

Good Sunday morning from a cloudy hill in Rockport!

It's Father's Day! It's a holiday "of honoring fatherhood and paternal bonds, as well as the influence of fathers in society. In the United States, Father's Day was founded by Sonora Smart Dodd, and celebrated on the third Sunday of June for the first time in 1910. Along with her five brothers, she was raised by her father alone, and after attending a Mother's Day in a church in 1909, she convinced the Spokane Ministerial Association to celebrate Father's Day worldwide. The day is held on various dates across the world, and different regions maintain their own traditions of honoring fatherhood." (from en.wikipedia.org)

What does Father's Day mean to you? As a child, I remember my mother would help me buy a box of King Edward Cigars for my father for Father's Day. My father smoked cigars, and chewed tobacco, most of his adult life, right up to his last few years before he died in 1991 at the age of 85. I wish I still had one of those great King Edward Cigars boxes I gave my father! I wish I still had my father.... But as with all our loved ones who have died, they never die in our memories, do they? They live on *through* us, if not *standing beside* us.... Think of your father today, no matter whether he was (or perhaps still is!) a "good father," or a "not so good one" for you.... His life is molded into your life....

Friday evening, we were treated in our sanctuary to the creative talents of Finnish vocalist, pianist and songwriter, Eeppi Ursin, compliments of the Finnish Heritage House and the efforts of our own Jackie Harjula. It was an amazing concert! Eeppi's performance was filled with just what we need right now – soul and light, grace and humility, love and goodwill. You can "go to her" on Facebook or YouTube and see her sing. You can buy her albums at iTunes Store or Spotify. I bought two! She also has CD's, for those of you who still have CD players! I do hope we can have her back again sometime in the future....

And I hope I'll see many of you in church this morning. We will begin at the beginning and focus our thoughts on Genesis 1:1-5 as we remember our fathers and all they have taught us....

Blessings to each one this early June morn..... Susan

p.s. I'll plan to post my sermon later today on both my Facebook page – freerangepastor, and the church's Facebook page – the Federated Church of Thomaston.... Thanks for tuning in, if you choose to do so!

p.s.s. Sorry if the spacing is a little "off" in what appears below..... some days computer programs don't come together very well!

“In the beginning....”
A Sermon for the Federated Church of Thomaston
Thomaston, Maine
Sunday, June 19, 2022
Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet
Scripture: Genesis 1:1-5

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” Genesis 1:1-5

God of all creation, help us to believe the opening words of the first book of the Bible. Help us to know in the very depths of our souls that *in the beginning* there was nothing but you, and that it was you who brought everything into being. Teach us to stand in wonder of your awesome power, in the beginning, and to this day. Amen.

Two weeks ago, my sermon title was “In the last days....” which were the words of the prophet Joel as quoted by Peter in Acts 2:1-21. It was Pentecost two Sundays ago, the celebration of the beginnings of the community of believers who would become known as Christians.... and now we are in what is known in the Christian calendar as “ordinary time.” “Ordinary time” takes us to Advent which begins on November 27th this year.

One overarching idea *cradles* the words of the entire Bible.

One central concept *underlies* all that is spoken, done and remembered in the Bible.

One figure is *beyond doubt* and without blemish.

One name is *unquestioned* and never crossed.

That idea, concept, figure and name is *God*.

The first five verses of the first book of the Bible, Genesis, give us the basis – the groundwork – for all of life as we know it as Christians. God started the whole ball rolling. God calls the shots from dawn to dusk and back again. God IS in charge.... so the Bible tells us.

So here's the question for the day – do you believe it? Do you believe that God started all of life, defined the days and nights, and keeps life moving over and over and over?

“The Bible always *assumes*, and *never argues*, God's existence. Although everything else had a beginning, God has always been,”^[1] [according to the Bible].

We live in a time in which it seems just about everything is argued and nothing is assumed – almost everything is questioned for its truth or its falseness, questioned for its worth or its insignificance in our lives, questioned for its necessity or its obstruction of our everyday activities.

We question, we doubt, we mistrust, we deny, we ignore, we fight, we try to overcome all that is not provable or useful.

We live in a world in which the word “digital” has become all powerful – whether it comes in the form of a camera, a DVD player, an electronic piano, a fully programmed dishwasher or microwave, a TV screen that is so sharp we might think the image on it IS the thing it portrays....

And now there is AI – do you know what that is? “Artificial intelligence.” Who will need the human brain once artificial intelligence tells us everything we need to know? And then there are the “drones”.... watching us from high above in the sky, from golf courses and football stadiums to traffic accidents to war zones to everywhere under the sun....

If we can't see it, we don't believe it. If it doesn't produce results, we get rid of it. If it doesn't make us happy or rich or more personally satisfied, we get a bigger, better or more powerful one – whatever IT is – so that we will feel better, in some way, than we did before we had IT.

I have to wonder what God – whoever/however God is – thinks about all of this. “In the beginning,” don't you think it must have seemed simple to God? It sounds simple in the Bible, doesn't it? God created the heavens and the earth, the light and the dark, and everything that followed. And here we are – thousands of years later – doing some things that make life easier, and too many things that make life difficult and complicated and full of chaos and distress.

All the while, we wonder why life has to be so complicated, and why people don't get along, and why there has to be war, and why children starve by the millions each day while so many people in this country, and oligarchs of every country, seek bigger, sharper images on TV screens and more possessions to bring happiness. I have to believe God must be shaking a holy head over all that's going on in the world right now that is not life giving, but life taking.

“In the beginning,” the Bible begins, “when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep....” (Genesis 1:1) Now, honestly, how could this observation been made and attested to in writing when nobody, no human person, was there to observe it?

Creation stories abound in early spiritual texts. The Bible’s creation story is just one of at least twenty-five creation stories that were “created” long ago.... We have been a curious lot, from the beginning.... searching for answers to the questions of life, how it began, how it progressed, how it stepped back and started again. We are a curious lot, us humans, and we have been curious since the beginning of *our* creation....

As Christians our “go to” source for all we know about God and all God’s people is the Bible. It is our link to our ancient, sacred past and our guidebook for how to go forward, *and* in places utterly confusing and confounding.

My favorite theologian, Frederick Buechner, says this about reading the Bible: “In short, one way to describe the Bible, written by many different people over a period of three thousand years and more, would be to say that it is a disorderly collection of sixty-odd books which are often tedious, barbaric, obscure, and teem with contradictions and inconsistencies.

It is a swarming compost of a book, an Irish stew of poetry and propaganda, law and legalism, myth and murk, history and hysteria. Over the centuries it has become hopelessly associated with tub-thumping evangelism and dreary piety, with surperannuated superstition and blue-nosed moralizing, with ecclesiastical authoritarianism and crippling literalism. Let them who try to start out at Genesis and work their way conscientiously to Revelation beware....

And yet just because it is a book about both the sublime and the unspeakable, it is a book also about life the way it really is. It is a book about people who at one and the same time can be both believing and unbelieving, innocent and guilty, crusaders and crooks, full of hope and full of despair. In other words, it is a book about us. And it is a book about God. If it is not about the God we believe in, then it is about the God we do not believe in. One way or another, the story we find in the Bible is our own story.”^[2]

And so, this Summer, rather than focusing on the readings of the RCL, that’s the Revised Common Lectionary, we’ll have a little VBS on Sunday mornings.... That’s “vacation Bible school” for those of us who did not grow up attending VBS each Summer. We will focus on texts from the Old Testament, which is not so

familiar to some of us, and think about how they relate to texts from the New Testament, which is much more familiar to many Christians.

The Old Testament is not a story of an angry God and the New Testament a story of a loving God. The entire Bible is THE story of God as we turn to it for an understanding of our past and guidance for our future.

Two weeks ago, I said, “The Bible tells me two things – first and foremost, God is love, and as the prophet Joel proclaimed long ago, ‘*In the last days* it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit **upon all flesh**, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.” (Acts 2:17)

And today, we turn to the start of all things.... “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)

From beginning to end, the Bible is about God.... and about us as God’s creations. Let the people say, “Amen.”

Federated Church in Thomaston

United Church of Christ United Methodist Church

All Are Welcome

Sunday, June 19, 2022 – Father’s Day

Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet, Pastor Alice Billheimer, Organist/ Choir Director
Lector: Richard Kortright

Please be respectfully silent once our worship service has begun.

An asterisk () indicates where you are invited to stand.*

***Bold print** indicates that the people speak these responses & prayers.*

GATHERING FOR WORSHIP

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude My Jesus, As Thou Wilt -- hymn tune "Jewett, music by Carl Maria Von Weber, arr by George Blake

Call to Worship

One: We lift our voices in praise of fathers and of all that is holy and life giving!

Many: We begin again this day, as if it was the first day of renewal for our spirits, our hopes, and our longings for peace within and without!

All: We give thanks to God: **Mystery, Teacher, Revealer, Source, Life, and Power.** Let us worship God!

***Opening Hymn** “Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty” #64 Blue Hymnal

A Responsive Reading “A Prayer of the People” (see insert)

A Moment of Silence

SERVICE OF THE WORD

Scripture Reading Genesis 1:1-5

***Gloria Patri No. 70 Glory Be to the Father....**

Message “In the beginning....”

***Hymn of Meditation** “Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise” #103 Blue hymnal

RESPONDING IN FAITH

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns with God and Each Other

Pastoral Prayer & The Lord’s Prayer.....

Our Father 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.

rtory Folk Song -- Charles Demorest

xology No. 95 Blue “Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow....”

***Prayer of Dedication**

***Closing Hymn** “Now Thank We All Our God” #102 Blue Hymnal

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Postlude Jupiter Theme from "The Planets' Suite" by Gustav Holst

Revised Common Lectionary Readings for Sunday, June 26, 2022
2 Kings 2:1-2, 6-14; Psalm 77:1-2, 11-20; Galatians 5:1, 13-25; Luke 9:51-62

Especially we continue to hold in prayer our Ukrainian brothers and sisters.... & those who have lost loved ones in Buffalo, NY and Uvalde, Texas and beyond..... due to gun violence....

Please hold in your prayers all those affected by the coronavirus and the families of those who have died from the virus.... And all those families affected by the use of addictive drugs among their members....And all those dealing with the ravages of cancer near and far..... And all those affected, which should be every one of us, by the cruel condition of racism which continues to take the lives of too many of our Black brothers and sisters....And all those who have worked tirelessly for the building and rebuilding of our nation into one people, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all And, from Jackie a request for prayers for Kyle Cloudier... and for "Cody," who doesn't live locally but needs prayers for guidance; Kristin Parker O'Neal, Jo Ann Parker's daughter, who has had brain surgery and is home now!; Enid, Ann Foster, Carol Moss, Julie Pollitt, Zeke Bryant, John Flaherty, Heather Van Buskirk, and for Tiffany, Lucy's granddaughter... And for Arlene from NH.... And for Rev. Wayne Sawyer

Please feel free to contact Susan by phone (207)322-1948 or by email at freerangepastor@gmail.com to have her add or drop any names from the prayer list AND to let her know if you would like for her to stop by for a visit sometime. She's always glad to have a chat with you!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Tuesday-6/21/22.....7:00 pm: Thomaston Historical Society Meeting

Thursday-6/23/22.....5:00 pm: Ladies Picnic & Pound Auction at Corinne Ervin's Home

Sunday-6/26/22.....9:30 am: Worship Service

Suggested Food Pantry

Donation.....Rice

The flowers for the Alter this week are given in memory of Helmut Steger by Mary Lou and his sons, John and Andy.

Deacons for June, 2022: Mary Lou Steger
Reminders for next Sunday, June 26, 2022:

Greeter/Usher: Frances

Hernandez

Coffee

Host:

Lector: Alice

Bilheimer

Flowers: Ja

net

Dwellely

Collection

Total for Sundays, June 12, 2022:

Pledges - \$383.00

Loose - \$196.00

Investment income - \$ 5.33 (Putnam

Dividend)

Total

- \$584.33

The 2022 weekly budgeted operating cost for the Church and parsonage is \$1623.00 per week.

**Federated Church of Thomaston
United Church of Christ
&
United Methodist Church
Together Since 1929**

Sunday, June 19, 2022

8 Hylar Street, Thomaston, Maine 04861 (207) 354-6105
To contact the pastor via e-mail: freerangepastor@gmail.com
WiFi password is #1Church

^[1]*The NIV Study Bible*, 10th Anniversary Edition, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995, p. 6.

^[2]Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking, A Seeker's ABC*, revised and expanded, HarperCollins Publishers, 1973, 1993, p. 9.