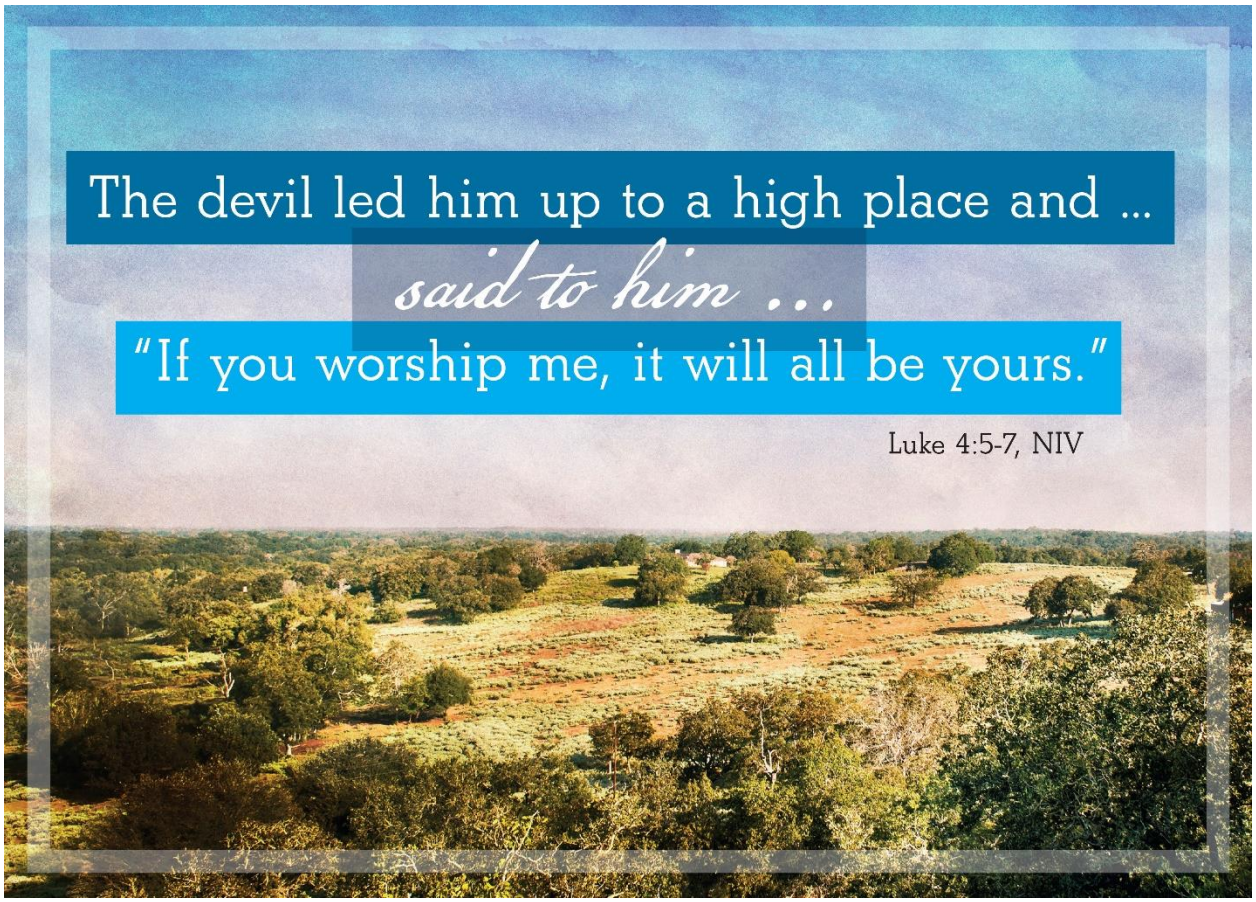

THE FIRST CHURCH

Congregational – United Church of Christ

†

Gathered December 16, 1685

No matter who you are, whom you love, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

Morning Worship

First Sunday in Lent

March 9, 2025 10:00 AM

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*If it is comfortable for you to do so, please stand.

APPROACH TO GOD

Let us keep silence as we prepare for worship.

TOWER CHIME Norma MacKinley-Smith

MEDITATION "Loneliness expresses the pain of being alone and solitude expresses the glory of being alone." -Paul Tillich

PRELUDE *Erbarm' Dich Mein, O Herre Gott,* BWV 721 J. S. Bach
Be merciful to me, Lord God *(1685 – 1750)*

CALL TO WORSHIP

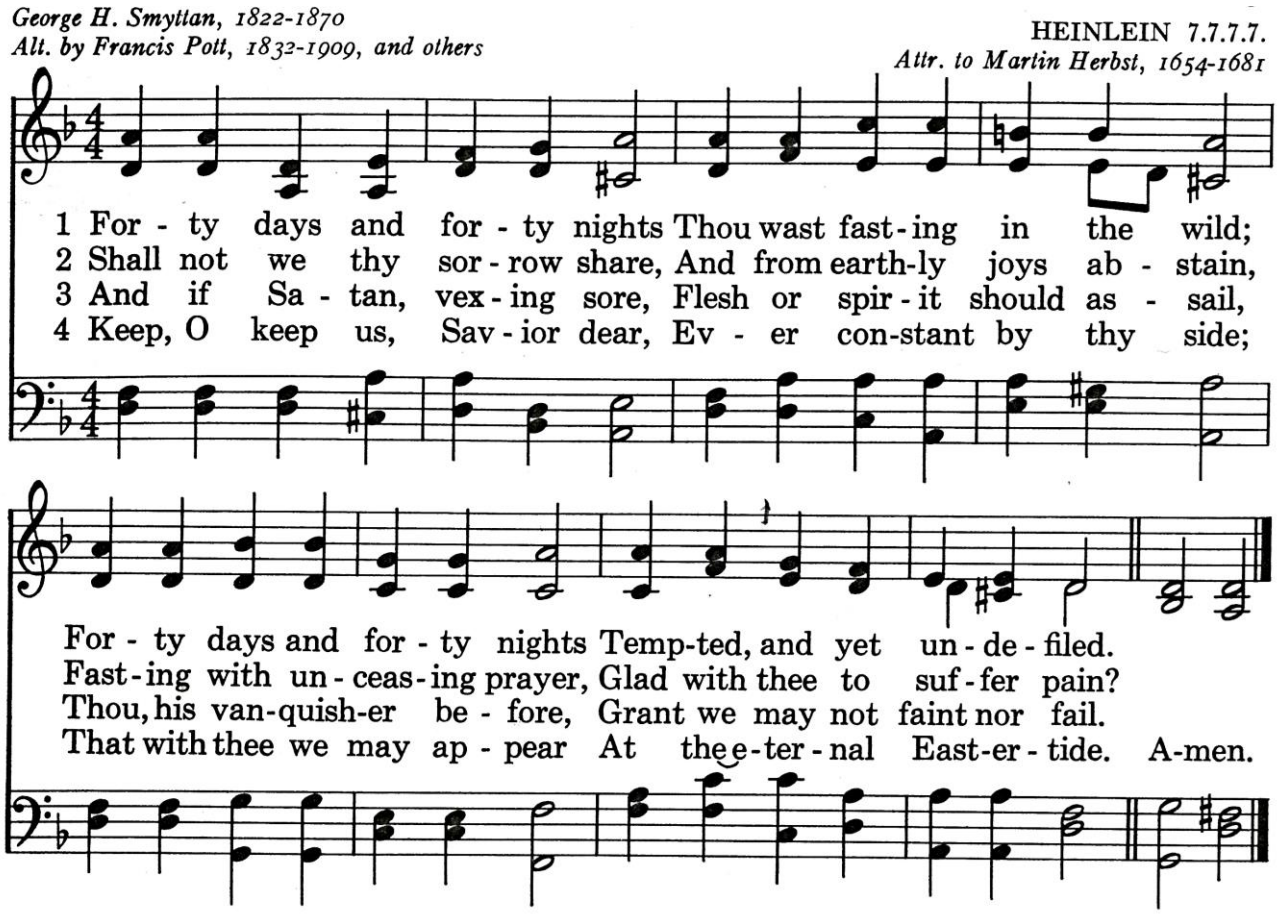
Leader: Jesus entered the wilderness, led by the Spirit, to face trials and temptations.
People: We, too, walk through wilderness seasons, seeking God's guidance.
Leader: In the solitude of the desert, Jesus clung to the Word of God.
People: In our struggles, we hold fast to the promises of God's love and care.
Leader: Come, let us worship the One who walks with us through every trial.
People: We come to worship, trusting that God's grace is enough for every moment.

***HYMN 148** *Forty Days and Forty Nights* HEINLEIN

(see next page)

1. SATB
2. Women only
3. Men only
4. Unison

Forty Days and Forty Nights



CCLI#3034682

*** PRAYER OF CONFESSION** (Unison)

Merciful God, we confess that we have wandered into the shadows, far from Your guiding light. We have turned away from Your face, seeking our own paths and stumbling along the way. Draw us back to Your brightness and teach us to walk in Your ways. Dispel the shadows within us, O Lord, and fill us with Your love and light. Shower us with Your grace, that we might reflect Your glory and live as Your people upon this earth. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

A time of silence for personal confession

***ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

Leader: Hear the good news: God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. In Christ, we are forgiven and set free to begin again. May God pardon you, deliver you, and grant you the time and strength to amend your lives.

People: Thanks be to God. Amen.

GREETINGS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S WORD

SCRIPTURE READINGS **Deuteronomy 26:1-11**

When you have come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him, "Today I declare to the LORD your God that I have come into the land that the LORD swore to our ancestors to give us." When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the LORD your God, you shall make this response before the LORD your God: "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, we cried to the LORD, the God of our ancestors; the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O LORD, have given me." You shall set it down before the LORD your God and bow down before the LORD your God. Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the LORD your God has given to you and to your house.

Luke 4:1-13

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'" Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.
People: Thanks be to God.

GRATIA TIBI *Thanks Be to Thee* T. Tallis
CHANCEL CHOIR *(1505 – 1585)*

ANTHEM *Quae moerebat et dolebat* G. B. Pergolesi
from Stabat Mater *(1710 – 1736)*
STAFF SINGER WOMEN

(She) who mourned and grieved, and trembled as she saw the suffering of her glorious Son…

SERMON "The Necessary Solitude" Rev. Dr. Andrew W. Armstrong

***HYMN 374** *In the Hour of Trial* PENITENCE

PILGRIMAGE AND CONFLICT

CCLI # 3034682

RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD

CENTERING PRAYER (Unison)

Lord Jesus, Who walked into the wilderness with nothing but the Spirit's leading, help us step away from the noise that drowns out Your voice within us and around us. In this moment of prayer, teach us to trust the quiet, where Your presence is as sure as the breath in our lungs. Let the stillness shape us as it shaped You, drawing us deeper into the love that sustains all things. We ask this in Your most precious name. Amen.

PRAYER CONCERNS

SILENT PRAYERS and PASTORAL PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy 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 Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.
Amen.

PRAYER RESPONSE *O Sacred Head, Now Wounded* PASSION CHORALE

OFFERTORY *How Lovely Are the Messengers* F. Mendelssohn
from the Oratorio "St. Paul" *(1809 – 1847)*

***LENTEN DOXOLOGY** OLD HUNDRETH LM

Lord Christ, throughout these Forty Days;
Thy sacrifice our voices praise;
Through thy temptation, victory won:
Eternal life, Eternal Son. Amen.

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION** (Unison)

Faithful God, in every season of our lives, You have been our light and our guide. With grateful hearts, we offer these gifts as signs of our trust in You. Bless and use them, we pray, so that Your church may fulfill its calling and Your love may be known in the world. May Your guiding hand rest upon us as we follow the One who leads us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

***HYMN 384** *Soldiers of Christ, Arise* DIADEMATA

(see next page)

***BENEDICTION**

POSTLUDE *In reverence to the solemn season, remembering Christ's Sacrifice on the Cross, a postlude will not be played during Lent.*

OUR WORSHIP HAS ENDED; OUR SERVICE BEGINS

Pulpit flowers are given in loving memory of his grandmother, May J. Leach, by Dennis Webster

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AV TEAM: Joe Glajch and Don Smith-Weiss

LICENSING: CCLI (print) 3034682; CCLI (streaming) 20119862; CCS 12820; OneLicense A-736284

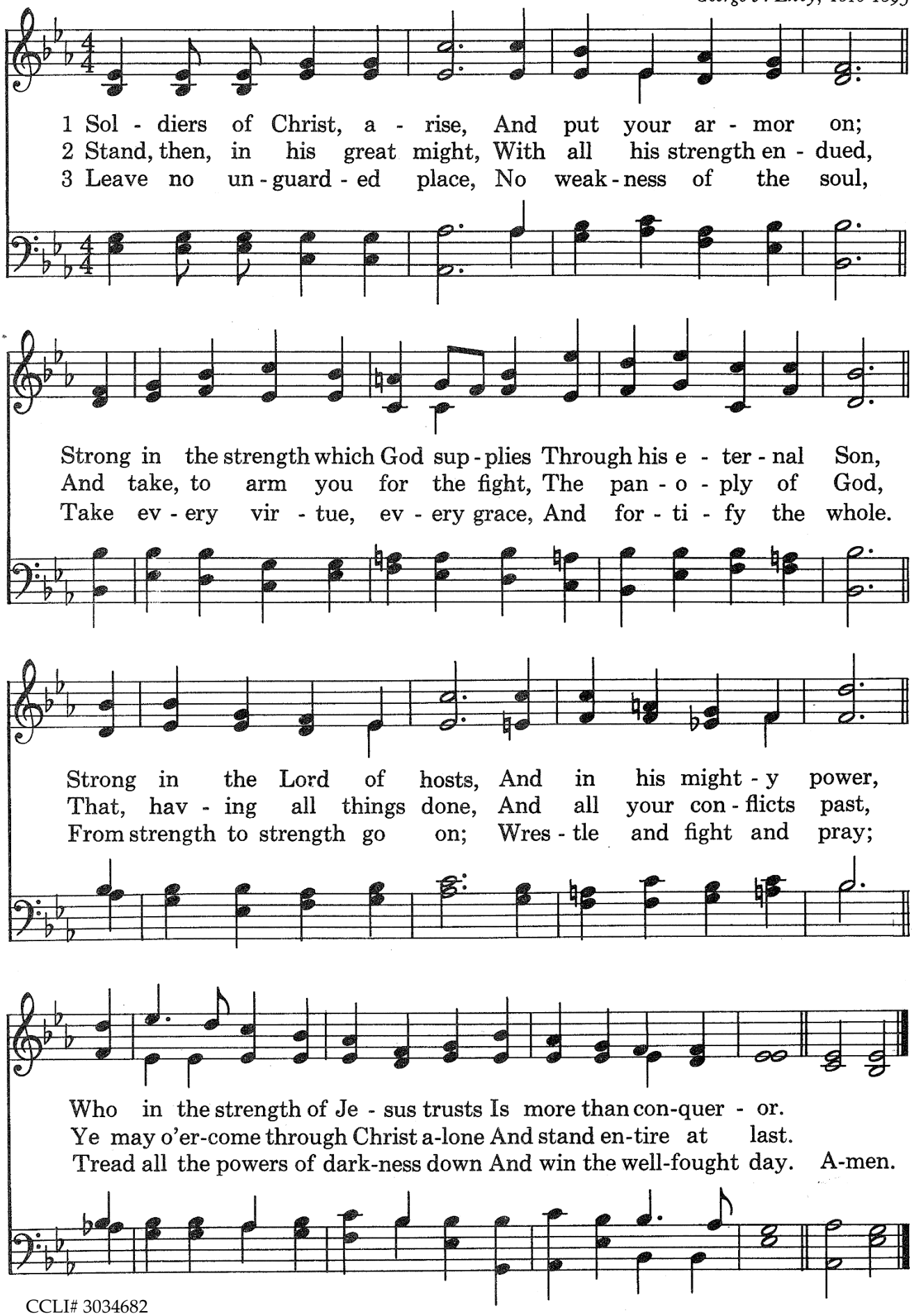
SCRIPTURE: NRSV reprinted by permission of the National Council of the Churches of Christ.

STAFF SINGERS: Janet Poisson, soprano; Brianne Biastoff, alto; Zoë Harper, tenor; Joshua L. Gore, bass

Soldiers of Christ, Arise

Charles Wesley, 1707-1788, alt.

DIADEMATA S.M.D.
George J. Elvey, 1816-1893



CCLI# 3034682

PLEASE USE THE VARIOUS CARDS IN THE PEW RACKS TO HELP KEEP THE STAFF INFORMED OF YOUR PASTORAL NEEDS. YOU MAY ALSO SUBMIT PRAYER CONCERNS ONLINE. FIND THE 'PRAYER REQUEST' BUTTON ON THE WORSHIP PAGE FOR ANY PRAYER CONCERNS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH REV. NANCY.

NOTES FROM THE CHANCEL

On this Sunday, the **First Sunday in Lent**, the Prelude sets a reflective mood in the haunting setting of ERBARM DICH MEIN; stemming from an original cantata by Bach's contemporary, Buxtehude who set this chorale for soprano, strings and continuo. This organ version (raised a key and prepared by Bach) is the reason the piece is attributed to him in modern times. Fitting to this somber piece, is the 1539 translation by Bishop Coverdale, from the *Goostly Psalmes and Spiritualle Songes*:

O God, be ye mercyfull to me,
Accordynge to thy great pitie;
Washe of, make clene my iniquitie:
I knowledge my synne, and it greveth me;
Agaynst the, agaynst the only
Have I synned, which is before myne eye:
Though thou be judged in man's sight,
Yet are thy wordes found true and right.

The congregation may recall hearing select movements of Pergolesi's Lenten choral masterwork *Stabat Mater* as a staple of our choral repertory (in particular when **FIRST SCHOLA** was in session). Although the Puritan/Calvinist tradition from which Congregationalism stems does not honor Mary in the way that Lutherans, Episcopalians and Roman Catholics do, its story still unifies **all believers in the Christian tradition to take time to reflect on Christ's suffering for our sins**; and in the case of the *Stabat:* what affect this suffering made on one of the closest people to Christ during His time on earth: His mother.

Our **Closing Hymn** this morning, was penned by Charles Wesley, and originally had sixteen (!) eight-line stanzas and appeared in the Wesley brothers' *Hymns and Sacred Poems* of 1749. The Wesley legacy to Christian hymnody is nothing short of extraordinary. This particular hymn has been printed in no fewer than 850 different hymnals.

The text of the hymn is based on Ephesians 6 which includes in its 11th verse: *Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes* (NIV). Reflect on two of these lesser-known verses, as a meditation:

Stand then against your foes,
In close and firm array;
Legions of wily fiends oppose
Throughout the evil day;
But meet the sons of night,
But mock their vain design,
Armed in the arms of heavenly light,
Of righteousness divine.

Leave no unguarded place,
No weakness of the soul,
Take every virtue, every grace,
And fortify the whole;
Indissolubly joined,
To battle all proceed;
But arm yourselves with all the mind
That was in Christ, your Head.

Worship Schedule

SUNDAY, MARCH 9TH

8:15 am Worship (Shaw Chapel)
10:00 am Worship in the Sanctuary & Livestream
Radio Broadcast on WSMN FM 95.3 & AM 1590
Sunday School & Nursery Care available

Christian Formation Corner

March 9, 2025 - Today is the First Sunday in Lent, and the liturgical color is purple.

Nursery News – The nursery school is open and staffed. Parents can check in at the Welcome Center and then proceed to the nursery. The Welcome Center staff can also assist in providing directions.

Busy Bags - are available at the Welcome Center for when children choose to remain in worship.

Pretzel Sunday: March 30th – CF students make pretzels to be enjoyed by all following worship.

Church Happenings and Outreach - New/Current

SUNDAY MORNING LENTEN STUDY – Join Revs. Andy and Nancy as they explore "**The Celebration of Discipline** by Richard Foster, Sunday mornings at 9:00 am in Nauss Hall. These sessions will continue through Sunday, April 13th. We look forward to having you join us for one session or all 7 sessions.

WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION- The Women's Association's annual tea will be held on Saturday March 22nd from 2-4 pm in Fellowship Hall and the theme this year is Springtime. Please come dressed for Spring including a Spring be-decked hat or bonnet (yes you may be creative!!). We are asking each of you to bring a toy, book, memory or other special item from your childhood to share. Special teas and fancy tea sandwiches and tea desserts including gluten free will be served. Please sign up at the Welcome Center between February 23rd and March 16th. This is always such a wonderful occasion and we encourage those of you who have come each year to invite new women to join us.

HOLIDAY FAIR COMMITTEE- The Holiday Fair Committee is beginning to make plans, explore ideas, and get organized. If you would like to participate in planning, volunteering, or preparations, the next meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 11th at 10 am in room 15. The Holiday Fair will take place November 7th-9th.

NEW MEMBERS ORIENTATION SESSIONS – If you are interested in becoming a member of The First Church or would like to learn more about membership in general, there will be orientation sessions on Sunday, March 16th and 23rd (must attend one session) at 11:30 am in room 15. New Members will be received on Sunday, March 30th during the 10 am worship service. Contact the office to sign-up or for more information.

SOUP AND BREAD COMTEMPLATIVE SUPPER – Join Rev. Andy on Tuesday, March 18th at 7 pm in the Dining Room. During the meal you will listen to a selection of readings from "Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth. There will be time for discussion and insights from your own journey. Sign up at the Welcome Center.

Choirs in Worship Next Week

Sunday, March 16, 2025 – Second Sunday in Lent

8:15 Organ

10:00 Ruthenberg Family Singers, Organ

THIS WEEK AT FIRST CHURCH

SUN MAR 9	8:15 am	Worship (Chapel)
	9:00 am	Lenten Study (Nauss Hall)
	10:00 am	Worship, Livestream
		Radio Broadcast, Sunday School
	3:00 pm	First Music Concert; Cello Masters II
MON MAR 10		Newsletter Deadline
	9:30 am	Bible, Friends & Coffee (Ladies Parlor)
TUE MAR 11	10:00 am	Holiday Fair Meeting (room 15)
	2:00 pm	Visitation Meeting (room 15)
	4:00 pm	Nashua Soup Kitchen & Shelter
	7:00 pm	Thank You Project (room 10)
WED MAR 12	8:30 am	Men's Group (Ladies Parlor)
	6:45 pm	Chancel Choir
THU MAR 13	10:00 am	Thrift Shop
	1:00 pm	Stewardship (room 15)
	6:30 pm	Quilt Guild (dining room)
	6:45 pm	Decibells
FRI MAR 14	12:15 pm	Fridays at First, Lenten organ meditation (Chapel)
	3:00 pm	Hunt Community Service
SAT MAR 15	10:00 am	Chancel Choir
	11:00 am	Sisters in Sobriety (dining room)

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SEASON XVII

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NADIA YAMAUCHI AZZI, PIANO

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MAR 09

FREE ADMISSION
ALL ARE WELCOME
3:00 PM

THE FIRST CHURCH

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THE FIRST CHURCH

NASHUA, NEW HAMPSHIRE

STAFF

Senior Minister, *Rev. Dr. Andrew W. Armstrong*, aarmstrong@tfcucc.org
Associate Minister, *Rev. Nancy Haynes*, nhaynes@tfcucc.org
Minister of Music, *Joseph R. Olefirowicz-MA,CAGO*, jolefirowicz@tfcucc.org
Church Business and Marketing Manager, *Dianne Smigliani*, dsmigliani@tfcucc.org
Office Manager, *Tasha Drew,* tdrew@tfcucc.org
Christian Formation Coordinator, *Amanda Steere*, asteere@tfcucc.org
Sexton, *Steve Buck,* sbuck@tfcucc.org

Pastors Emeriti, *Rev. James S. Chaloner and Rev. Dr. Jeffrey C. Evans*

WELCOME

A warm welcome is extended to all who are attending this worship service. A special greeting to those who are visiting or worshiping with us for the first time. Please fill out the **visitor card** found in the pew racks. Fill out the back of the card, and put it in the offering plate or hand it to a minister, Usher or Deacon so we may acknowledge your visit. Join in the time of fellowship, in Fellowship Hall, following worship. If you have any questions about the life and ministry of The First Church please seek out the individuals wearing colored nametags; they are members of the various boards and committees.

INFORMATION

The First Church was gathered on December 16, 1685 as The Church of Christ in Dunstable. On the same day Thomas Weld was ordained and settled as minister of the church. The current building, built in 1894, is the tenth building to house the First Church community. In 1961, the church entered fellowship with the United Church of Christ. We welcome into our membership any who will own the covenant of The First Church and seek to continue the ministry of Jesus Christ in the community and world. Those interested in joining the church should contact the church office for information. The Sacrament of Communion is celebrated on the first Sunday of the month and the Sacrament of Baptism on the last. The First Church is supported almost entirely by pledges. Every member is expected to make a financial pledge according to their ability.

PASTORAL CARE

Pastoral Care is available to all in need. Please keep the ministers informed of occasions of sickness, sorrow, and joy. Let the church office know if you or a family member or friend are hospitalized.

COMMUNICATIONS

If you have a change of address, phone number, or email address, please let the church office know so that we may keep our records current. All information for the weekly bulletin must be in the office by noon on Tuesday. All information for the monthly newsletter must be in the office by 4:00 PM on the second Monday of the month (August through May).

All use of the building must be scheduled by the Office Manager.

THE FIRST CHURCH

One Concord Street - Nashua, New Hampshire 03064 - 603-882-4861

Office Hours: Monday-Thursday, 9:00am-noon and 1:00-4:00pm, Friday 9:00am-noon

www.tfcucc.org