

**CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF LACONIA
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
A JUST PEACE & OPEN AND AFFIRMING CHURCH
18 VETERANS SQUARE, LACONIA, NH ~ WWW.LACONIAUCC.ORG
SUNDAY, MARCH 19, 2023 ~ 9:30 A.M.**

Morning Meditation

We have been focusing on where love is to really be found during this season of Lent. We too often look for love in the security of powerful figures, sure that they can "fix" things for us. It was no different for the people of the First and Second Testaments. They were looking for Kings, Saviors, Liberators who would offer peace and security in uncertain times. And they often looked in all the wrong places." The Pharisees just can't believe that this troublemaker, rule-breaker named Jesus is the One, the Son of God and Savior. Time and again, Jesus uses the unlikely metaphor of a Shepherd to teach us how we ought to love and care for each other. No wonder, the Shepherd does what is needed when it is needed, regardless of the rules."

Marcia McFee

GATHERING MUSIC

**WELCOME AND GREETING LIGHTING OF THE
CHRIST CANDLE**

***HYMN OF PRAISE #43** Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
verses 1 & 2

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Let us open our hearts to the love of God. Before we even utter a word, we can be assured God will offer us grace and a way forward. For this reason, we can be honest with what

pains us most about our own thoughts and actions. Let us pray:

Holy and Merciful One, in this season of discernment, we come bringing our deepest longings, and our failed attempts at satisfying them. We have often looked for love, for acceptance and security, in halls of the perceived power of public opinion or unexamined presumptions about others not like us rather than the real power of love and care for one another. We yearn for lives that matter, we desire relationships that thrive, we want less regret.

At times we fail to see that you have already given us what really matters: your love and acceptance. You provide opportunities all around us to make a difference in the lives of others. You give us a fresh start each day, inviting us to do better. In this silence, we bring to you our pleas for openness to a different way of living.

Silence

My friends, be assured by the Psalmist who says that “the Lord is our shepherd whose goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our lives.” Let us respond together:

We open our hearts, our minds, our souls, our vision to the ways of love created by God, embodied in Jesus, and already moving in us by the Spirit. We are forgiven, loved, and freed!

Amen!

PASSING THE PEACE

The love and peace of Christ be with you! (*Elbow bump today!*)
And also with you!

READING OF SCRIPTURE

Dawn Dupak

- Psalm 23 *A song of trust*
- John 9:1-17 *Jesus heals the one born blind*

ANTHEM “The Irish Blessing” *Joyce Eilers Bacak*

REFLECTION There He Goes Again :(Campbell Lovett

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

ANTHEM “My Shepherd Is the Living God”
Southern Harmony

OFFERING

Congregational Church of Laconia is sustained by the generosity of church and community members. Offerings are gratefully received in the Offering Boxes by each exit. Checks may be mailed to the church at, 18 Veterans Square, Laconia, NH 03246

NURTURING LOVE

- One Great Hour of Sharing Offering is both given and received today
- Coffee & Conversation following worship – one flight downstairs
- Special Meeting – April 16, 2023 to consider bylaw amendments

***CLOSING HYMN # 252** Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us

COMMISSIONING AND BENEDICTION

CHORAL RESPONSE “Love
Overflows” *Sandy Yu*

POSTLUDE

Rev. Campbell Lovett, Interim Pastor
Mr. Bob Bengtson, Organist & Choir Director
Dan Tinkham & Bob Hunt, Ushers
Mr. Mike Marshall, Technology Associate

TODAY’S ALTAR FLOWERS are given by Stan & Sandy Brallier:

*”In celebration our wedding anniversary today and gratitude
for our church family.”*

March(ing) in the Light of God Lenten Series concludes this Thursday at 5:30 p.m. with a presentation about the month of Ramadan. We have a special guest, Mr. Sekou Ali, the Executive Director of the Islamic Society of Greater Concord. Please wear purple, yellow or green. Dates, lentil soups, fruit salads, rice and hummus are all foods fit for breaking the fast. “Ramadan mubarak” (*Happy or Blessed Ramadan*) is a traditional greeting to share with our Muslim neighbors.

Take a look at the Chapel and you’ll find a **Prayground!** This area is for young children to enjoy toys and coloring pages during the service. Children are welcome in this area with a parent or grandparent who will monitor their activity while still being able to participate in the service. This is a work in

progress, and you can watch it develop over the next few weeks. There is also a rocking chair for people of any age to enjoy – no children necessary.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PANCAKE BREAKFAST: The Laconia Rotary Club will hold a Pancake Breakfast **TODAY** until 12 p.m. at the Belknap Mill. Cost is \$6/adults & \$5/kids.

BIBLE STUDY BEGINS TODAY following worship in the Library, just across the Bridge. Grab a cup of coffee/tea and get ready to study “The New Testament You Never Knew: Exploring the Context, Purpose, and Meaning of the Story of God.” The study includes a video presentation and workbook guided discussions.

NH SAVES BUTTON UP WORKSHOP: Learn about making your house more energy efficient. Monday, March 20, 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the Laconia Library.

THE EASTER VIGIL, sponsored by the Deacons, will begin on Friday afternoon, April 7, and conclude early Easter morning, April 9. Stay tuned for information about signing up and specific hours.

DON'T FORGET TO ORDER EASTER FLOWERS: Easter is April 9. The Altar Guild adorns the altar and chancel with flowers on Easter Sunday. A sign-up sheet is now in the office to place a lily or Easter flower in honor of or in memory of a loved one, or with another message. A donation of \$20 will allow us to buy a plant. Make checks payable to: Congregational Church of Laconia, UCC with “Easter Flowers”

in the memo. Please indicate whether you wish to take the flower home or have it delivered to a shut-in by our Caring Connections team. **The deadline for ordering is Monday, March 31.**

SPRING RUMMAGE SALE – SAVE THE DATE!: The Rummage Sale will be held Thursday, May 18th to Saturday, May 20th. More details to follow!

A CALL TO SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF LACONIA, UCC – SUNDAY, APRIL 16, 2023: A Special Meeting of the Church will be held immediately following worship service in the Church sanctuary, for the purpose of the presentation of, and action upon, the proposed Amendments to the Church's By-Laws.