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The First Congregational Church of Old Lyme
Pastoral Prayer for July 19, 2026

Henry David Thoreau wrote, “Time is but the stream I go fishing in. I drink at it; and while I drink, I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is.”

Would you join me in prayer,

God of mystery, God of creation, God of mercy, be with us as we gather this morning. Help us to hold fast to one another; for it is in the fellowship we share that our wisdom grows and our strength increases. In these languid, hot days of summer, with the skies clouded by a smoky haze, our lives, by necessity, slow down. There is less inclination to hurry from task to task. For tomorrow will come. The tree and its shade look inviting. This morning’s cool breeze off Long Island Sound offers a blessed, temporary respite. Time slows down.

But time is indeed a stream into which we venture only fleetingly; for it is ever moving, ever elusive, ever slipping from our grasp. And you, God of the ages, help us to see the eternal amidst the temporal. Friends and loved ones slip out of our grasp, and yet you stand beside us as a rock of ages. Precious reunions come to an end; and yet the memories we make endure and sustain us. We give You thanks, God, for the gift of time. Help us to use it – however brief it may be – to make a world where grace and compassion knit us all together as one. Help us to use the time we have been given to make this world a better place for **all** people – for all creatures – and for your blessed creation itself.

We come before You this morning, Loving God, with worries and anxieties of our own that You know all too well; for You know each of us in the very depth of our being. In a moment of sacred silence, we hold up before You the fears and trepidations that we seldom give voice to; and we ask that you carry them alongside us.

We pray this morning for the people of war-torn Iran and Lebanon and Gaza... we pray for the hungry and the vulnerable in Haiti and the Sudan... we pray for those in this, our country of bounty, who are hungry and unhoused and struggling to find adequate medical care... we pray for those who grieve the loss of a loved one, and those who are lonely... for those who struggle every day with the demons of addiction and the grip of mental illness. Where your children are hurting, precious Lord, reach out to them with your arms of mercy, we fervently pray.

This morning we pray for this country in which we live... for its leaders and for all who live within its boundaries, and especially for those who have come to our shores in hopes of achieving the dream of safety and peace of mind. These days of turmoil and fear hold us in an iron grip. Remind us to hold fast to one another’s hands so that none of us goes missing. Time is fleeting. And life itself is precious beyond words. Tell us how to work for the greater good - for that is what we so desperately seek.

Be with the leaders and officials who shape the future for this nation we call our own. Remind them that when more people come to the table in need, we can surely build a bigger table and share with them all. That is the central truth of the Gospel: the enduring lesson of your Son, Jesus the Christ.

In the week to come, guide each one of us to look into the ever-moving flow of time and reach down to grasp the stream of generosity and mercy and compassion that makes our lives richer, our hearts bigger, and our arms stronger.

All this we pray in the name of a God who is far bigger than any name we have to offer, but who we have come to know in the life and teachings of Jesus the Christ. Amen.