture Reader:	Julie Burke
Organist:	Larry Schipull
Choir Director:	Ben Coakley
Deacon:	Martha Guild
Greeter:	Julie Burke



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."



PLEASE KEEP THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE IN YOUR PRAYERS

Continual:

Barbara Blank, on Hospice at Reeds Landing
Martha Guild's mother, June
Eileen Halkyard
Elisa's young friend Elija, addiction recovery
Eunice Howes
Leila Mulder, attending boarding school
Mary Nelsons father, Dave, with cancer
Fay Paquette, at Reeds Landing
Nikki Wolf, Linda's granddaughter
Those struggling with addiction,
with cancer, and with chronic disease



Situational:

Cynthia Baker
Dennis Banks, friend of Karen and
Estelle Anderson, with cancer
Dianne Clinton's friend Sally, on the passing
Of Sally's son at age 56
Robin Glossner, undergoing chemo
John Hoffman's parents, Jean and John
Elisa Morrison's step-mother Sandy, and
brother Carl, with heart issues

**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**

The Gospel of Mary Magdalene



April 16 and April 23 in the Conference Room at Loomis Village.
All are welcome. Copies will be available on the table at the Church
Street entrance. Those living at Loomis will receive a copy in their
mailbox. The Gospel of Mary Magdalene never made it into the Bible, but is a
respected source.

THE MINISTRY AT CENTER CHURCH

Ministers: All Church Members
Senior Minister: Rev. Lori J. Souder

Christian Education Program

Children: Vicki Scherer, Coordinator, Emily Mulder & Julia Nogales, Teachers
Youth Coordinator: Kenneth Mulder
Nursery Caregiver: Annabelle Burke

Music

Organist: Larry Schipull
Choir Director: Ben Coakley
Associate in Music: Cynthia Morrell
Office Administrator: Cynthia Jubinville
Sexton: Robert Farman

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 the Crossway.



On April 19th we will have a special collection for the Peterson Memorial Scholarship Fund. This fund was established by Rev. Gus Peterson, who served in the capacity of the volunteer Minister of Missions at Center Church from 1990-2006. The fund's statement of purpose says "The fund exists to assist people who wish to pursue their education to help them reach their fullest potential, but whose financial situation makes it difficult for them to do so." The Peterson Scholarship team selects recipients and distributes the scholarships. 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 5th.



Humor Sunday April 19 we will be celebrating Humor Sunday, when "God had the last laugh at the Devil." Sure, we do not believe in the Devil, but evil exists and we need ways to respond...through laughter. Join us.



Let's Find Out: We know there are friends of Center Church who attend quite frequently. Do you wish to know more about the church? Do you wish to join or be reinstated? What times work best for a meeting? - during the early evenings or after church? Please let Lori know.



Are you a South Hadley resident interested in our town's history? The South Hadley Historical Commission is about to start work to create the first Town of South Hadley Historical Preservation Plan. We will be working with the Massachusetts Historical Commission. We have six commission members, but we need one more! You can apply at <https://www.southhadley.org/692/Board-Vacancies>. For more information, or if you have a question, please contact Bob Judge at RobertJudge@gmail.com.



Spring has arrived and our **English Spring Tea, Saturday, May 9th, Noon - 3pm**, is on the horizon! This is a CHANGED DATE and TIME. "Take time for Tea" is our theme, again 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 (\$20 adults, \$10

children). There will be spring flowers and small gifts available to purchase. 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!

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



This Week at Center Church

Monday	Outreach Team 7pm
Wednesday	Trustees 7pm
Thursday	Bible Study at Loomis 11am AA 1:30pm
Sunday	Worship 10am Humor Sunday Peterson Scholarship Fund Offering Deacon's Meeting following Service

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Registration for United Church of Christ summer camp at Silver Lake Camp and Retreat Center is open. Silver Lake offers one-week overnight camp sessions from June 21 – July 25 for campers entering 4th through 12th grade. Experience inclusive and nurturing Christian community, opportunities to grow and participate as Christ’s disciples, and a model of sustainable environmental stewardship of God’s world. Center Church has a limited number of \$275 Silver Lake summer camp scholarships for Center Church families. Summer camp information at silverlakeect.org Contact the Center Church office for scholarship information.



Summer Camp 2026 registration is OPEN NOW

[View all the sessions and register today!](#)



Summer Camp 2026

Week #

Grades 4-6

Grades 7-9

Grades 10-12

Tiered Pricing: \$940 | \$850 | \$760 *Financial Assistance is available.*

1 JUNE 21-27 	PRaise & Play All Day Deans: Stacy Stevens, Debi Mastroni-Kenyon BRING ON THE MONSTERS Deans: Brittany Romaniello, Rebekah Lyon ARTS ALIVE Deans: Emily McKenna, Tiffany Nakanishi BABY CAMP Ages 0-3 & Adult Wednesday-Saturday Deans: Chelsea Kordiak, Mike Kordiak, Anne Hughes
2 JUNE 28- JULY 4 	FAMILY CAMP 1 All Ages Sunday-Wednesday Deans: Sarah Rodriguez, Chris Miller CIRCLE OF FRIENDS Deans: Camryn Cicarelli, Aran Gillette TBA Program Details to be Announced Soon! ADVENTURE CAMP! Dean: Andrew Wicks
3 JULY 5-11 	FAMILY CAMP 2 All Ages Sunday-Wednesday Deans: Evelyn Cass Adams, Kelsey DeCarlo WATER WORLD Deans: Betty Geiling, Josh Geiling, Maureen Montrose SING PRAISE Deans: Valerie Tutson, Leanna Bonafini, Whendi Cook Broderick
4 JULY 12-18	MUGGLES & WIZARDS Dean: Jennifer Long FUN IN THE SON Deans: Brian Lapis, Cameron Hull, Caitlin Mundy
5 JULY 19-25 	GOD SONG Deans: Victoria Bower, Brianna Gambacini ALL ABOARD! Deans: Brittany Anderson, Kaleb Oakleaf SUMMERTIME S.T.E.A.M. Deans: Vin Urbanowski, Donna Kaiser



Southern New England Conference
United Church of Christ
Along the Coast & South of us.



ACCREDITED

www.SilverLakeCT.org

[Silver Lake Camp & Retreat Center](#)

A Ministry of the [Southern New England Conference UCC](#)

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Dear Friend:

I'm reaching out because our loved ones in Hawaii are experiencing two significant Kona storms, causing relentless flooding throughout the Hawaiian Islands. Three of our local congregations, Waialua UCC, Liliuokalani, and Topside Molokai, are directly impacted by the flooding, which is also causing destruction to schools, homes, roads, and airports. UCC churches in other impacted communities are operating as emergency shelters to help as many people as possible.

The UCC Global HOPE team is actively working with our siblings at the Hawaii Conference to link them with immediate response resources to try to lessen the impact of this unimaginable loss for our congregations.

The UCC is accepting donations for this emergency. Your kindhearted generosity continues to remind our local congregations that they are not facing these widespread disasters on their own, that we are here praying and sending support to facilitate the long-term recovery of their neighborhoods and churches. If you wish to help, you may mail a check **directly to the UCC fund** (*Center Church will not be taking a separate collection*) payable to the **United Church of Christ**, PO Box 71957, Cleveland, OH 44194. Please be sure to note "Hawaii Flooding 2026" in the memo section of your check.

Thank you for your prayers and support. We are constantly amazed at the innumerable ways you step up to help! Please [click here](#) to learn more about how you can make a difference.

With gratitude,
Michelle A. Carver, MBA
Director of Philanthropy

The Strife Is O'er

1 Cor. 15:53-57

Latin, c. 1695

Transl. Francis Pott, 1861; alt.

Refrain (before st. 1 and after st. 4)

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

1 The strife is o'er, the bat - tle done, the vic - to -
 2 The powers of death have done their worst, but Christ their
 3 The three sad days are quick - ly sped, Christ ris - es
 4 Christ, by your wounds on Cal - va - ry from death's dread

ry of life is won; The song of tri - umph
 le - gions has dis - persed: Let shouts of ho - ly
 glo - rious from the dead: All glo - ry to our
 sting your ser - vants free, That we may live e -

has be - gun. Al - le - lu - ia!
 joy out - burst. Al - le - lu - ia!
 ris - en Head! Al - le - lu - ia!
 ter - nal - ly. Al - le - lu - ia! to Refrain

A seventeenth-century Jesuit collection published in Cologne, Germany, is the earliest known source of this Latin hymn. The hymn is firmly associated with this musical setting from a Manuscript by the Italian composer Palestrina

Tune: VICTORY 8.8.8. with alleluias
 Giovanni Perluigi da Palestrina, 1591
 Arr. William H. Monk, 1861

LENT

191

Before Your Cross, O Jesus

Ferdinand Q. Blanchard, 1929; alt.

Mark 8:34; Gal. 6:14; Phil. 1:27; 3:7-10

1 Be-fore your cross, O Je-sus,
our lives are judged to-day;
the mean-ing of our ea-ger strife
is test-ed by your way.
A-cross our rest-less liv--ing
the light streams from your cross,
and by its clear, re-veal-ing beams
we mea-sure gain and loss.

2 The hopes that lead us on-ward,
the fears that hold us back,
our will to dare great things for God,
the cour-age that we lack,
The faith we keep in good--ness,
our love, as low or pure,
on all, the judg-ment of the cross
falls stead-y, clear, and sure.

3 Yet hum-bly, in our striv-ing,
we rise to face its test.
We crave the power to do your will
as once you did it best.
On us let now the heal--ing
of your great Spir-it fall,
and make us brave and full of joy
to an-swer to your call.

Ferdinand Q. Blanchard, moderator of the General Council of Congregational Churches (1942-1944), was active in missions and was a leading advocate of educational opportunity for African-Americans. This hymn was written for Euclid Avenue Congregational Church in Cleveland, Ohio, which he served for forty years.

Tune: ST. CHRISTOPHER 7.6.8.6.8.6.8.6.
Frederick C. Maker, 1881

O God, as with a Potter's Hand

Gen. 2:4b-8; 1 Cor. 15:21-22; 2 Cor. 4:7-12

Herman G. Stuempfle, Jr., 1991; rev. 1994

1 O God, as with a pot - ter's hand, when earth was morn - ing
 2 Can clay de - fy the pot - ter's touch, a - lone its form de -
 3 But once you shaped from hu - man clay a life whose truth and
 4 O God, you hold our earth - en lives with - in your shap - ing

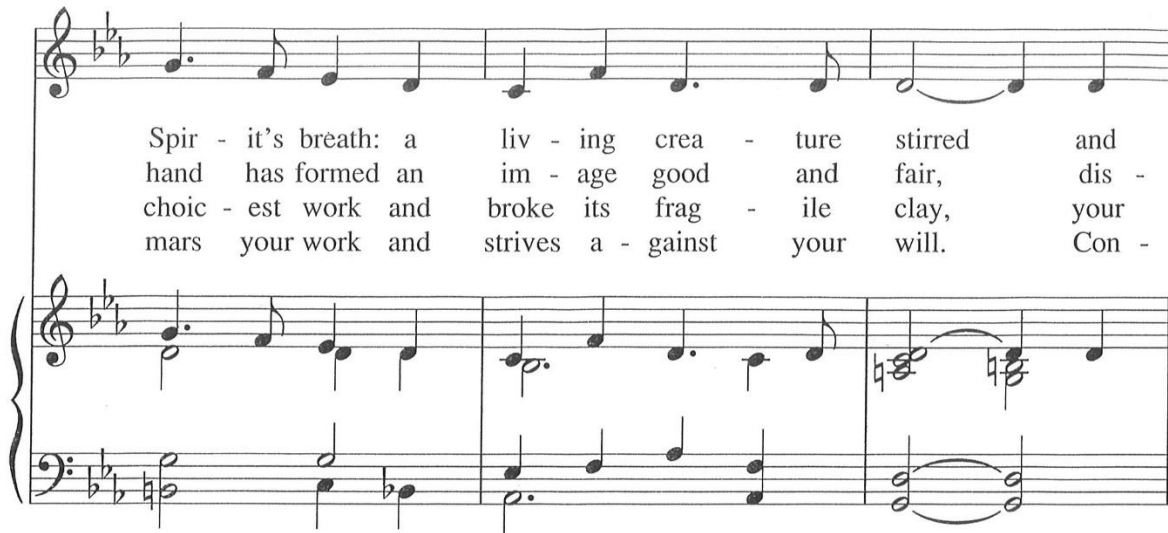
bright, you shaped from clay a hu - man form that
 fine, or spoil with wild, re - bel - lious will the
 grace re - vealed an im - age pure and whole that
 hand and turn our form - ing clay to show the

gave your eye de - light; You breathed in love your
 art - ist's true de - sign? Yet we, in whom your
 sin could not de - face. And when we seized your
 im - age you have planned. For - give the sin that

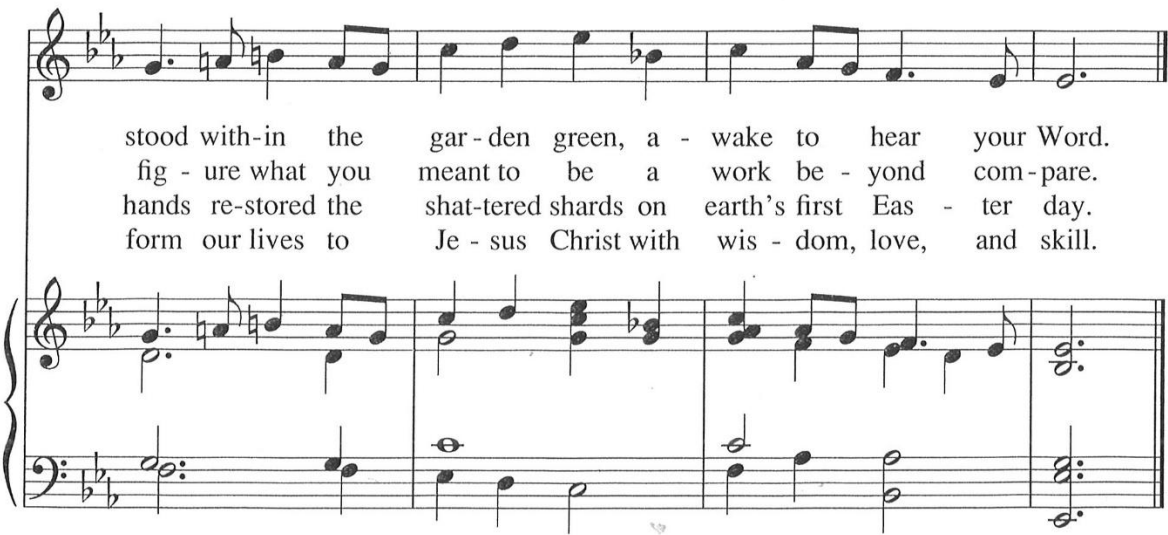
Composer Sally Ann Morris has frequently collaborated with hymnwriter Herman Stuempfle, Jr., who dedicated this text to his son, David, a potter. Morris named the tune Winston-Salem for her hometown in North Carolina.

Tune: WINSTON-SALEM C.M.D.
 Sally Ann Morris, 1993

HEALING AND FORGIVENESS



Spir - it's breath: a liv - ing crea - ture stirred and
hand has formed an im - age good and fair, dis -
choic - est work and broke its frag - ile clay, your
mars your work and strives a - gainst your will. Con -



stood with-in the gar - den green, a - wake to hear your Word.
fig - ure what you meant to be a work be - yond com - pare.
hands re-stored the shat-tered shards on earth's first Eas - ter day.
form our lives to Je - sus Christ with wis - dom, love, and skill.