

Installation Service

*of
Rev. Dr. Kevin Downer
as pastor of*



October 23, 2022



Windham Association

Southern New England Conference

United Church of Christ

Living the Love & Justice of Jesus

**Due to the incidence of Covid-19 in the area, you
are encouraged to mask while in the building.**

We Gather

PRELUDE

*PROCESSIONAL In the Midst of New Dimensions vs. 1, 3, & 4

1 In the midst of new di-men-sions, in the face of chang-ing ways,
 2 Through the flood of starv-ing peo - ple, war - ring fac-tions and de - spair,
 3 As we stand a world di - vid - ed by our own self - seek - ing schemes,
 4 We are man and we are wom-an, all per-sua-sions, old and young,
 5 Should the threats of dire pre-dic-tions cause us to with - draw in pain,

C C/B F C F Am7 Dm7 G C

Who will lead the pil - grim peo - ples wan-dering in their sep - arate ways?
 Who will lift the ol - ive branch-es? Who will light the flame of care?
 Grant that we, your glob - al vil - lage, might en - vi - sion wid - er dreams.
 Each a gift in your cre - a - tion, each a love song to be sung.
 May your blaz-ing phoe-nix spir - it res - ur - rect the church a - gain.

Refrain
 Am Em F C F C G7 C Dsus4 D7 G7sus4 G7 Am

God of rain-bow, fier - y pil - lar, lead-ing where the ea - gles soar, We your

Em F C F C/E F C/E F C/E Dm7 G7 C

peo-ple, ours the jour-ney now and ev - er, now and ev - er, now and ev - er - more.

WELCOME

Kathy Packard & Rick Singh

CENTERING MUSIC

CENTERING PRAYER (In Unison) Rev. Debbie Pallatto-Fontaine

Source: *A Pilgrim's Prayer* by Thomas Merton

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going.

I do not see the road ahead of me.

I cannot know for certain where it will end....

Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following Your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please You,
does in fact please You.

And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.

I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.

And I know that if I do this, You will lead me by the right road,
though I may know nothing about it.

Therefore, will I trust You always though I may seem lost in the
shadow of death. I will not fear, for You are ever with me,
and You will never leave me to face my perils alone.

PRAYER RESPONSE There Is One Among Us, *Iona Community*

**There is One among us whom we do not know,
host of highest heaven present here below.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION ending with LORD'S PRAYER

Source: *New Zealand Prayer Book, abridged*

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,

Source of all that is and that shall be,

Father and Mother of us all, Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name echoes through the universe! The
way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world!

Your will be done by all created beings!

Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope
and come on earth. With the bread we need for today, feed us.

In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us. In times of
temptation and test, strengthen us.

From trials too great to endure, spare us. From the grip of all
that is evil, free us. For you are the glory of the power that is
love, now and forever. Amen

** Please rise in body or spirit*

We Listen

PRAYER RESPONSE

**There is One among us whom we do not know,
host of highest heaven present here below.**

FIRST READING

Romans 12:1-21

Toby Bishop

GOSPEL READING

Mark 4:30-23

MESSAGE

Making a Nest in the Shade

Rev. Dr. Jamie Harrison, Pastor Emeritus

SONG OF REFLECTION Joy Comes Back

Words and music by Ruthie Foster

Chorus:

I want to be rea-dy. I want to be rea-dy.

I want to be rea-dy, when joy comes back to me

I've been down-hearted. I've been down-hearted.

I've been down-hearted, but I won't be down too long. (Chorus)

I've been too long cry-in. Been too long cry-in.

Been too long cry-in. I ain't gonna cry no more. (Chorus)

I've been tied to the ground, Lord.

Tied to the ground, Lord. Tied to the ground, Lord.

I'm gettin' lighter every day.

I've been surrounded by midnight.

I've been surrounded by midnight,

Surrounded by midnight, the sun's gonna warm my face.

(Chorus 2x)

While living in Austin, TX, Toby and Rev Kev became friends with Ruthie Foster. They enjoyed hosting Ruthie and friends for dinner and sharing good conversation with her as they relaxed in their garden.

We Respond

CALL FOR THE OFFERING

Rev. Elizabeth Garrigan-Byerly

Today's offering will benefit the Mustard Seed Grants of the Windham Association. Mustard Seed Grants provide one-time only funding for new ministries that grow, develop, and stimulate others to share in that ministry.

***DOXOLOGY Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow #95**

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

Praise God, all creatures here below;

Praise God for all that Love has done,

Creator, Christ and Spirit, one. Amen.

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

Charlene Swanson

Dear God, we open our hearts in gratitude for your constant love and guidance. Thank you for blessing us with such a spiritually vibrant church community and for walking with us on this journey of finding a Pastor whose heart and ministry are aligned with our own.

As Jesus says in Matthew 7:7 "Ask, and you will receive. Search, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened for you."

We have asked in prayer for a Pastor whose heart feels aligned with the heart of our congregation, someone who can lead and support us in the ministry we envision for the future of our church and in service to our community.

We trust you know our hearts and needs even more fully than we know our own.

OUR CALL

Jim Nowak

The Pastoral Search Team included the words from today's Prayer of Dedication in the congregation's search profile.

OUR COVENANTS

Rev. Dr. Sue Foster

Rev. Elizabeth Garrigan-Byerly

Our responses today are as follows:

***People of First Congregational Church of Woodstock:**

We, the people of the First Congregational Church of Woodstock, receive Rev. Dr. Kevin Downer as our pastor and teacher, promising to pray for him and his family, to participate in conversations, to explore questions and new ways of being and doing “church,” and to express love and grace amid uncertainty and messiness.

With God’s guidance, we promise to walk together and work together and wonder how God is calling us to reflect more fully God’s love, Christ’s compassion, the justice of Jesus, and the Spirit of healing and hope in our relationships with ourselves, others, creation, and our Creator.

We gather with him and with the United Church of Christ as a sign of our mutual ministry in Christ’s name.

***Members of the Windham Association:**

We, the members of the Windham Association, gather with you, the people and the pastor and teacher of the First Congregational Church of Woodstock, as a sign of our covenant and in celebration of our mutual ministry in Christ’s name.

OUR PRAYERS FOR OUR SHARED MINISTRY TO HEAL THE WORLD

Rev. Dr. Sue Foster and Debby Kirk

You are invited to bring your prayer flags forward during the song. Please walk up the side aisles and hand them to the usher. Then return to your seat, walking down the center aisle.

The search team concluded the congregation’s profile with the poem “Continue.” And friend of the congregation, Sally Rogers, has graciously allowed us to sing “We will Build this House.” We share these words as our collective prayer, prophetic call, and commitment to listen deeply to the wisdom of others, build one another up, and work together to heal our relationships, communities, and God’s world.

DECLARATION OF INSTALLATION AND PRESENTATION OF GIFTS

Rev. Elizabeth Garrigan-Byerly

*CLOSING SONG No Time to Feel Hopeless by Sally Rogers

You read a book one word at a time, one
learn to swim one stroke at a time, one
word at a time. You read a book one word at a time un-til your book is
stroke at a time. You learn to swim one stroke at a time and then you can cross the
through. You pool. There's No time to feel hope-less! No time to feel hope-less
No time to feel hope less, when there's
so much work do!

You walk ten miles
One step at a time, one step at a time.
You walk ten miles one step at a time
Until your journey's through

You build a house
One brick at a time, one brick at a time
You build a house one brick at a time
And then you enjoy the view.

CHORUS

We live our lives
One breath at a time, one breath at a time
We live our lives one breath at a time
Until our time is through

We'll fix this world
One mess at a time, one mess at a time
We'll fix this world one mess at a time
Together we'll all pull through.

CHORUS

Sally Rogers says this song was inspired by the words of justice activist Dorothy Day, who said; "No one has a right to sit down and feel hopeless. There is too much work to do."

* Please rise in body or spirit

***BENEDICTION (in Unison)**

“Do all the good you can, In all the ways you can,
At all the times you can, To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can.” *attributed to John Wesley*

***CLOSING ALLELUIA**

POSTLUDE Fugue in E Flat Major BWV 552

Johann Sebastian Bach

Special notes and greetings:

Beloved FCCW Congregation,

As you celebrate the installation of the Rev. Dr. Kevin Downer as your pastor, I am delighted to add my blessing to the ones God is most assuredly pouring out this day.

Though I cannot be there in person today, I am with you in spirit and sending my prayers to accompany yours.

May your relationship as pastor and congregation be a source of joy, comfort, and inspiration. May you receive one another with open hearts, curious minds, and gentle hands. May you carry forward the proud legacy of this congregation while also adapting with creativity and flexibility as the Spirit carries you forward in new ways. May your shared ministry continue to embody God’s realm of love and justice for all.

Every blessing on this day and always,

Rev. Jocelyn B. Gardner Spencer

Dear First Congregational Church of Woodstock,

Thank you for this opportunity to share a few thoughts about your new minister. We share in your joy as you install the Reverend Doctor Kevin Downer as your pastor!

“Rev Kev” was faithful in his service to Greendale People’s Church, and we know he will be a blessing to your congregation and to the ministry work of your church family. We have many fond memories of his ministry and service with us in Worcester. We wish him well as he labors in Christian ministry with your congregation.

We will keep Pastor Kevin, Toby, and your church in our thoughts and prayers as you gather in celebration for this installation service on October 23, 2022. We will continue our prayerful support as you move together into the future. Today, and in the days to come, God will be faithful.

Yours in Christ,

***Dennis Christo, Chair, Governing Board, and the people of
Greendale People’s Church (Worcester, Massachusetts)***

Greetings Rev. Downer and the people of First Congregational Church of Woodstock.

On behalf of the people of All God's Children MCC, I send congratulations and blessings on the installation as pastor of First Congregational Church. It is such a gift to witness the weaving together of pastor and people in the Divine blessings of ministry. The Holy One is moving among you in ways that will bring vision and mission, healing and blessing, as well as inspiration and transformation.

I have witnessed and experienced Rev. Downer's gifts of discernment, organization, visioning, creativity, and relationship building. Rev. Downer has a pastor's heart which oozes with God's gifts of healing, transformation, blessing and more, which allows the Spirit to walk in and through him and those he serves.

Many blessings on your continued ministry endeavors as pastor and people. I look forward to celebrating how lives are changed and blessed as you open your heart and lives to the essence of Kin-dom Living.

In celebration and blessing,

Rev. Kenny Callaghan,

All God's Children MCC Minneapolis, MN

We would like to thank everyone who helped make this service possible, especially the following organizers and participants:

Kathy Packard and Rick Singh, Senior Deacons

Debby Kirk, Christina Manuilow, Bruce Lyman, Aimee Ahearn,
Deacons

Rev. Dr. Debbie Pallatto-Fontaine, Former Interim Minister, First
Congregational Church of Woodstock, and Bridge Pastor, Church of
the Good Shepherd

Toby Bishop, liturgist

Rev. Dr. James S. Harrison, Pastor Emeritus of First Congregational
Church of Woodstock

Charlene Swanson, co-chair of the Search Committee

Jim Nowak, Council Moderator and co-chair of the Search Committee

Rev. Elizabeth (Liz) Garrigan-Byerly, Area Conference Minister for the
North Central Region, Southern New England Conference, United
Church of Christ

Rev. Dr. Susan J. Foster, Moderator for the Windham Association and
Pastor of the East Woodstock Congregational Church

Dr. Leilani Nixon, Organist

Maria Sangiolo, Music Director

Jen Beck, Leslie Sweetnam, Carol Rossetti, Rick Lamarre, Donna
Dufresne, Jan Lamarre, Alexandra Lyman, Tom Chase, Laura Boies,
Holly Ware, Ginny Moylan, Kathy Packard, and Charles Bottieri;
Musicians

And everyone who helped with our reception.

A brief (re)introduction to our Pastor

Rev. Dr. Kevin Downer grew up in Pomfret, graduated from Putnam High, went to college in Worcester, and earned an MBA from UCONN. He was baptized and confirmed in the UCC, volunteered as a young adult at Silver Lake Conference Center, and was a member of several UCCs in CT.

A second career pastor, he spent more than ten years as a consultant, helping businesses use emerging technologies to streamline processes and enhance customer, employee, and stakeholder relationships.

Ordained in 2006 by the Metropolitan Community Churches, he returned to his spiritual roots in the UCC receiving full standing through Privilege of Call in 2018. He holds a Master's in Divinity from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary and a Doctorate in Ministry from Chicago Theological Seminary.

He planted a diverse, emerging church in Chicago and served congregations in Minneapolis, Los Angeles, San Antonio, Toronto, and Worcester. His doctoral thesis is "Transforming Community: Dialogue and inquiry as a just and loving way of leading beyond fear, loss, and uncertainty."

Throughout his ministry he has worked with interfaith, ecumenical, and social justice organizations, including the LGBT Asylum Task Force in Worcester. He has received awards for his innovative ministry, and was recognized by the U.S. House of Representatives for transformational ministry with Founders MCC in Los Angeles – the first congregation to have a primary focus affirming the lives of LGBTQ people. He has appeared in several documentaries and an episode of Vanderpump Rules.

He is joined on this journey by his spouse, Toby Bishop. In August they celebrated 22 years together and the 16th anniversary of their marriage.

The stole Rev Kev is wearing was presented to him by the people of the Metropolitan Community Church of San Antonio following his ordination. Rev Kev began serving MCC San Antonio while in seminary and eight months before he was ordained.

While placing the stole on Rev Kev's shoulders, the Regional Elder pointed to the threads at the ends of each side of the stole and said, *"Some might think of these as decoration, or that the artisan did not complete their work. As you wear this stole and serve Christ's church, may they always remind you that we live in an unfinished world, and have an unfinished calling."*

All Are Welcome Here

We, the members of the First Congregational Church of Woodstock, seek to embody in our words and actions the unconditional grace and hospitality of God we have experienced in the personality of Jesus Christ. In him, we have been invited into the life of God, and welcomed into the community of faith. Led by Jesus' spirit and following his example, we invite all who seek to be his disciples into this church family without regard to race, nationality, age, marital status, gender, mental, emotional, or physical challenges, economic status, or sexual orientation. We believe that there are no outsiders in a community that is observant of God's will.

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