

Rev. Carleen Gerber
The First Congregational Church of Old Lyme
Pastoral Prayer
September 27, 2026

The youngest head of state to speak at the General Assembly of this week's United Nations summit, was the newly elected prime minister of Nepal. Balendra Shah is 36 years old. As he struggles to counter the massive destruction caused by a flood of enormous proportions, and obtain fuel and fertilizer his country desperately needs, this is what he said:

"We have built a world with flawless logistics for war and broken logistics for food. And this is not Nepal's private misfortune. Ask Bangladesh. Ask Bhutan. Ask India or Pakistan or Sri Lanka. Ask any other country in our region and you will hear the same account: we are hit by a climate we did not warm, and hit again by wars we did not start."

In a moment of silence, let us ponder those words, and then I'll offer a prayer.

Let us pray,

God of all time, and all people, as we gather here this morning, we are whipped by a storm that only hints at the natural disasters that threaten human and animal life in your beloved world. For us, as the colors of Fall turn, and the tables of harvest begin to be laden with bounty, we give thanks for our good fortune. And yet we know, we are painfully aware, that there are places and peoples in this ragged world where despair over shadows lives. We have been given the tools, the where-with-all, and the conscience that calls to us that *we can do better*. We can share more. We can make sacrifices. And we can work together to do our small part to effect change in a world where the momentum toward harm can sometime feel unstoppable.

That, God of Mercy, is why we join hands to work together to do whatever we can to ameliorate suffering. We can give, and we give because we care. We know that with our collective effort, and our best knowledge, we can make a difference. We are ready to go to work. We are eager to go to work. We are ready to share in the task to which we have been called.

We give thanks for all those who volunteer to feed the hungry at our food pantries, and cook the meals for the people in need in the city of New London. We are grateful to those who work to minister to the people whose lives have been upended by the immigration crisis. We give thanks to those who sit with our children even now to teach them what we know of mercy, and those who connect with other faith traditions throughout this county to help us work together to face our common challenges. We give thanks to those who serve on boards and committees, and to those who sing in our choir and volunteer with our bell choirs, offering us the blessings of inspiration and joy. We are a grateful people. We are a resilient people. We are a people of faith who find our strength and determination through working side by side to make this world a better place for all.

We pray that You, God of infinite grace and mercy, would be with all those throughout the world who know the pain of suffering of any kind: those who grieve for a loved one, those who are lonely or afraid or in need of courage to face their tomorrow. Help us to become, more and more, a coalition bonded in faith, in service, in gratitude and in joy. Help each one of us to be more loving, more forgiving and more generous in the days to come.

All this we pray in the name of a God who larger than any of our many names, but whom we have come to know in the person of Jesus the Christ, our friend and guide and counsellor.
Amen.