

The First Church in Swampscott, Congregational
United Church of Christ
Homecoming
September 13, 2026



CONNECTING COMMUNITIES
at the Intersection of Faith & Life



WELCOME!

Special greetings to you who are worshipping with us for the first time. Join us in person or online via Zoom or at our Facebook live video stream at 10am Sunday:
<https://www.facebook.com/FirstChurchSwampscott/>

ABOUT US

We are a community of Christians seeking meaning, purpose, and mission through our participation in the life of this beautiful local church. We believe that God is Still Speaking and has something new and essential to say to us as we live in this ever more complex and challenging world. We don't have all the answers, but we have some great questions. Together, we rely on the rich resources of the tradition of our Christian faith, the Bible, the revelation of God's love in the person of Jesus Christ, and the God given gifts of each person here, to lead us in our daily lives.

The First Church in Swampscott, Congregational is so named because it was the first church established in the town in 1846 as Swampscott was developing into an independent town, separating from nearby Lynn.

If you would like to be added to our weekly newsletter, please send your name and email address to office@thefirstchurch.org

GATHERING

** An asterisk is an invitation for the congregation to stand.*

OPENING VIDEO

GATHERING

Rev. Katie Cole

PRELUDE "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" (FAITHFULNESS) William Runyan/Arr. Diane Bish **Patricia Clark**

CALL TO WORSHIP

David Silva

(By Steve Garnaas-Holmes)

One: Creator God, you alone give us life!

All: We praise you. We thank you. We worship you.

One: Crucified and risen Christ, you show us the way of life.

All: We hear you. We love you. We follow you.

One: Holy Spirit, you fill us with life and call us to honor life.

All: We receive you. We breathe you. We bear you into the world.

One: Teach us your ways. Change our hearts. Re-create us again.

All: Alleluia! Come, Spirit of life, and transform us by your grace. Alleluia!

***OPENING HYMN #86** "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" (FAITHFULNESS) Thomas O. Chisholm/William M.

Runyan

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Choir and Patricia Clark with Congregation

ALL: Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father.
There is no shadow of turning with thee.
Thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not.
As thou hast been thou forever wilt be.

REFRAIN/ALL: Great is thy faithfulness!
Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see.
All I have needed thy hand hath provided.
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

LOW VOICES: Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
sun, moon, and stars in their courses above,
join with all nature in manifold witness
to thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love. **REFRAIN**

HIGH VOICES: Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide,
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow;
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside! **REFRAIN**

WORDS OF WELCOME

Rev. Katie Cole

INVITATION TO PASS THE PEACE OF CHRIST

*** PEACE PASSING SONG "God Is Still Speaking" Marty Haugen**

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Choir and Patricia Clark with Congregation

REFRAIN/ALL: God is still speaking, blessed invitation, God is still speaking, Listen and draw near.
God is still speaking, see a new creation. God is still speaking. Stand and do not fear.

CHOIR: Open up your ears to hear. (God is still speaking.)
Living Good News strong and clear. (Listen and draw near.)
Through the struggle, grief and pain (God is still speaking.)
God can raise us up again. (Stand and do not fear. **REFRAIN**

HIGH VOICES: Though the nations rage and fight. (God is still speaking.)
Hear God's voice of grace and light. (Listen and draw near.)
Choose the way that leads to peace. (God is still speaking.)
True compassion, sweet release. (Stand and do not fear.). **REFRAIN**

LOW VOICES: Hear the sound of justice ring. (God is still speaking.)
Hear the sound of mercy sing. (Listen and draw near.)
To the ones in deep despair. (God is still speaking.)
Be the sign of hope and care. (Stand and do not fear.). **REFRAIN**

PROCLAMATION

Matthew 18:21-35

David Silva

Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. And, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

SERMON

Forgiveness is Not a Math Problem

Rev. Katie Cole

HYMN #487 "Help Us Accept Each Other" (ACCEPTANCE) Fred Kaan/John Ness Beck

Public Domain

Choir and Patricia Clark with Congregation

ALL: Help us accept each other as Christ accepted us;
teach us as sister, brother, each person to embrace.
Be present, Lord, among us and bring us to believe
We are ourselves accepted and meant to love and live.

HIGH VOICES: Teach us, O Lord, your lessons, as in our daily life
we struggle to be human and search for hope and faith.
Teach us to care for people, for all, not just for some,
to love them as we find them, or as they may become.

LOW VOICES: Let your acceptance change us, so that we may be moved
in living situations to do the truth in love;
to practice your acceptance until we know by heart
the table of forgiveness, and laughter's healing art.

ALL: Lord, for today's encounters with all who are in need,
who hunger for acceptance, for justice, and for bread,
we need new eyes for seeing, new hands for holding on;
renew us with your Spirit; Lord, free us, make us one!

TIME OF PRAYER

If you are online, you are invited to add your prayers using the Chat function in the Zoom application.

CALL TO PRAYER:

Rebecca Kinchley

One: Let us prepare ourselves for a time of prayer.
May the Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

One: Let us pray.

PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE

(From The Worship Sourcebook, Second Edition)

Merciful God, for the things we have done that we regret, forgive us;
For the things we have failed to do that we regret, forgive us;
For all the times we have acted without love, forgive us;
For all the times we have acted without thought, forgive us;
For all the times we have withdrawn care, forgive us;
For all the times we have failed to forgive, forgive us.
For hurtful words said and helpful words unsaid, for unfinished tasks and unfulfilled hopes, God of all time, forgive us and help us to lay down our burden of regret. Amen.

Spoken Prayer

Rebecca Kinchley

A TIME FOR PRAYERS FROM THE CONGREGATION (CHAT FUNCTION)

Rev. Katie Cole

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father/Mother/Creator, 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

MUSICAL MEDITATION "Home" Ola Gjeilo

Patricia Clark

PRAYER SONG "Holy Spirit" Stuart Townsend and Keith Getty

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Choir and Patricia Clark with Congregation

HIGH. VOICES: Holy Spirit, living breath of God,
Breathe new life into my willing soul.
Let the presence of the Living God
Renew my heart and make me whole.
Cause your Word to come alive in me,
Give me faith for what I cannot see.
Give me passion for your purity,
Holy Spirit, breathe new life in me.

LOW VOICES: Holy Spirit, from creation's birth,
Giving life to all that God has made.
Show your power once again on earth,
Cause your church to hunger for your ways.
Let the fragrance of our prayers arise,
Lead us on the road of sacrifice,
That in unity the face of Christ
May be clear for all the world to see.

ALL: Repeat v.1

GOING FORTH

BRIEF ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rev. Katie Cole

This Sunday, we will end the Facebook stream and say goodbye to our friends on zoom during the instrumental verse in the parting song.

BENEDICTION

Rev. Katie Cole

*PARTING SONG "Lead Me, Lord" John D. Becker

Text: Based on Matthew 5:3-12; 7:7, 13; John 14:6. Text and music © 1987, John D. Becker. Published by OCP. All rights reserved. Used with permission of ONE LICENSE #A-727774

Choir and Patricia Clark with Congregation

HIGH VOICES: Blessed are the poor in spirit longing for their Lord.
For God's coming Kingdom shall be theirs.
Blessed are the sorrowing for they shall be consoled,
And the meek shall come to rule the world.

REFRAIN: Lead me, Lord, lead me, Lord, by the light of truth,
To seek and to find the narrow way.
Be my way, be my life, be my truth, my Lord,
And lead me, Lord, today.

LOW VOICES: Blessed are the merciful, for mercy shall be theirs.
And the pure in heart shall see their God.
Blest are they whose hunger only holiness can fill,
For I say they shall be satisfied. **REFRAIN**

ALL: Blest are they who through their lifetimes sow the seeds of peace.
All will call them children of the Lord.
Blest are you, though persecuted, in your holy life,
For in heaven, great is your reward. **REFRAIN**

INSTRUMENTAL VERSE

(Facebook stream ends, zoom greetings, Breakout rooms)

ALL: Final Parting REFRAIN

MUSICIANS: FIRST CHURCH CHOIR, AND PATRICIA CLARK, PIANIST AND ORGANIST

USHERS: JANET FISCHER AND MAUREEN WARK

HOMEcoming LUNCH HOSTS: WOMEN AT WORK

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First Church Council:	Clerk: Melissa Foye. Treasurer: David Foye. Members: Janet Fischer (Chair), Rebecca Kinchley, Katie Day, Andrew Steingiser, Stephen Rose, Julia Wistran, Betty McNeil

Open and Affirming Covenant

We, The First Church in Swampscott, Congregational, declare ourselves to be an open and affirming church. We are called by God through Jesus Christ to follow the Great Commandment "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." (Luke 10:27)

We joyfully welcome everyone of all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, ages, races, and ethnicities, economic and social statuses, physical, mental and emotional abilities, faith backgrounds, marital standings and family structures into our community, to share in the full life, leadership and ministry of First Church.

We celebrate the wonderfully rich and diverse world God has created and embrace the joy and growth this diversity inspires. All who seek to know God are encouraged to join with us as we work to live out our mission in faith and love.



Use this QR code to give your offering digitally through the MyVanco website.