

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
“Center Church”



United Church of Christ - ONA
One Church Street
South Hadley, Massachusetts 01075
(413) 532-2262

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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!

May 3, 2026

*There is life in a stone. Any stone that sits in a field or lies on a beach
takes on the memory of that place.*

PRELUDE

*Regent Square
Union Seminary*

F. Peeters
D. Maxwell

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PASSING OF THE PEACE

CHORAL INTROIT

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: God, our rock, we call out to you today.

People: O God, we seek your refuge.

Leader: Guide us and lead us, O God.

People: O God we seek your refuge.

Leader: Let your face shine on us, your servants.

People: O God, we seek your refuge.

Leader: O God, we seek your refuge.

All: You are, indeed, our rock and our fortress.

***HYMN** *God Is Here! As We Your People Meet* black #70
*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)

Holy One, sometimes the trials of our lives can seem too heavy a burden to bear. The slings and stones of the world hurt us deeply. Forgive us when we lash out at those who seek to wound our spirits. Forgive us when we forget to take refuge in you.

Assurance of Forgiveness

We know you are our fortress, Holy One. Help us to take refuge in you, for you forgive our failings and redeem us in your faithfulness. Amen

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

1 Peter 2:2-10

² Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

⁴ Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and ⁵ like living stones let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For it stands in scripture:

“See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

⁷ This honor, then, is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,

“The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner,”

⁸ and “A stone that makes them stumble and a rock that makes them fall.”

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people. in order that you may proclaim the excellence of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

SERMON**PEOPLE OF THE LIVING STONE*****HYMN***God, Creation's Great Designer*

black #371

OFFERING**Invitation****Offertory***Jubilate Deo (Psalm 100)*

Dale Wood

***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***Draw Us in the Spirit's Tether*

black # 337

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)

We are thankful for how the bread and cup make a way for transformation. We no longer have to be stuck, but rejuvenated through Jesus. Thanks be to God.

HYMNChrist Is Made the Sure Foundation*

black # 400

BENEDICTION**BENEDICTION RESPONSE***Threefold Amen***POSTLUDE***Abbot's Leigh*

M. Burkhardt

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.*

In our Service Today

Preacher:	Rev. Lori J. Souder
Scripture Reader:	Sharyn Kovalesky
Organist:	Larry D. Schipull
Choir Director	Ben Coakley
Deacon:	



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
Elisa Morrison’s step-mother Sandy, and
brother Carl, with heart issues
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
Bob Farman and family on the passing of his
sister, Bonnie
Robin Glossner, undergoing chemo
Kate and John Hoffman’s daughter Sarah,
following surgery
John Hoffman’s parents, Jean and John

**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 the Crossway.



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.

Breakfast and Conversation: May 13 8-9am in Fellowship Hall

Topic: Birthright Citizenship: What is the Biblical meaning of birthright? U.S. Faith Communities Unite In Support of Birthright Citizenship -and CNN's takeaway of the Supreme Court's understanding.

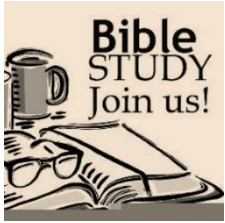
Please pick up the reading for the discussion at the Church Street entrance. Donations are welcome for the light breakfast

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.

This Week at Center Church

Tuesday	Church Council 7pm
Thursday	AA 1:30pm
Friday	Church Office closed
Saturday	Spring Tea noon - 3pm
Sunday	Worship 10am HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY





Please join us for conversation on another Gospel found in Robert Miller's edit book, The Complete Gospels. Dr Miller has compiled all the canonical and non-canonical gospels, otherwise known as those gospels sanctioned by The Church and those that were later identified and that never "made the cut" in the 3rd Century. We can see why the Gospel of Mary ruffled some feathers.

Come ruffle some feathers together. We meet from **11-12 noon in the Loomis Village Conference Room** (upstairs). We will meet **May 14 and 21st**. The short reading has not been selected yet, but will be available by May 1st out on the table in the Church St entrance, or will be dropped off in Loomis mailboxes or sent to you via email.



You may still make a contribution to our 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.

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

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

Larry Picard, Lay Pastor

North Congregational Church, UCC
243 River Drive Hadley, MA 01035

Sunday, May 24, 2026 3PM

TAG SALE ????

The Church Council and the Trustees have been discussing the viability of the Fall Tag Sale Fundraiser. This project, along with the Holiday Bazaar and the Spring Tea, generated over \$19,000 in 2025 to the church, growing annually. The current discussion wonders if pledges can increase to not only cover normal operating expenses each year for the church, but the loss of this income.

To continue the Fall Tag Sale Fundraiser, we need additional *committed* help to deliver a fundraiser that attracts our community successfully. Traditionally, we draw donations and buyers to a well-oiled project that has grown since humble beginnings in 1996. This project needs more hands and volunteer hours “on the floor”, to happen this fall. We have changes being discussed to control the hours the project takes to complete, but volunteer hours are what is needed.



By the way, the most time-consuming parts of the fair preparation are:
Pricing...Sorting into categories...Cleaning donations

The fair always needs Donations!!! That are sale-able!!! We are always interested in donations that are *oriented to our market*. The time to plan for our early fall fundraiser starts in May.

If you are interested in keeping the Tag Sale Fundraiser, and willing to pledge time to make it happen, we are very accommodating to individual availability. Please contact Corinne Chartrand and Karen Anderson, co-chairs, if you can join in.

2026 Annual Meeting

HAMPSHIRE ASSOCIATION
of the Southern New England UCC

June 7, 2026, at 3pm

Plainfield Congregational Church
356 West Main Street Plainfield. MA

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 Open House May 17.

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



Southern New England Conference
United Church of Christ
Changing the World & Saving of souls



ACCREDITED

www.SilverLakeCT.org

[Silver Lake Camp & Retreat Center](#)

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

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slrc@sneucc.org



God Is Here! As We Your People Meet

Fred Pratt Green, 1978; alt.

1 God is here! As we your peo-ple meet to of - fer praise and prayer,
 2 Here are sym-bols to re - mind us of our life - long need of grace;
 3 Here our chil-dren find a wel-come in the Shep - herd's flock and fold;
 4 Sov - ereign God, of earth and heav-en, in an age of change and doubt

May we find in full - er mea-sure what it is in Christ we share.
 Here are ta - ble, font, and pul - pit, here the cross has cen - tral place.
 Here as bread and wine are tak - en, Christ sus - tains us as of old.
 Keep us faith - ful to the gos - pel, help us work your pur - pose out.

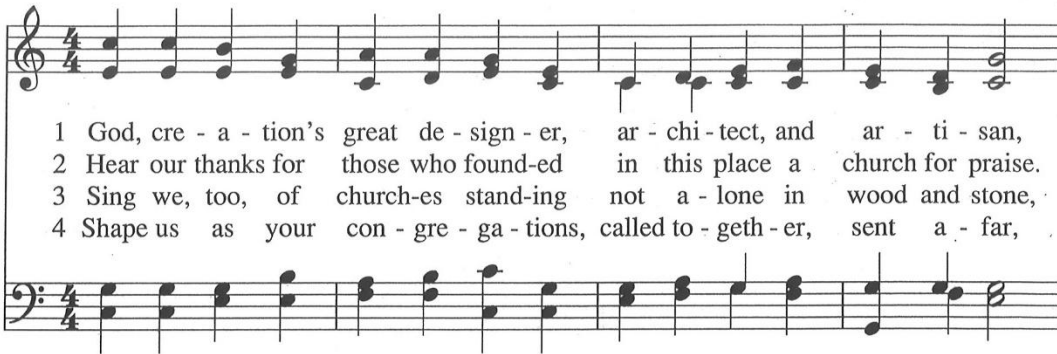
Here, as in the world a - round us, all our var - ied skills and arts
 Here in hon - es - ty of preach - ing, here in si - lence, as in speech,
 Here the ser - vants of the Ser - vant seek in wor - ship to ex - plore
 Here, in this day's ded - i - ca - tion, all we have to give, re - ceive;

wait the com - ing of the Spir - it in - to o - pen minds and hearts.
 here, in new - ness and re - new - al, God the Spir - it comes to each.
 what it means in dai - ly liv - ing to be - lieve and to a - dore.
 we, who can - not live with - out you, we a - dore you! We be - lieve!

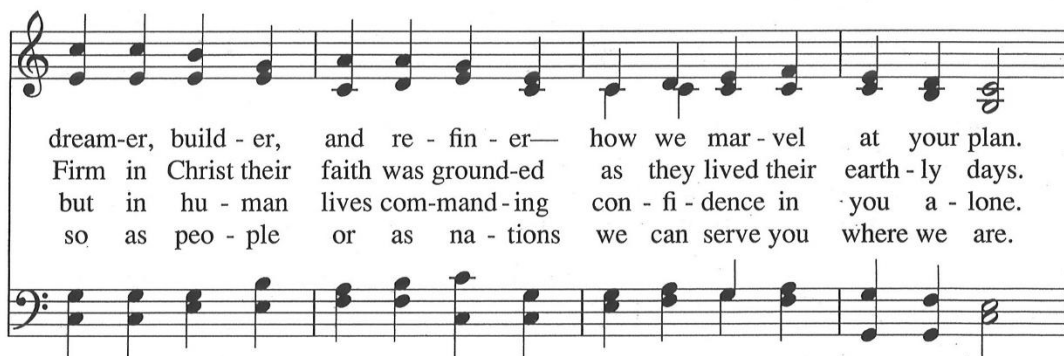
Though he retired in 1969, this distinguished British poet has continued to write hymns. In addition to administering several circuits and local congregations, Fred Pratt Green published plays, translations, and poems. Emory University in Atlanta awarded him an honorary doctorate.

Tune: ABBOT'S LEIGH 8.7.8.7.D.
 Cyril V. Taylor, 1941

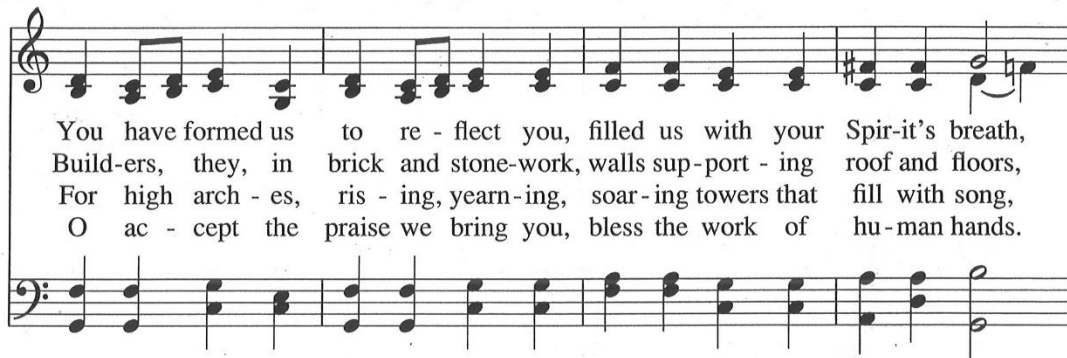
God, Creation's Great Designer

*Gen. 1:1-2:7; 1 Pet. 2:4-9**Jane Parker Huber, 1984*


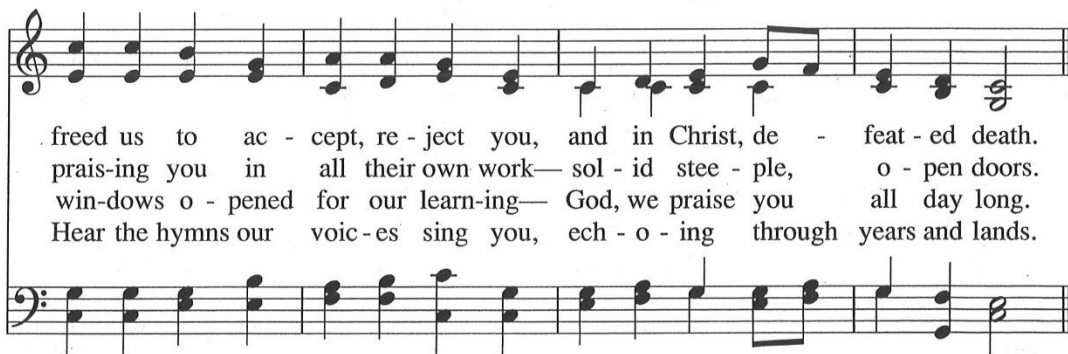
1 God, cre - a - tion's great de - sign - er, ar - chi - tect, and ar - ti - san,
 2 Hear our thanks for those who found-ed in this place a church for praise.
 3 Sing we, too, of church-es stand-ing not a - lone in wood and stone,
 4 Shape us as your con - gre - ga - tions, called to - geth - er, sent a - far,



dream-er, build - er, and re - fin - er— how we mar - vel at your plan.
 Firm in Christ their faith was ground-ed as they lived their earth - ly days.
 but in hu - man lives com-mand-ing con - fi - dence in you a - lone.
 so as peo - ple or as na - tions we can serve you where we are.



You have formed us to re - flect you, filled us with your Spir-it's breath,
 Build-ers, they, in brick and stone-work, walls sup-port - ing roof and floors,
 For high arch - es, ris - ing, yearn-ing, soar-ing towers that fill with song,
 O ac - cept the praise we bring you, bless the work of hu - man hands.



freed us to ac - cept, re - ject you, and in Christ, de - feat - ed death.
 prais-ing you in all their own work— sol - id stee - ple, o - pen doors.
 win-dows o - pened for our learn-ing— God, we praise you all day long.
 Hear the hymns our voic-es sing you, ech - o - ing through years and lands.

Jane Parker Huber wrote this text specifically for the dedication of an Indiana church's rebuilding program to be sung with this twentieth-century tune, New Reformation. "It celebrates the skill and labor of human workers as well as of our creating God."

Tune: NEW REFORMATION 8.7.8.7.D.

J. T. Morrow, 1950

Alternate tunes: WEISSE FLAGGEN,
 HOLY MANNA

Draw Us in the Spirit's Tether

337

Percy Dearmer, 1925; alt.

Matt. 18:20

Unison

1 Draw us in the Spir-it's teth - er, for when hum - bly
 2 As dis - ci - ples used to gath - er in the name of
 3 All our meals and all our liv - ing make as sac - ra -

in your name, two or three are met to - geth - er,
 Christ to sup, then with thanks to God the Giv - er,
 ments of you, that by car - ing, help-ing, giv - ing,

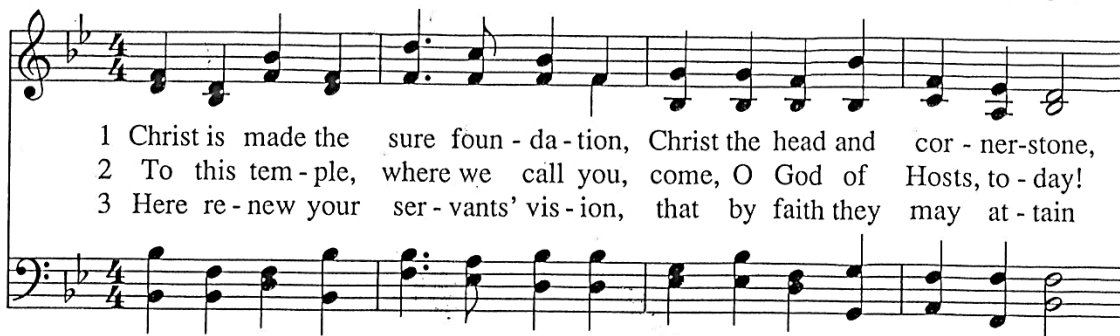
you are in the midst of them; Al-le - lu - ia!
 break the bread and bless the cup, Al-le - lu - ia!
 we may be dis - ci - ples true. Al-le - lu - ia!

Al - le - lu - ia! Touch we now your gar - ment's hem.
 Al - le - lu - ia! So now bind our friend - ship up.
 Al - le - lu - ia! We may serve with faith a - new.

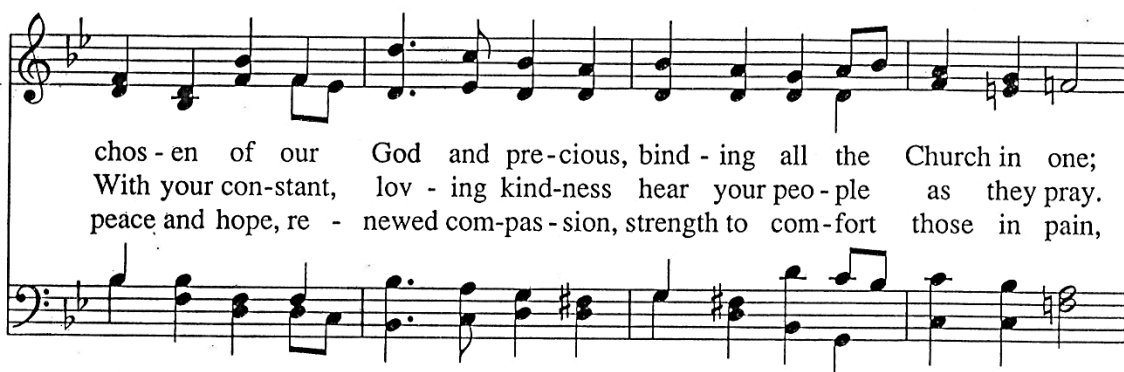
British hymnal editor Percy Dearmer originally wrote these stanzas under a pseudonym as part of a postcommunion hymn by George H. Bourne. The tune was adapted from an anthem by Harold Friedell and is named for Union Theological Seminary in New York.

Tune: UNION SEMINARY 8.7.8.7.4.4.7.
 Harold Friedell, 1957
 Adapt. Jet Turner, 1967

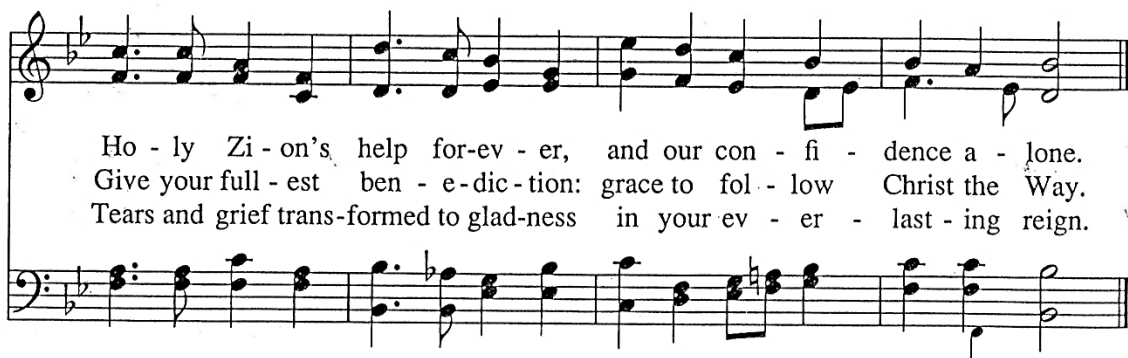
Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation

*Eph. 2:20-22; 1 Pet. 2:4-7**Latin, 6th-8th century
Transl. John Mason Neale, 1851; alt.
St. 3 adapt. Thomas H. Troeger, 1992*


1 Christ is made the sure foun - da - tion, Christ the head and cor - ner - stone,
2 To this tem - ple, where we call you, come, O God of Hosts, to - day!
3 Here re - new your ser - vants' vis - ion, that by faith they may at - tain



chos - en of our God and pre - cious, bind - ing all the Church in one;
With your con - stant, lov - ing kind - ness hear your peo - ple as they pray.
peace and hope, re - newed com - pas - sion, strength to com - fort those in pain,



Ho - ly Zi - on's, help for - ev - er, and our con - fi - dence a - lone.
Give your full - est ben - e - dic - tion: grace to fol - low Christ the Way.
Tears and grief trans - formed to glad - ness in your ev - er - last - ing reign.

The hymn has its origins in an early Latin poem, Urbs beata Jerusalem, based on passages from Ephesians, 1 Peter, and Revelation. "Holy Zion" refers to the church transcendent, built of "living stones"—the saints of God.

Tune: REGENT SQUARE 8.7.8.7.8.7.
Henry T. Smart, 1867
Alternate tune: WESTMINSTER ABBEY



On **Pentecost Sunday, May 24**, Center Church will join congregations across the United Church of Christ in receiving the **Strengthen the Church** special mission offering—one of the UCC's four annual offerings dedicated to nurturing new life, new leaders, and new ministries in our wider church.

Strengthen the Church supports the growth and expansion of emerging ministries, including:

- new church starts
- innovative ministry offerings
- programs for youth and young adults
- leadership development
- creative approaches to renewing existing congregations

Where your gift goes

80% of your gift stays in the Southern New England Conference, supporting local and regional ministry innovation.

20% supports national UCC ministries, helping the wider church respond boldly to the Spirit's movement.

How to give

You may support the **Strengthen the Church offering** anytime between now and May 31, through personal check in the offering plate or mail, or on the Center Church website. Please clearly mark, "Strengthen the Church" in the memo line so we can record and send your contribution to the Conference.



Cathedral in the Night is an outdoor Christian community in downtown Northampton, MA which seeks to create a safe place for all people: the homeless, the housed, the church-less, the churched, the student and the resident to explore, question and live out their spiritual beliefs; to gather for a meal and to empower one another to engage in issues of social justice by working to fight the causes of inequality and homelessness. **The Outreach Team is providing meals Sunday on May 17. Coming Soon - sign up sheet for food and people needed to help with this ministry.** Come and help. Come to the worship which starts at 4:30. You will be blessed.