



The Promised Land always lies on
the other side of a Wilderness.

~ Havelock Ellis

March 23, 2025

Third Sunday of Lent

9:30 a.m.

PRELUDE

Keith Ciccone, organ

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rev. Karen E. Gale

PASSING THE PEACE

Peace be with you!

And also with you!

CONGREGATIONAL INTROIT *Tree of Life (v.3)*

Light of life beyond conceiving, Mighty Spirit of our Lord;
Give new strength to our believing, Give us faith to live your word.

Living Water of salvation, Be the fountain of each soul;
Springing up in new creation, Flow in us and make us whole.

*CALL TO WORSHIP (Responsive)

In the Beginning, when there was no Light,

God created Light and a new dawn broke across the world.

When Abraham and Sarah left for a new place,

God promised them a new land and a new life.

As Moses and the people of Israel stepped across the boundaries of what
they ne: had always known,

God said "I am here. I will journey with you."

When Ruth declared she would accompany Naomi,

When Isaiah said a new shoot would come from the stump of Jesse,

When Jesus proclaimed "Come to me all you who are carrying heavy burdens,"

We know God is in the changes, on the journey, in the in-between.

God is with us wherever we go, today and every day.

Thanks be to God of our past, our present and our future.

*HYMN 74

O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing

UNISON PRAYER:

God of Love,

You are with us in every transition and change.

**We enter into transition with mixed emotions: grief, anxiety, excitement
and worry.**

Where are we headed? What will happen next?

We recall your deep compassion, faithfulness, and abounding love.

**We thank you for the gifts, talents and skills with which you have
blessed us.**

We thank you for the experiences that have brought us to this moment.

**We thank you for the work of each other that gives breadth and depth
to our own work.**

**Be with us as we move forward, trusting in you, and supporting one
another.**

We ask this in your Holy Name. Amen.

CHILDREN'S TIME

SCRIPTURE READINGS Exodus 13:17-18, 20-22
Ephesians 4:1-6

*GLORIA PATRI

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be.

World without end. Amen. Amen.

SERMON

“The Church in the Wilderness”

Rev. Karen E. Gale

*HYMN 353

Be Thou My Vision

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE/PASTORAL PRAYER

LORD'S PRAYER

*Each week in Lent we will be using a different version of the Lord's
Prayer so we might hear this prayer in new ways.*

Our Creator, you are all around us and within us

We praise you with different names

Help us live as we understand we should from knowing you

in harmony and connectedness with each other
with all creatures of the earth and the universe itself
Help us to use your resources wisely so that we may be sustained
Help us take responsibility when we fail to live harmoniously and
help us understand and forgive when others let us down.
Let us know you well enough that we are not tempted to live outside
your love
and empower us to work together to overcome evil.
We believe that you created the world and that you will be all around
us and within us forever. Amen.

~ Lyn Selis Robertson

DEDICATION OF OFFERING

*DOXOLOGY

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.
Praise God, all creatures, here, below.
Praise God, above, ye heav'nly hosts.
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

**Jesus, you bring us messages of steadfastness and change.
You walk with the lost and the found,
with those celebrating and those who mourn.
You invite us to lay down our burdens and to follow you.
Thank you for this meal of blessing and hope.
Thank you for your words of encouragement and guidance.
Help us to see the signs of God as we journey into unknown territory.
Receive these gifts as offerings of hope and persistence as we continue
to walk this Lenten journey.
May your love shine forth through us and all that we do. Amen.**

*HYMN 541

Here I Am, Lord

*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE



Exodus 13:17-18, 20-22

It so happened that after Pharaoh released the people, God didn't lead them by the road through the land of the Philistines, which was the shortest route, for God thought, "If the people encounter war, they'll change their minds and go back to Egypt."

So God led the people on the wilderness road, looping around to the Red Sea. The Israelites left Egypt in military formation.

They moved on from Succoth and then camped at Etham at the edge of the wilderness. God went ahead of them in a Pillar of Cloud during the day to guide them on the way, and at night in a Pillar of Fire to give them light; thus they could travel both day and night. The Pillar of Cloud by day and the Pillar of Fire by night never left the people.

Ephesians 4:1-6

I want you to get out there and walk—better yet, run!—on the road God called you to travel. I don't want any of you sitting around on your hands. I don't want anyone strolling off, down some path that goes nowhere. And mark that you do this with humility and discipline—not in fits and starts, but steadily, pouring yourselves out for each other in acts of love, alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences.

You were all called to travel on the same road and in the same direction, so stay together, both outwardly and inwardly. You have one Master, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who rules over all, works through all, and is present in all. Everything you are and think and do is permeated with Oneness.



EASTER FLOWERS 2025

We invite you to donate flowers for display on Easter Sunday, April 20, 2025 to honor loved ones. We will be ordering from Almquist Flowerland in Quincy. There is a choice of three different plants: lilies, tulips or daffodils. The cost is \$14 per plant.

All orders must be in by Thursday, April 3, 2025.

Please complete this form and scan it then email it to office@firstchurchbraintree.com or drop it at the church or mail it to: First Congregational Church, 12 Elm Street, Braintree, MA 02184. You may also call during regular office hours (Mon-Fri, 9:00a - 1:00p) to place an order by phone.

2025 EASTER FLOWER ORDER

Please **PRINT** the names below *exactly* as you wish them to appear in the bulletin.

To order more than 3 plants, please use an additional form.

❖ Given by: (your name) _____

Type: Lily Tulip Daffodil No Preference

In Memory of *or* In Honor of : _____

❖ Given by: (your name) _____

Type: Lily Tulip Daffodil No Preference

In Memory of *or* In Honor of : _____

❖ Given by: (your name) _____

Type: Lily Tulip Daffodil No Preference

In Memory of *or* In Honor of : _____

After Easter Sunday worship, what would you like to do with your plant(s)?

Give it as a gift to First Church (to be delivered to First Church friends) *or*

I will take my plant home for personal use.



Amount due: TOTAL # of plants _____ x \$14 each =
\$ _____

Please make checks payable to

For office use: Order received: _____ \$Amount _____ Check # _____



WELCOME to this Service of Worship at First Congregational Church. Whether you are attending in-person or viewing the live-stream of this morning's service, we're glad you chose to be with us.



Subscribe to the First Church YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTaGrBGnYzfM66pS7Bd4PvA>

First Church Office Hours are Monday - Friday, 9:00 - 1:00

Televised Worship Services are broadcast on BCAM: Verizon Channel 28, Comcast Channel 9, on Saturday at 8:00 AM and Sunday at 10:00 AM.

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First Church Braintree Announcements

Upcoming Meetings

Prudential - Thursday, April 3 at 10am

Deacons - Sunday, April 13 after worship

Leadership Team - Tuesday, April 15 at 7pm (zoom)

Listening Devices Available

Did you hear Pastor Karen's sermon last week? NO? Then perhaps you could use a LISTENING DEVICE! Ask a Deacon for one and give it a try.

There are 3 available but we can order more.

Printed Weekly Blast

The church office will print copies of the weekly email blast for those who aren't online. If you would like a printed copy of the blast for yourself or someone else, please let Deb or Pastor Karen know. Tell us if you'd like to pick it up here at Sunday worship or have it mailed it to your home. We will be mailing the blast to our "at home" folks who do not receive emails and can not attend in person.



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