

Jesus, Midwife of Grace



2nd Sunday in Lent: John 3:1-17

Sunday, 3/1 @ 10am, on-site & online via Zoom

Connect at www.NeedhamUCC.org

The Congregational Church of Needham, *United Church of Christ*

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Valerie Becker, *director of music*
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Welcome! *No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are invited and welcome here at The Congregational Church of Needham, United Church of Christ.*

Please take a moment to let us know you're here, whether you are an official church member, a frequent guest, or a first-timer. **Scan this QR code with the camera on your phone and follow the link to sign-in.** *There's a paper sign-in sheet in the foyer, if you prefer.*

Our Church Covenant *At the Congregational Church of Needham, United Church of Christ, we strive to be a joyful, welcoming Christian Community. We seek to be faithful in a world torn by suffering, injustice, oppression, and war. We are inspired by God, Christ's Ministry, and the examples of other faithful people. We join together in worship and song, fellowship, study, and mission to embrace the risks and challenges of continuing Christ's ministry. We struggle to live out our faith in the world by furthering justice and peace, witnessing to the truth, and proclaiming God's love and mercy for all people.*

Our Open and Affirming Covenant *We believe that all people are created in the image of God, who loves each of us as we are. Following the example of Jesus, we welcome and affirm all people, including those of every age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression; every racial, ethnic and cultural identity, and country of origin; every faith background, family configuration and economic situation; every mental and physical ability and health status; every life experience and circumstance. We strive to be an example of God's extravagant welcome and to live these beliefs in our worship, language, actions and relationships. We invite all people who desire to join us in this journey of faith to share in the full life and ministry of this church.*

If you are a guest with us today, a special welcome to you! We'd love to know that you're here. Please sign in using the QR code at the top of this page or the physical attendance sheet in the narthex/foyer. If you like, you can sign up for our weekly email and monthly e-newsletter.

If you'd like to learn more about our church or what it means to be a member here, please reach out to Rev. John at revjohn@needhamucc.org.

Children of all ages are always welcome in worship! Quiet books and pew pals (soft toys) are available in the narthex/foyer just outside the sanctuary doors. All accessible bathrooms have **changing tables**.

WIFI in the sanctuary: UCC_Guest, password: needhamucc

FOR TODAY:

Yes! There is Sunday school today. Kids in Pre-K–Grade 5 will be invited to come forward for the “Time Especially for Children” during worship, then head out to Sunday School in the Reception Room (in the hall just outside this sanctuary) with our Director for Children & Youth, Darlene Wong, and their volunteer teachers.

For today's celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion / The Eucharist / The Lord's Supper, those in the sanctuary who wish to partake will be invited to come down the center aisle to receive a piece of gluten-free bread and a serving of non-alcoholic juice in a compostable cup. Folks participating online, we hope you prepare something to eat and drink to participate with the body. **ALL ARE INVITED TO SHARE, INCLUDING CHILDREN.** You need not be a member of this congregation or any congregation, but simply desire to receive this blessing in your life.

March 1, 2026: 2nd Sunday in Lent and Open and Affirming Anniversary Sunday

Every midwife knows / that not until a mother's womb softens / from the pain of labor / will a way unfold / and the infant find that opening to be born. / Oh Friend! there is a treasure in your heart. / It is heavy with child. / Listen... / All the awakened ones, like trusted midwives, are saying, / "Welcome this pain.. / It opens / the dark passage / of Grace."

–Rumi (13th C Persian poet), paraphrased by Coleman Barks

PRELUDE

Couplet by F. Couperin

Valerie Becker, organ

WELCOME

Rev. John MacIver Gage

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: By your loving will alone, O God, we live and move and have our being,

Many: caught up in a network of mutuality with family, friends, neighbors, strangers, enemies, and all creation.

One: We come together to share our lives and listen for your Word and be changed:

Many: centered, cleansed, renewed, and energized for service and for joy.

One: We enter this time with hopeful curiosity about what God is already doing among us, for us and for the whole world, to bring about God's kin-dom of justice, peace, and compassion.

Many: Bless our hands and feet, hearts and minds, so that, together as the body of Christ, we may journey through this Lenten world toward a life-giving Easter.

All: Let us worship God together in spirit and in truth, in word and in deed.

HYMN

O Jesus, Let Me Walk With Thee (see below)

GREETING ONE ANOTHER IN PEACE ("Peace be with you / And also with you")

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Hear Our Prayer, O God

The image shows a musical score for the prayer "Hear Our Prayer, O God". It consists of two systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: "Hear our prayer, O God, hear our prayer, O God; in - cline your ear to us, and grant us your peace." The music is written in a simple, hymn-like style with block chords and single notes.

READING SCRIPTURE

from the Gospels, John 3:1-12. 16-17

SERMON

Jesus, Midwife of Grace

Rev. John MacIver Gage

HYMN

Womb of Life and Source of Being (see below)

SHARING OUR PRAYERS (“O God, hear our prayer”)

LITANY FOR OUR 26th OPEN & AFFIRMING ANNIVERSARY

adapt. from K.F. Reisch

One: O God, we remember that every person is created in your image, of infinite worth and with inalienable dignity.

Many: Each of us and all of us together are the incarnation of your love in the world.

One: Diverse in our experiences, manifold in our manifestation of humanity and divinity, from differing constellations of family and culture,

Many: we each and all together represent and honor the myriad ways your people live and love.

One: When encouraged to grow and blossom, our sexual, gender, and every other kind of diversity blesses us, enriches our lives, and gives us joy.

Many: Our lives and the life of the world are better when LGBTQ+ people are welcomed and affirmed in our communities and in our communities of faith.

One: Our lives and the life of the world are better when neighbors of every gender, race, ethnicity, and immigration status are welcomed and affirmed in our communities and in our communities of faith.

Many: When any of us is oppressed, excluded, or shamed, we all suffer. When any of us is denied justice, the fullness of justice is denied us all.

One: Your living Word--shared in scripture, embodied in Jesus, and sown in the Spirit--calls us to be a church devoted to justice, peace, and compassion.

Many: In all your loving and liberating names, we recommit ourselves to the holy work of building a more loving, more just church and world, your kin-dom on earth as it is in heaven,

All: because until all of us are free, none of us is free.

SINGING THE LORD’S PRAYER *(see below)*

SHARING THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

For today’s celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion / The Eucharist / The Lord’s Supper, those in the sanctuary who wish to partake will be invited to come down the center aisle to receive a piece of gluten-free bread and a serving of non-alcoholic juice in a compostable cup. Folks participating online, we hope you prepare something to eat and drink to participate with the body. ALL ARE INVITED TO SHARE, INCLUDING CHILDREN. You need not be a member of this congregation or any congregation, but simply desire to receive this blessing in your life.

SINGING WHILE SHARING

Eat This Bread

The image shows a musical score for the hymn 'Eat This Bread'. It consists of two systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: 'Eat this bread, drink this cup, come to God and nev-er be hun - gry.' and 'Eat this bread, drink this cup, trust in God and you will not thirst.'

MUSICAL OFFERING

God Will Open a Door; by P. Choplin

Chancel Choir

God will open, open a door, God will open, open a door.
The Spirit draws us to it. With Faith, we walk through it as we follow the Lord through the open door.
So ask, it shall be given to you. Seek and you shall, you shall find.
Knock, it shall be opened, shall be opened unto you.
Ask, it shall be given to you. Seek and you shall, you shall find.
Knock, it shall be opened, opened unto you, opened unto you.
Now, God is calling, God is calling us on. Let us leave behind our waiting.
We'll go forward, celebrating. There are blessings in store through the open door.
God will open, God will open the door. Let us follow the Lord through the open door.

INVITATION TO DEEPER RELATIONSHIP

Feeling like you might like to make this congregation your church home? Curious to learn more about who we are and how we practice our faith and what membership means here? Reach out to Rev. John at revjohn@needhamucc.org

PARTNERING IN THE GOOD NEWS

SINGING OUR THANKS & PRAISE

**Praise God, the source of breath and birth,
who formed us from the dust of earth,
and made us one humanity
to love and set each other free.**

WE ARE BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

POSTLUDE



Call for Sunday School Volunteers

Every Sunday we need two non-related adults—a teacher and an assistant—to staff our Sunday School classroom. Ms. Darlene Wong, our Director for Children & Youth, is our teacher. Will you be the assistant? No experience is needed. Please [sign up here](#) to help.

Register for Sunday School [Here](#)

All kids ages K-5th grade are welcome to join our Sunday School (ages K-5th grade whenever they like, whether it be their first time or for a repeat visit! We understand the value of flexibility for busy families. Help us get to know your child and receive children & youth programming updates by registering your kids! Forms can be returned to Ms. Darlene, at childrenandyouth@needhamucc.org.

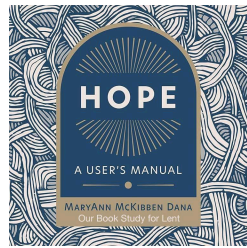
Questions about our Children & Youth Ministries? Email childrenandyouth@needhamucc.org

CHURCH ACTIVITIES & ANNOUNCEMENTS: March 1, 2026



Welcome to Lent!

Lent is a church season of reflection, repentance, grace, and recommitment to spiritual growth. It's a pilgrimage, of sorts, with deeper loving relationship with God, our neighbors, and ourselves as the goal. In worship, we will walk with Jesus as he sets his face toward Jerusalem and moves into direct conflict with the secular and religious powers there for the sake of God's liberating Gospel—a journey which will end in his murder by the state. Except it doesn't. No matter how challenging the journey, God promises it will end in Easter resurrection and abundant life, or it's not the end.



Lenten Book Group: *Hope: A User's Manual*

How do we cultivate hope to face each day? How do we find the energy to persevere, knowing things don't always work out OK, no matter what the platitudes say? How do we pursue the work of justice, knowing that the task is too big for any of us? One thing is certain: real hope demands that we do something with it. That we live it out. That we use hope to participate in a bigger story playing out behind the bleak world we see on the news or in our social media feeds every day. If you're a human being who longs for a spiritual counter-narrative to live by, this book points to one resilient enough to endure crises and crushing defeats.

Over the course of the season, we'll gather to read and reflect on *Hope: A User's Manual* by Maryann McKibben Dana. Most weeks there will be both an **on-site only group Sundays after worship** and a **Zoom-only group Wednesdays @ 7-8:15pm at our usual Zoom link for worship, <http://zoom.us/j/907548568>**. You are free to attend either or both as fits your schedule. *A few weeks will be Zoom only due to conflicts with Sunday programming. See schedule below:*

*Chapter 1: WED 2/25 ONLY ON ZOOM
Chapter 2: SUN 3/1 & WED 3/4
Chapter 3: SUN 3/8 & WED 3/11

*Chapter 4: WED 3/18 ONLY ON ZOOM
Chapter 5: SUN 3/22 & WED 3/25
Chapter 6: SUN 3/29 & WED 4/1



Thursday Soup Lunch

We will gather on **Thursday, 3/5 at 12 Noon in the church library** for our monthly soup lunch. Please join us for delicious soup and friendly conversation. It will be warm and nourishing for body and soul! **And if you'd like a ride, let us know at prayerandcare@needhamucc.org**



Period Party

3/15 @ Noon, in the Fellowship Hall

When you're living unhoused or in a shelter, there are so many questions to think about, so many needs to be met; but there's at least one we don't often consider: **"Where am I going to get the products I need to deal with my monthly period cleanly and safely?"** So we're partnering with **Circle of Hope** here in Needham to address this need. We're collecting pads, tampons, pantyliners, & hygiene wipes, all individually wrapped, which we'll repackage into reusable containers for distribution to folks who need them.

TO DONATE ITEMS, please use this link to our Amazon Registry: <https://tinyurl.com/dmxxr35ds> (Yeah, *Amazon*: we know. But this ensures we get exactly the products we need in the quantities we need.)

TO DONATE MONEY to the effort, go to www.NeedhamUCC.org/paypal and click on the PayPal link, then select "Period Party" from the dropdown menu; or you can write a check to the church with "Period Party" in the memo line.

TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PARTY, join us at the church on 3/15 (parking available in the lot behind the church off Linden Street) to help repackage those donations into individual bags for distribution. Our goal is to assemble 1000 kits, and many hands make light work.



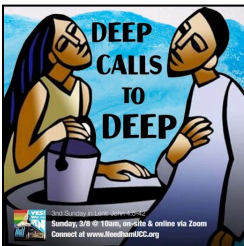
The Egg Hunt is Coming Up, But

All Those Eggs Won't Stuff Themselves!

3/8 @ 11:11am, in Linden Hall

Every year we host an Egg Hunt (explicitly *not* an Easter Egg Hunt) for small children and their families in the Needham area. We tell folks the church will handle the Easter stuff in worship, and this is just for them, just for fun. We have a "sensory friendlier version" for kids with sensory sensitivities and a "bells & whistles" version for everyone else. All in all, we host 125 kids, which means we need just about 2000 eggs. But all those eggs won't stuff themselves. **We need your**

help. Join Ms. Darlene and our Christian Education Committee after worship 3/8 in Linden Hall to stuff as many eggs as possible as quickly as possible. Thank you!



Coming Up Next Sunday

Deep Calls to Deep

3/8 @ 10am, LIVE! on-site & online via Zoom at <http://zoom.us/j/907548568>

Jesus meets a Samaritan woman at the well and asks her for a drink, and the conversation just flows from there. Conversation, not a lecture. Conversation, not a sermon. In fact, it's the longest single conversation Jesus has with anyone in the Gospels, and maybe the deepest and most personal. At the end of the day, she tells her friends that she felt seen and heard and known by Jesus. "Deep calls to deep" between them, and the world is turned upside down. (John 4:5-42)



Baby Basics Groceries Ongoing Food Collection

Each Sunday in worship, we collect specific core proteins for the groceries we give to the families accessing diapers through Baby Basics every other month. We're looking for large jars of natural (no sugar added) **peanut butter**; small cans of **tuna in water**; large cans of **chicken**; and bags of **dried beans**.

O Jesus, Let Me Walk With Thee

O Je - sus let me walk with thee
 Teach us thy pa - tience; let us be
 In hope that sends a shi - ning ray

in low - ly paths of ser - vice free;
 in clo - ser, dear - er com - pa - ny,
 far down the fu - ture's broad - 'ning way,

filled with thy Gos - pel, help me bear the
 in work that keeps faith sweet and strong, in
 in peace that on - ly thou canst give, with

strain of toil, the fret of care.
 trust that tri - umphs o - ver wrong.
 thee, O Je - sus let us live.

Text: W. Gladden (1879, alt.); Tune: MARYTON (H.P. Smith, 1874)

Womb of Life and Source of Being

Womb of life and source of being, home of ev'ry rest-less heart,
 Word in flesh, our broth-er Je-sus, born to bring us sec-ond birth,
 Brood-ing Spir-it. move a-mong us; be our part-ner, be our friend.
 Moth-er, Broth-er, ho-ly Part-ner; Fath-er, Spir-it, On-ly Son;

in your arms the worlds a-wakened; you have loved us from the start.
 you have come to stand be-side us, know-ing weak-ness, know-ing earth.
 When our mem'-ry fails, re-mind us whose we are, what we in-tend.
 we would praise your name for-ev-er, one-in-three, and three-in-one.

We, your chil-dren, gath-er 'round you, at the ta-ble you pre-prepare.
 Priest who shares our hu-man strug-gles, Life of Life, and Death of Death,
 La-bor with us, aid the birth-ing of the new world yet to be,
 We would share your life, your pas-sion, share your word of world made new,

Shar-ing stor-ies, tears and laugh-ter, we are nur-tured in your care.
 Ris-en Christ, come stand a-mong us, send the Spir-it by your breath.
 free of ser-vant, lord, and mas-ter, free for love and u-ni-ty.
 ev-er-sing-ing, ev-er-prais-ing, one with all, and one with you.

Text: Ruth Duck (1992); Tune: PLEADING SAVIOR (arr. J. Leavitt, 1830)

The Lord's Prayer