



Why should I dislike anything about my appearance?
I came off the factory line this way. I am perfect.
~ Shonda Rhimes

March 15, 2026

Fourth Sunday of Lent

9:30 a.m.

Prelude Simone Mead, piano

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.**

**Give us eyes to see you clearly,
Make us children of your light;
Give us hearts to live more nearly
As your gospel shining bright.
As your gospel shining bright.**

*Call to Worship c. Jonny Baker

God of justice, peace and righteousness, come into our midst this morning.

Breathe your breath, your Spirit of prophecy, your energy, your imagination on us.

Wake us up. Open our eyes. Unplug our ears.

That we might hear. That we might see. That we might dream.

That we might follow the ways of your extraordinary kingdom,

And build that kingdom here, in this place and time. Amen.

*Hymn 354

Open My Eyes, That I May See

Unison Prayer

**Discerner of hearts,
you look beneath our outward appearance
and see your image in each of us.**

**Banish in us the blindness
that prevents us from recognizing truth,
so we may see the world through your eyes
and with the compassion of Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Children's Time

* Indicates all who are able may stand.

Please silence your cellphones.

Scripture

1 Samuel 16:1-13

God addressed Samuel: "So, how long are you going to mope over Saul? You know I've rejected him as king over Israel. Fill your flask with anointing oil and get going. I'm sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I've spotted the very king I want among his sons."

"I can't do that," said Samuel. "Saul will hear about it and kill me." God said, "Take a heifer with you and announce, 'I've come to lead you in worship of God, with this heifer as a sacrifice.' Make sure Jesse gets invited. I'll let you know what to do next. I'll point out the one you are to anoint."

Samuel did what God told him. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the town fathers greeted him, but apprehensively. "Is there something wrong?" "Nothing's wrong. I've come to sacrifice this heifer and lead you in the worship of God. Prepare yourselves, be consecrated, and join me in worship." He made sure Jesse and his sons were also consecrated and called to worship.

When they arrived, Samuel took one look at Eliab and thought, "Here he is! God's anointed!" But God told Samuel, "Looks aren't everything. Don't be impressed with his looks and stature. I've already eliminated him. God judges persons differently than humans do. Men and women look at the face; God looks into the heart."

Jesse then called up Abinadab and presented him to Samuel. Samuel said, "This man isn't God's choice either." Next Jesse presented Shammah. Samuel said, "No, this man isn't either." Jesse presented his seven sons to Samuel. Samuel was blunt with Jesse, "God hasn't chosen any of these."

Then Samuel asked Jesse, "Is this it? Are there no more sons?" "Well, yes, there's the runt. But he's out tending the sheep." Samuel ordered Jesse, "Go get him. We're not moving from this spot until he's here." Jesse sent for him. He was brought in, the very picture of health—bright-eyed, good-looking.

God said, "Up on your feet! Anoint him! This is the one." Samuel took his flask of oil and anointed him, with his brothers standing around watching. The Spirit of God entered David like a rush of wind, God vitally empowering him for the rest of his life. Samuel left and went home to Ramah.

Ephesians 5:8-14

For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Walk as children of light, for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness; rather, expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly, but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

"Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

*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.**

*Hymn 467

Abide with Me

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.

Musical Reflection

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.Rev. Abigail Carlisle-Wilke

**Lord your light calls us forth to follow and serve you.
Your light still shines for all to see in this world.
May we continue to reflect your light in our lives,
in our service, in our words and in our deeds.
Accept our gifts and offerings. Amen.**

*Hymn 48

Love Divine, All Love Excelling

*Benediction

Postlude



Simone Mead is a classical pianist based in Boston. She currently plays for Boston Ballet, Boston Conservatory at Berklee, and José Mateo Ballet Theatre. Simone earned her Bachelor's degree from the Royal College of Music in London and a Master of Music from the Manhattan School of Music in New York City.

Thank you for joining us at this Service of Worship at
First Congregational Church of Braintree, UCC.

Of all the things you could have done this morning, we're glad you chose to be with us.



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

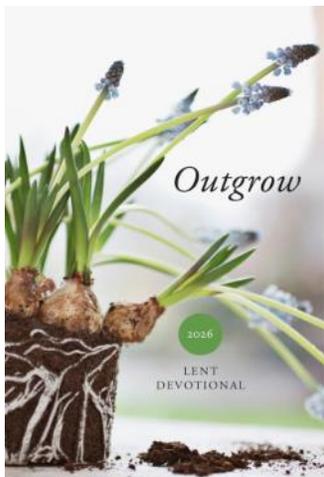
Valerie Fink, Bookkeeper ❖ finance@firstchurchbraintree.com

First Church Braintree Announcements



Today's Coffee Hour Hosts:
Kris Johnson and Lorraine Gill

- Upcoming Meetings & Events
- TODAY 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!



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

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!

Hop on over to First Church Braintree for Easter fun!

Easter Egg Hunt

Sunday, March 29

@ 2pm *Bring your own Basket*

***Egg Hunt begins promptly @ 2pm**
Free Easter Bunny Photos



This event is FREE. Donations of non-perishable food items, grocery gift cards or cash for the **Marge Crispin Food Pantry** are welcome and appreciated.

We Need Help:

- Stuffing plastic eggs during Coffee Hour
- Bringing flyers to places of business, the library, etc.
- Day of: registration table, crowd control, donation table
- Set up and clean up

Contact Mattie if you can help.
mattie@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 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 # _____