

**First Congregational Church, Claremont,
NH Sunday Gathering
March 5, 2023, Second Sunday in Lent**
* Those who are able may stand for items marked with an
asterisk.

Gathering

CENTERING MUSIC

WELCOME AND SHARED NEWS

***NAMING OUR PURPOSE**

Christ of the comfortable,
you would call us from our security and sameness,
down that unknown path which leads to God's heart:
with trust, we would place our hands in yours, and follow.
Companion of our sleepless nights,
you would beckon us out of the shadows of our fears,
calling us to bring our doubts and questioning hearts along:
with humility, we would listen to those answers we do not expect, or even understand.
Word which creates out of nothingness,
you would fill us with life where we see only emptiness,
you would keep your promises when all ours lie littered on the ground:
we would let your grace transform us into faithful disciples.
Keeper of every moment,
walk with us, we pray.
Watcher in the night:
stay with us, we pray.

***SONG OF THANKSGIVING**

"Blessed Assurance"

New Century #473

Encountering the Word

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 12:1-4a, John 3:1-17

REFLECTION

Keep Asking the Questions

*SUNG RESPONSE TO THE WORD "Bread of the World, in Mercy Broken" New Century #346

Responding to the Good News

GIVING OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS TO GOD OFFERTORY

*THE DOXOLOGY

Pilgrim Hymnal #515

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

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Celebrating the Lord's Supper

GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

May the God of great adventures be with you.

And also with you!

It is God who is able to keep our hearts filled with hope and peace.

We will offer our hearts to the One who is our Keeper.

Trust in the promises whose fulfillment we cannot see.

We lift our songs to the One who is always with us.

You went into the shadows of nothingness, bearing your Light of creation, Keeper of all, so that life might burst forth where there was none:

white sands at the edge of blue green seas, shale formed under the crust of the earth, warm mornings and frigid nights to mark the seasons.

You blessed your children with creation's gifts so we might prove to be a blessing to others, **but we watched the comings and goings of sin and death, allowing ourselves to be blown about by them.**

Prophets responded to your call to them, daring to bring us those words we did not want to hear, calling us back to a way of life we had abandoned,

but we knew that we preferred life in the absence of your presence.

For this reason, you sent Jesus into the world, so that we, along with all creation, might be saved.

With those who toss and turn in the night, with those who have responded to your call, we lift our thanksgivings to you:

Holy, holy, holy are you, Who neither slumbers nor sleeps.

All creation blesses your glorious name. Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is the One who comes to answer our questions.

Hosanna in the highest!

Holy One, you are the God of blessings, and Jesus Christ is your Faithful One.
The One who could truly boast, he humbled himself to become like us.
The One who was truly righteous, he emptied himself to fill us with grace.
The One who had spoken life into existence, he embraced death on the cross,
so that we might be justified through your grace and wonder.
As we continue on the journey to Jerusalem,
as we seek to leave our comfortable lives to follow,
we would talk about that mystery we call faith:

**Christ died, faithful to the end;
Christ was raised, so all creation might be saved;
Christ will come, to bring us to that home he will show us.**

What then are we to say, Keeper of our lives?
It is your Spirit poured out upon us and upon the gifts of the Table which brings us new life.
It is the brokenness of the bread which gives us life, that life
poured out for those who have no hope, for those who wander in the shadows.
It is the grace of the cup which overflows with your gifts,
so we might go to be a blessing to all forsaken by the world.
**And when our journey has ended and we find ourselves in that land which you have
prepared for us, we will sing our glad songs to you forever, God of the past, God of the
present, God of the future. Amen.**

DISTRIBUTION OF THE BREAD AND CUP

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE followed by the LORD'S PRAYER (debts, debtors)

*SENDING FORTH HYMN "God Loved the World" New Century #208

*BENEDICTION

*BENEDICTION RESPONSE "Go, My Children" New Century #82

CONTEMPLATIVE MUSIC

(Please sit and enjoy the music in silence.)

(Prayers from Lectionary Liturgies, by Thom M. Shuman)

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