

The First Congregational Church of Old Lyme

Rev. Carleen Gerber

Pastoral Prayer for March 8, 2026

One of you sent me this quote (which I will in part paraphrase) from the humanist and secular prophet Rebecca Solnit:

“Perhaps one of the weaknesses of our era is that we look for lone superheroes to solve the problems we are facing in society: some kind of man in spandex who will sweep in to deliver us from the turmoil. When actually the world mostly gets changed through collective effort. A few years before he died, Thich Nhat Hanh said that the next Buddha will be a Sangha. In Buddhist terminology that means “a community of practitioners.” In other words, in popular jargon... “We are the ones we’ve been waiting for....”

Would you join me in prayer...

God of mercy and truth and love, we gather here this morning on this cloudy, damp, foggy Sunday morning in gratitude for the warmth and comfort we share in this house of meeting. Here we know that the cacophony of voices that speak deep within our hearts of fear and trepidation, can be silenced at least for a brief time.

There are simple gifts we are given every day.... the music of birdsong, the smell of coffee, the lilting laughter of children... These gifts lift our souls and give us strength and purpose. These simple gifts endure through time. We are blessed if we know enough to stop and give thanks; for it could be otherwise. For here we know a peace and stability for which much of the world can only yearn.

Our hearts have been torn, and our minds wearied by the war now being waged in the Middle East. There is much we cannot fathom— and much more that we cannot predict – but our souls bear the burden of the pain. We know that soldiers have lost their lives -and their families are grieving. But there are many, many civilians who will go unnamed, but who have fallen within that dreadful category blithely and carelessly known as “collateral damage.” Men and women and children who now bear the scars of an onslaught of unimaginable carnage. Please, God of mercy, sustain those who are forced to live where bombs fall, and where every tomorrow is in

jeopardy. What could it be like, we ask? To live with no assurance that there will be a tomorrow for ourselves or for our children or our children's children.

But here, this day, we have each other. And the blessed assurance that comes from knowing we have a common purpose and a common hope and a common goal. And relying upon the arms that surround us, we will remain strong and courageous and resilient. We will strive for what is right and just and merciful. We will hold to account those in power who denigrate and oppress the vulnerable. For we are "the ones we have been waiting for..." Together we hold the promise of a new world, and a better hope.

In the week to come, help us to find rest from all that beleaguers us. Help us to silence the voice of anxiety that plagues us. Help us to rely on the gentle love we find in one another. Help us to trust the instincts of compassion and grace that guide us. Help us to know, deep within our very being, that the love we have known in the life and teachings of Jesus the Christ will never forsake us. For that love is trustworthy and strong and true – always.

Hear this and all our prayers, offered in the name of a God we scarcely know how to name; a God who is bigger and broader, more inclusive and expansive than words can adequately portray. But a God who we name in this place, this day, as Jesus the Christ: our friend and mentor and guide.

Amen.