

First United Methodist Church  
of Shelton, Connecticut  
*Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors.*



March 30, 2025 | 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent

**Revised Common Lectionary Texts**

Joshua 5:9-12 | Psalm 32

2 Corinthians 5:16-21 | Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

**Prelude:** "Grace Greater Than Our Sin"

Towner

**Welcome & Announcements**

**Centering Prayer**

**\*Call to Worship**

N. Townly / MinistryMatters.com

Leader: How blessed we are that God forgives us and loves us!

**People: For all those times when we have fallen short of what God would have us be, we have been forgiven.**

L: God makes us new in God's Holy Spirit!

**P: Now is the time to joyfully accept the newness of life which God offers to us.**

L: Come, let us worship and be thankful.

**P: Let us open our hearts to the peace and joy of God. AMEN.**

**\*Opening Hymn:** "What Wonderful Love is This"

UMH 292

**Prayer of Confession**

V. Bridgeman Davis | UMCDM

**God, we admit that we are prone to try to hide our sins; to keep our mouths shut and hope we are not found out. But there is no place to hide from you. Our silence only makes us sick in body and spirit. But you delight in forgiving us and in covering our sin. You are glad when we confess our failings and our needs. Hide us, O God, from trouble; teach us the way we should go. Deliver us from our own stubbornness, and draw us near, we pray. Amen.**

## **Moment of Silent Confessional Prayer & Words of Assurance**

**The Psalm:** Psalm 32

UMH 788

**Response to the Psalm:** "You Are My Hiding Place"

TFWS 2055

**Epistle Reading:** 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

This is the Word of God for the people of God.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Children's Message:** "Ambassadors"

**Children's Hymn:** "God is So Good" (v.1-4)

TFWS 2056

**\*Gospel Reading:** Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

This is the Word of God for the people of God.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Sermon:** "What Holds You Back?"

**Anthem:** "Love Lifted Me" (W&S 3101)

Rowe & Smith

**Refrain:** Love lifted even me! Love lifted even me! When nothing else could help, love lifted me! Love lifted even me! Love lifted even me! When nothing else could help, love lifted me!

**Prayers of the People/Pastoral Prayer**

**The Lord's Prayer**

UMH 895

**Passing of the Peace**

**Invitation To Offer Our Gifts**

**Offertory:** "He Is the Answer"

Lange

**\*Presenting Our Gifts:** "Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow." UMH 95

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;**

**Praise God, all creatures here below;**

**Praise God above, ye heavenly host;**

**Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

## \*Prayer of Dedication

UMC Discipleship Ministries (adapted)

**Gracious God, our refuge and restorer, we bring these gifts as a sign of our return to you. Like the prodigal, we long to feel your embrace and live in the light of your grace. As we observe this holy time of Lent, may our offerings reflect hearts that are turning back to you. Help us see the rainbow of your promise even in our struggles. Bless these gifts and our lives so that we may share your steadfast love with the world. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.**

\*Sending Hymn: "Amazing Grace (My Chains are Gone)"

W&S 3104

## Benediction

Postlude: "I Know That My Redeemer Liveth"

Handel

\*Please stand in body or spirit as you are able.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

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### **UMCOR SUNDAY is TODAY**

March is UMCOR month. March 30 is the day that the entire United Methodist Church collects to support the administration of the United Methodist Committee on Relief, the arm of our church that is there to help after disasters strike.

Our donations on UMCOR Sunday make it possible for 100% of all gifts given for disaster relief to flow to the people in need. In short, our help on March 30 pays the operating expense of UMCOR for the full year. And in this time of diminished governmental assistance, the need is greater than ever.

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## **COMMUNITY DINNERS & DEVOTIONS: UNIFIED IN HOPE**

Our final Lenten community dinner will be here at First UMC of Shelton on April 9. This past Wednesday's dinner at Huntington Congregational Church was a great time of fellowship, a brief devotion, and conversation. **Please plan to join us on April 9.**

First UMC of Shelton will be hosting on April 9. If you would like to be part of the dinner preparation, please speak with Pastor Bill.

### **Shelton Community Lenten Dinner & Devotions**

*'UNIFIED IN HOPE'*

Dinner at 6 P.M., Devotions at 7 P.M.

**April 9: First United Methodist Church**

188 Rocky Rest Road

A freewill offering to benefit programs at Spooner House Homeless Shelter will be taken.

**ALL ARE WELCOME!**

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## **TRUDY BICKNELL'S ARRANGEMENTS**

As announced during our March 23 worship service and in a special notice that went out on Monday, Trudy Bicknell's funeral service will be held at First UMC of Shelton at 10 :00 AM Saturday, April 5. Calling hours are from 4-7 PM Friday at Spinelli-Ricciuti Funeral Home, 62 Beaver Street in Ansonia. The link to Trudy's obituary follows:

<https://www.spinellifuneralhome.com/obituary/trudy-bicknell>

If you are available to help with the repast in Wilkinson Hall on Saturday morning, please let the office know so we can coordinate the effort. Our hospitality is a vital and appreciated part of our church's ministry to people in their time of need. Thank you.

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## **DONE! THE RUSTED DOOR REPLACEMENT**

We have collected the funds needed to move forward with the Wilkenson Hall exit door replacement. **THANK YOU** to all of you who gave so generously. With direct donations large and small as well as funds raised by our luncheons – THANK YOU Pat F! – we were able to accomplish our goal.

The down-payment check has been sent to our vendor, and the work will be done in April. Thanks again for your stewardship as we maintain this building with which we have been entrusted.

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## **SANCTUARY LIGHTING**

To keep the light on facilities for a moment, we will be replacing all flood and spotlight bulbs in the sanctuary on Monday, March 31. Expect to see a brighter worship space soon.

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## **TEXT ALERTS OPT-IN**

The winter storms made it clear that we need a more comprehensive way to communicate closures and other important issues. We are starting a new text-message alert system. If you would like to be part of it, just fill out the simple form in the narthex and leave it in the drop box.

While we anticipate using it infrequently, this text messaging system will help us ensure that everyone gets the message when needed. Questions? See Sal I or Pastor Bill. And thanks, Chris C, for the supporting artwork!

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## **FOOD PANTRY**

Our food pantry is in need of vegetables and beans (black bean, chickpeas, etc.). Thank you for your generous support so we can continue to help our neighbors in need.



**The Prodigal Son**

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## WEEKLY EMAIL NEWSLETTER

An email newsletter is sent out each Wednesday. Please have any items for submission to the church office by Wednesday at 9 am.

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## TO REACH PASTOR BILL

Please call or text 475-282-2800. He may also be reached via email: [pastor@umcshelton.org](mailto:pastor@umcshelton.org). His office hours at the church office are Mondays and Fridays from 9:00 am to 2 pm (but may vary from week to week).

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## SERVING TODAY:

Bill Florin, Pastor  
Ron Giannattasio, Organist  
Pam Florin, Liturgist  
Sal Iorfino, Video & Sound Tech

## CHURCH LEADERSHIP:

Bill Florin, Pastor  
Ron Giannattasio, Organist

Bob Singletary, Chair. of Church Council  
Bob Wood, Chair. of the Board of Trustees  
Jorge Varas Chair. of Staff Parish Relations Committee

# WELCOME

We welcome you to our worship and our church community. We are so glad you are here. We invite you to participate in the service as much as you feel comfortable and to sit out parts of the service you might not yet feel comfortable with. Wherever you are in your journey of faith, you are welcome here. As our "Welcoming Statement" says, "We welcome **all** to full inclusion in the life and ministry of our church."

(see below for complete "Welcome" and "Mission" statements)

**SUNDAY WORSHIP // 10:00 also live-streamed & recorded  
Fellowship 11:00 am**

## **Welcoming Church Statement**

A welcoming family of God committed to becoming more and more like Jesus Christ.

We affirm and respect each individual as a child of God. We celebrate the uniqueness of each person and welcome people of every age, ethnicity, and race, sexual orientation and gender identity, marital status, socio-economic situation, and physical/mental ability.

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we strive to create a community of faith that reflects Christ's message of love and justice. We invite all to full inclusion in the life and ministry of our church in Christ.

**FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF SHELTON**  
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