



**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!

April 19, 2026
Humor Sunday

How many angels can fit in a Honda? All of them: for it is written: "All of my angels shall sing my praises in one ACCORD."

PRELUDE Two settings of *Lasst uns erfreuen*

R.G. te Velde, D. Bednall

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PASSING OF THE PEACE

INTROIT

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: This is the time to rejoice!

People: What better time than now!

Leader: This is the day to laugh, and as the cabbage Deacon likes to say...

Deacon:

Leader: How many choir directors does it take to change a light bulb?

Choir

Member:

Leader: How many Congregationalists does it take to change a light bulb?

People: Change?! Congregationalists don't believe in change!

Leader: What's the greatest joke ever?

People: The one God played on the devil by overcoming death, celebrating that God has the final laugh.

***HYMN**

Give To us Laughter

insert back page
from Voices United Hymnal

MESSAGE FOR ALL

At the conclusion of the message, 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

You know better than we do, God, what important people we believe we are. Believing we have to be serious all the time, we miss out on the joy of your creation. Forgive us, Heart of Joy, and make us open to the startling, and upside-down, ways in which you work. Fill us with Easter's laughter; fill us with your healing joy; fill us with the love poured into us through Jesus Christ.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Hear the good news! God is faithful and just, slow to anger, and quick to laugh. God's mercy, evident in the jokes, one liners, and stories, pours out for all people!

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

Jonah 1:1-10

1 Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah, son of Amittai, saying, ²“Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it, for their wickedness has come up before me.” ³But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid his fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.⁴ But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and such a mighty storm

came upon the sea that the ship threatened to break up. ⁵Then the sailors were afraid, and each cried to his god. They threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten it for them. Jonah, meanwhile, had gone down into the hold of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. ⁶The captain came and said to him, "What are you doing sound asleep? Get up; call on your god! Perhaps the god will spare us a thought so that we do not perish."

⁷The sailors^[a] said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, so that we may know on whose account this calamity has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. ⁸Then they said to him, "Tell us why this calamity has come upon us. What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?" ⁹"I am a Hebrew," he replied. "I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." ¹⁰Then the men were even more afraid and said to him, "What is this that you have done!" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them so.

¹⁵So they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. .

¹⁷But the Lord provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

2 Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish, ² saying, "I called to the Lord out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice.

¹⁰ Then the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out onto the dry land.

SERMON "LAUGHTER IS THE LANGUAGE OF THE SOUL"

Pablo Neruda

***HYMN**

How Firm a Foundation

black #372

OFFERING

Invitation

Offertory

Guide Me, O Great Redeemer

lyrics by R. Matteson

*Guide me, O Thou Great Redeemer, I can't seem to find my car;
Parking lot is quite confusing, looks the same both near and far.
I know that it's right around here; think I parked in section B
Or perhaps it's over there in C.*

*I remember driving here this morning, getting out and making note
of the place where in I parked it; on a paper even wrote.
Now I cannot find the paper in amongst my other stuff.
Getting older sure is really tough.*

*I'm quite sure I'll soon remember where I left my car, you see;
Yeah, I think it's round the corner, underneath that big maple tree.
There are sev'ral close together, different styles and colors too.
Which is mine? I think it's white, no, blue.*

*Gosh it sure is getting tiring walking round this parking spot;
I can't see it anywhere around here; guess it's stolen from the lot.
So I'll call a nice policeman, maybe one whose name is Gus;
I remember now; I took the bus!*

***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** *To You, O God, All Creatures Sing* black #17 vs 1-4

***BENEDICTION**

***BENEDICTION RESPONSE** *Threefold Amen*

POSTLUDE *O pássaro irritante* Z. Abreu

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.

**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.*

And look for jokes scattered all around Fellowship Hall.

In our Service Today

Preacher:	Rev. Lori J. Souder
Assisting Minister:	Rev. Randy Purinton
Scripture Reader:	Kate Hoffman
Organist:	Larry Schipull
Choir Director:	Ben Coakley
Deacon:	Rachel Alldis



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
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
Bob Cocker, Rob Cocker’s dad, after a fall
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.



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.



This morning we will take 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 12th.



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.

This Week at Center Church

TODAY
Thursday
Sunday

Humor Sunday
Bible Study at Loomis 11am AA 1:30pm
Worship 10am **Deacon Meeting following service**





Spring has arrived and our **English Spring Tea, Saturday, May 9th, Noon - 3pm**, is on the horizon!

“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, \$12 students, \$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.

Members of the Hampshire Association, UCC are invited to attend the installation of

Rev. Susan Cartmell

South Congregational Church 1066 South East Street Amherst, MA

Sunday, May 17, 2026 3PM

Visitors are welcome

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

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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Give To Us Laughter

G C Bm Em

1 Give to us laugh - ter, O Source of our life.
 2 Give to us laugh - ter as sign of deep joy,
 3 Why do we wor - ry that we will lose face?
 4 E - ven in sor - row and hours of grief,

C Bm Em Am D

Laugh - ter can ban - ish so much of our strife.
 let us in laugh - ing find Chris - tian em - ploy,
 Why act like king for the whole hu - man race?
 laugh - ter with tears brings most heal - ing re - lief.

G C Bm Em

Laugh - ter and love give us whole - ness and health.
 join - ing with stars and with bright north - ern lights,
 Of - ten in fam - ily, and of - ten with friend,
 God, give us laugh - ter, and God, give us peace,

C D Bm Em Am D 1-3 G Dsus4 4 G

Laugh - ter and love are the coin of true wealth.
 laugh - ing and prais - ing and shar - ing de - lights.
 laugh - ing at pride caus - es an - guish to end.
 joys of your pre - sence a - mong us in - - - - crease.

Words: Walter Farquharson 1974
 Music: Ron Klusmeier 1974, 1995
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OLDHAM
 10 10 10 10

K.
Rippon's "A Selection of Hymns," 1787, alt.

ADESTE FIDELES 11.11.11.11.
John F. Wade's "Cantus Diversi," 1751

1 How firm a foun - da - tion, ye saints of the Lord,
2 "Fear not, I am with thee, oh, be not dis - mayed,
3 "When through the deep wa - ters I call thee to go,
4 "When through fi - ery tri - als thy path - way shall lie,

Is laid for your faith in his ex - cel - lent word!
For I am thy God, and will still give thee aid.
The riv - ers of woe shall not thee o - ver - flow;
My grace, all - suf - fi - cient, shall be thy sup - ply.

What more can he say than to you he hath said,
I'll strength - en thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
For I will be near thee, thy trou - bles to bless,
The flame shall not hurt thee; I on - ly de - sign

To you who for ref - uge to Je - sus have fled?
Up - held by my right - eous, om - nip - o - tent hand,
And sanc - ti - fy to thee thy deep - est dis - tress,
Thy dross to con - sume, and thy gold to re - fine,

To you who for ref - uge to Je - sus have fled?
Up - held by my right - eous, om - nip - o - tent hand.
And sanc - ti - fy to thee thy deep - est dis - tress.
Thy dross to con - sume, and thy gold to re - fine. A - men.

5 "The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no, never, no, never forsake.
I'll never, no, never, no, never forsake!"

GOD

17

To You, O God, All Creatures Sing

Ps. 148

St. Francis of Assisi, 1225
Adapt. Miriam Therese Winter, 1993

Descant

4 To you, God, day af-ter day, earth in

Unison

1 To you, O God, all crea-tures sing, and all cre - a - tion, ev - ery -
2 Your wind that blows the tem-pest by, your clouds that sail a - cross the
3 Your flow-ing wa - ters, crys - tal clear, make mel - o - dies for you to
4 To you, O God, day af - ter day, your plan - et earth in ev - ery

ev-ery way sings your prais - es, al-le - lu - ia! As fruit, fra - grant

(Harmony) *(Unison)*

thing sings your prais-es, al-le - lu - ia! Your burn-ing sun with gold-en
sky sing your prais-es, al-le - lu - ia! Your morn-ing ris - es with a
hear, sing your prais-es, al-le - lu - ia! Your fire, . . . boun-ti - ful and
way, sings your prais-es, al-le - lu - ia, As sa - vory fruit and fra-grant

Miriam Therese Winter described her thoughts about adapting this text: "As I entered into communion with the word and spirit of the hymn, I felt called to enable that unknown-to-me poet's wisdom to live on into the future, a moving commission, and also felt a bond with the one who had gone before."

Harmonization Copyright ©, Oxford University Press. From *The English Hymnal* 1906.

Tune: LASST UNS ERFREUEN
8.8.4.4.8.8. with alleluias
Geistliche Kirchengesäng, Cologne, 1623
Harm. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1906
Descant, *The New Century Hymnal*, 1993

flower show forth glo - ry and power, sing - ing prais - es, al - le -

(Harmony)

beam, your sil - ver moon with soft - er gleam sing your prais - es,
 song, and lights of eve - ning sing a - long, sing your prais - es, al - le -
 bright, re - mem - bering your warmth and light, sings your prais - es,
 flower show forth your glo - ry and your power, sing - ing prais - es,

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

(Unison)

lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

5 Now we who are of ten - der heart,
 for - giv - ing oth - ers, take our part,
 sing your prais - es, al - le - lu - ia!
 To you we lift our pain and care,
 re - ceive the bur - dens that we bear,
 sing - ing prais - es, al - le - lu - ia,
 al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

6 In you, a kind and gen - tle death
 pre - pares to hush our fi - nal breath,
 sing - ing prais - es, al - le - lu - ia!
 Christ goes be - fore us to re - new
 the way that leads us home to you.
 Hear our prais - es, al - le - lu - ia,
 al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

