



Meditation: "You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

~ Psalm 16:11

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March 1, 2026

Second Sunday of Lent

9:30 a.m.

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Prelude *What Wondrous Love is This* Keith Ciccone, organ

Welcome and Announcements Rev. Karen E. Gale

Passing the Peace

Peace be with you!

**Peace be with you!**

Let us pass the peace with one another...

\*Introit

*Tree of Life*

**Tree of Life and awesome mystery,  
In your death we are reborn,  
Though you die in all of history,  
Still you rise with every morn,  
Still you rise with every morn.**

**In our call to be a blessing,  
May we be a blessing true;  
May we live and die confessing  
Christ as Lord of all we do.  
Christ as Lord of all we do.**

\*Call to Worship

This is the day that God has made. Who comes to the house of our Lord?

**We are here. We come as divided people, aware of our differences and our struggles.**  
Christ calls us together. Christ calls us to love. Christ calls us to believe in the promises of faith.

**In this place we become united in faith, united at the table, united in our call, united in God's love for us all.**

The Spirit is alive this morning, igniting our hearts, surfacing the best parts of our selves.

**Let us be together as one people. Let us continue the journey of Lent. Let us worship the Holy One. Amen.**

\*Hymn 41

To God be the Glory

Children's Time

\* Indicates all who are able may stand.

Please silence your cellphones.

## Scripture

## Psalm 121

I look up to the mountains; does my strength come from mountains?  
No, my strength comes from God, who made heaven, and earth, and mountains.  
God won't let you stumble, your Guardian God won't fall asleep.  
Not on your life! Israel's Guardian will never doze or sleep.

God's your Guardian, right at your side to protect you—  
Shielding you from sunstroke, sheltering you from moonstroke.  
God guards you from every evil, guards your very life.  
God guards you when you leave and when you return,  
God guards you now. God guards you always.

## John 3:1-17

There was a man of the Pharisee sect, Nicodemus, a prominent leader among the Jews. Late one night he visited Jesus and said, "Rabbi, we all know you're a teacher straight from God. No one could do all the God-pointing, God-revealing acts you do if God weren't in on it."

Jesus said, "You're absolutely right. Take it from me: Unless a person is born from above, it's not possible to see what I'm pointing to—to God's kingdom."

"How can anyone," said Nicodemus, "be born who has already been born and grown up? You can't re-enter your mother's womb and be born again. What are you saying with this 'born-from-above' talk?"

Jesus said, "You're not listening. Let me say it again. Unless a person submits to this original creation—the 'wind-hovering-over-the-water' creation, the invisible moving the visible, a baptism into a new life—it's not possible to enter God's kingdom. When you look at a baby, it's just that: a body you can look at and touch. But the person who takes shape within is formed by something you can't see and touch—the Spirit—and becomes a living spirit.

"So don't be so surprised when I tell you that you have to be 'born from above'—out of this world, so to speak. You know well enough how the wind blows this way and that. You hear it rustling through the trees, but you have no idea where it comes from or where it's headed next. That's the way it is with everyone 'born from above' by the wind of God, the Spirit of God." Nicodemus asked, "What do you mean by this? How does this happen?"

Jesus said, "You're a respected teacher of Israel and you don't know these basics? Listen carefully. I'm speaking sober truth to you. I speak only of what I know by experience; I give witness only to what I have seen with my own eyes. There is nothing secondhand here, no hearsay. Yet instead of facing the evidence and accepting it, you procrastinate with questions. If I tell you things that are plain as the hand before your face and you don't believe me, what use is there in telling you of things you can't see, the things of God?"

"No one has ever gone up into the presence of God except the One who came down from that Presence, the Son of Man. In the same way that Moses lifted the serpent in the desert so people could have something to see and then believe, it is necessary for the Son

of Man to be lifted up—and everyone who looks up to him, trusting and expectant, will gain a real life, eternal life.

“This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn’t go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again.

\*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

"Saved From? Saved For?"

Rev. Karen E. Gale

Musical Reflection

*Freely, Freely*

Keith Ciccone, Baritone  
Nancy Mills, Soprano

Prayers of the People/Pastoral Prayer

Lord's Prayer

**Our Father (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.**

Dedication of the 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 c. Lavon Baylor, adapt.

**Into your hands, faithful God, we commit our spirits, our substance, and our plans. Come and claim our time, our compassion, our prayers, not just the wealth we are willing to share. Receive our energies and creativity. Let your church become more fully a beacon of hope. We celebrate this opportunity to be a part of your unfolding love for a needy world. Amen.**

## The Sacrament of Communion

Invitation

Prayer of Confession

**O God, like Nicodemus we come with questions about faith and the way to salvation. Hear our repentance this Lent. Receive our humble attempts to do right in an impossibly complicated world. Help us free ourselves from the ties of oppression so that we may advocate for others. Set free our hearts for compassion. God, hear our silent prayers of confession... (silence)...**

Words of Assurance

Words of Institution and Prayer of Consecration

Communion Hymn 534

*Fill My Cup, Lord*

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Jesus, our brother and savior, may we offer your saving grace of compassion, healing, and presence to those we meet. May our Lenten focus help save ourselves from the choices that take us away from you. Pour out your Spirit upon us, O Christ, that this meal may strengthen us for the journey, and that your saving love may take root in our lives. Amen.

\*Hymn 359

*Blessed Assurance*

\*Benediction

Postlude

*What Wondrous Love is This*



The First Congregational Church of Braintree is an Open & Affirming Congregation working in partnership with all churches of the United Church of Christ. We welcome all God's children into Christian faith regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, political stance or theological perspective, national origin, mental health status, physical and cognitive abilities, and the many diverse forms of family configurations. We proclaim and affirm that full and equal participation in the life and leadership of our church is open to all. We seek to continue learning and growing together as the inclusive Body of Christ. We are committed to spreading the light and love of Christ into the world through worship and service.

**Whoever you are and wherever you are on life's journey,  
you are welcome here.**



Rev. Karen E. Gale, Interim Pastor ❖ revkarengale@gmail.com

Keith Ciccone, Director of Music ❖ keciccon@aol.com

Mattie Gietman, Dir. Children's Ministry ❖ mattie@firstchurchbraintree.com

Deb McMartin, Administrator ❖ office@firstchurchbraintree.com

Valerie Fink, Bookkeeper ❖ finance@firstchurchbraintree.com

## First Church Braintree Announcements

- Upcoming Meetings & Events
- Sunday, March 15 @ 11:00am in the Chapel - Church Council
- Tuesday, March 17 @ 7pm Search Team zoom with Pastor Mereschuk
- Thursday, March 19 Deadline to order Easter Plants
- Sunday, March 22 - Crockpot Challenge .
- Sunday, March 29 - Easter Egg Hunt!



**Help Needed!** Can you bring some treats to share for our Coffee Hour one Sunday? **Sign up in the Lower Parish Hall!**

Join us for our

## CROCKPOT CHALLENGE

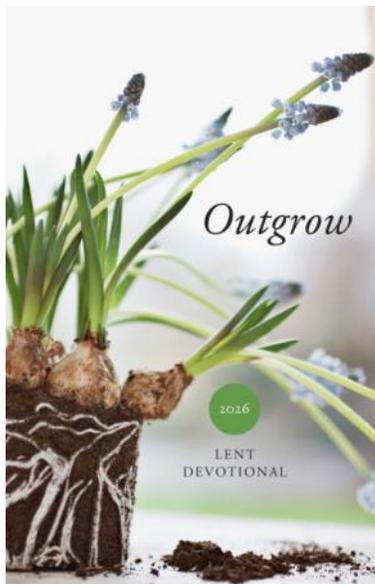
### Sunday, March 22

following the 9:30 Worship Service



Enter your favorite soup, chili, chowder or other crockpot recipe.

Prizes (and bragging rights) are at stake!



**Lenten Devotionals** are available in the back of the church or you can email Deb in the office for the link to read online

First Congregational Church of Braintree

## Holy Week 2026



### Palm Sunday

**Palm Sunday**  
March 29 at 9:30am  
in the Sanctuary &  
streaming live  
With special music.



**Maundy Thursday**  
April 2 at 6:00pm  
in the Sanctuary &  
streaming live  
**Tenebrae Service**  
Candlelight service  
with communion



**Easter Sunday**  
April 5 @ 9:30am  
**Worship  
& Communion**  
in the Sanctuary &  
streaming live

12 Elm Street, Braintree, MA 02184  
firstchurchbraintree.com

# EASTER FLOWERS 2026



We invite you to donate flowers for display on Easter Sunday, April 5, 2026 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 \$15 per plant.

**All orders must be in by Thursday, March 19, 2026.**

Please complete this form and scan it then email it to [office@firstchurchbraintree.com](mailto: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.

## 2026 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 as a gift to First Church (to be delivered to First Church friends) *or*

I will take my plant(s) home for personal use.

Amount due: TOTAL # of plants \_\_\_\_\_ x \$15 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Please make checks payable to  
First Congregational Church of Braintree.*



For office use:    **Order received:** \_\_\_\_\_    **\$Amount** \_\_\_\_\_    **Check #** \_\_\_\_\_