



# Candlelight Christmas Eve Service

*First Congregational Church of Stockbridge  
United Church of Christ  
December 24, 2020 ~ 7:00 p.m.*

*Welcome to worship.*

**We ask you to open your hearts to the greatest story ever told.**

We invite you to have a candle for the Service of Light at the end of worship.

*We hope tonight is a gift of peace, hope, joy and love in these complicated times. We remember that on Christmas Eve long ago the gift that was so desperately needed by humanity came in a most surprising form. May it again, even tonight.*

*We are an Open and Affirming Church. We invite persons of every sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, racial and cultural identity, age, physical ability, economic circumstances, faith background, and family structure to share fully in the ministry, leadership, and fellowship of this congregation's life in Christ.*

## PRELUDES

Noël nouvelet

Traditional French, arr. Jennings & Oltman

Impression on "We Three Kings"

arr. Alfred Fedak

Tracy Wilson, *organ*

## GATHERING IN WORSHIP

### LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLES

In Advent as the days get shorter and the darkness grows, we as people of faith light candles. Through centuries of worshipping together, through reading the same stories over and over, we have learned how to cope with growing darkness even if we can't stop it. We turn to the light.

We have seen how, illogically and impossibly, four candles surrounded by greenery somehow are enough. They remind us of the truth that God will not let us face darkness alone. They flicker with the truth that in impossible situations God sends new and even illogical beginnings like a baby born in a stable under the light of a star.

We begin our worship remembering the Advent journey of peace, hope, joy and love. **As the four candles are lit, we invite you to join in singing this verse of *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* as printed below:**

O come, O Dayspring, come and cheer  
Our spirits by your advent here;  
Love stir within the womb of night,  
And death's own shadows put to flight.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!

### LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

Jacob Damrow

Leader: The time to celebrate is now!

**People: "For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders;**

Leader: And he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

**People: "From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace."**  
*(Lighting of the candle)*

Leader: The light has come!

**People: Let us sing praise to God!**

HYMN

O Come, All Ye Faithful

1 O come, all ye faith - ful, joy - ful and tri - um - phant, O  
 2 Sing, choirs of an - gels, sing in ex - ul - ta - tion,  
 3 Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this hap - py mor - ning,

come ye, O come ye to Beth - - le - hem;  
 sing, all ye ci - ti - zens of heaven a - bove;  
 Je - sus, to thee be all glo - - ry given;

Come and be - hold him, born the King of an - gels;  
 glo - ry to God, all glo - ry in the high - est;  
 Word of the Fa - ther, now in flesh ap - pear - ing;

*Refrain*

O come, let us a - dore him, O come, let us a - dore him,

O come, let us a - dore him, Christ, the Lord.

WELCOME

Rev. Brent Damrow

PASSING OF THE PEACE

TIME WITH CHILDREN

Rev. Damrow

ANTHEM

*I Am So Glad Each Christmas Eve*

Norwegian carol, arr. Marty Haugen

Andrea Bargabos and Deryl Godshall, *vocalists*

I am so glad each Christmas Eve,  
The night of Jesus' birth!  
Then like the sun the star shone forth,  
And angels sang on earth.

The little Child in Bethlehem,  
He was a king indeed!  
For He came down from Heaven above  
To help a world in need.

When mother trims the Christmas tree  
Which fills the room with light,  
She tells me of the wondrous star  
That made the dark world bright.

And so I love each Christmas Eve  
And I love Jesus, too;  
And that He loves me every day  
I know so well is true.

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE *Joy in Hard Times*

Rev. Damrow

## SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS

LESSON – Isaiah 9:2-7

Linda Hoddy

HYMN

*Now Bless the God of Israel*

1 Now bless the God of Is - ra - el, who comes in love and power,  
 2 Re - mem-ber-ing the cov - e - nant, God res - cues us from fear,  
 3 In ten - der mer-cy, God will send the day - spring from on high,

who rais - es from the roy - al house de - liv - erance in this hour.  
 that we might serve in hol - i - ness and peace from year to year;  
 our ris - ing sun, the light of life for those who sit and sigh.

Through ho - ly proph-ets God has sworn to free us from a - larm,  
 And you, my child, shall go be - fore to preach, to proph - e - sy,  
 God comes to guide our way to peace, that death shall reign no more.

to save us from the heav-y hand of all who wish us harm.  
 that all may know the ten - der love, the grace of God most high.  
 Sing prais-es to the Ho - ly One! O wor - ship and a - dore!

LESSON – Luke 1:26-35, 38

Cathy Clark

ANTHEM

*O God, Whose Steadfast Love*

James L. Haddix

Andrea Bargabos and Deryl Godshall, *vocalists*

O God, whose steadfast love true motherhood has blessed;

Who shields the infant small upon its mother's breast:

Embrace us, too, O God, our God, and hold us in your

Loving arms, and hold us in your loving arms.

Your promises, O God so sure throughout the years,

Have lived in mothers' hearts, have bloomed from mothers' tears.

So Sarah laughed, and Hannah wept, and singing Mary

Secrets kept, and singing Mary secrets kept.

LESSON – Luke 2:1-7

Jim McMenamy

HYMN

*Away in a Manger*

Capo 3: F(D) B<sup>b</sup>(G) F(D) C<sup>7</sup>(A<sup>7</sup>)

1 A - way in a man - ger, no crib for a bed, the lit - tle Lord  
 2 The cat - tle are low - ing, the ba - by a - wakes, but lit - tle Lord  
 3 Be near me, Lord Je - sus; I ask you to stay close by me for -

F(D)

Je - sus laid down his sweet head; the stars in the bright sky looked  
 Je - sus, no cry - ing he makes. I love you, Lord Je - sus: look  
 ev - er and love me, I pray. Bless all the dear chil - dren in

B<sup>b</sup>(G) F(D) C<sup>7</sup>(A<sup>7</sup>) F(D) Gm(Em) C<sup>7</sup>(A<sup>7</sup>) F(D) ♮

down where he lay; the lit - tle Lord Je - sus a - sleep on the hay.  
 down from on high and stay by my side un - til morn - ing is nigh.  
 your ten - der care; pre - pare us for heav - en to live with you there.

LESSON: Luke 2:8-14

Deb McMenemy

TIME WITH CHILDREN

Rev. Damrow

HYMN

*Angels We Have Heard on High*

1 An - gels we have heard on high sweet - ly sing - ing o'er the plains,  
 2 Come to Beth - le - hem, and see him whose birth the an - gels sing:

and the moun - tains in re - ply e - cho back their joy - ous strains.  
 come, a - dore on ben - ded knee Christ the Lord, the new - born King.

Glo - - - - - ri - a

in ex - cel - sis De - o! Glo - - - - -

- - - - - ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - o!



CALL TO THE OFFERING

*Proceeds from the offering this evening will be given to the Christmas Fund (retired and emergency Minister's Fund). There is a link to online giving where you found this bulletin. Or you may mail a check with "Christmas Fund" in the memo line to PO Box 825, Stockbridge MA 01262. Thank you!*

OFFERTORY ANTHEM *A Christmas Blessing*

Words from Book of Common Prayer, music by Philip Stopford

May the joy of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds,  
The worship of the wisemen and the peace of the Christ child  
Be yours this Christmas.

May Christ who by his incarnation gathered into one all  
Things earthly all things heavenly.  
And fill you with joy and peace.

And the blessing of God, the Father and the Son  
And the Holy Spirit be with you and remain  
With you always. Amen.

GOSPEL READING: John 1:1-14

Sarah Conly

CHRISTMAS CREED FROM LATIN AMERICA (please join at home)

**I believe in Jesus Christ and in the power of the gospel, begun in Bethlehem.**

**I believe in the one whose spirit glorified a small village, of whose coming shepherds saw the sign, and for whom there was no room at the inn.**

**I believe in the one whose life changed the course of history, over whom the rulers of the earth had no power, & who was not understood by the proud.**

**I believe in the one to whom the oppressed, the discouraged, the afflicted, the sick, the blind, and the injured gave welcome, and accepted as Lord and Savior.**

**I believe in the one who – with love – changed the hearts of the proud, and with his life showed that it is better to serve than to be served, and that the greatest joy is giving your life for others.**

*over*

**I believe in peace, which is not the absence of war, but justice among all people and nations and love among all.**

**I believe in reconciliation, forgiveness, & the transforming power of the gospel.**

**I believe that Christmas is strength and power, and that this world can change if, with humility and faith, we kneel before the manger.**

**I believe that I must be the first one to do so.**

ANTHEM

*Still, Still, Still*

Austrian folk tune, arr. Matt Astle

Andrea Bargabos and Deryl Godshall, *vocalists*

Still, still, still. One can hear the falling snow.

For all is hushed, the world is sleeping.

Holy Star its vigil keeping.

Still, still, still. One can hear the falling snow.

Still, still, still. Tis a wondrous tale I tell

On starlit night in stable lowly

Came the Son of God most holy.

Still, still, still. Tis a wondrous tale I tell.

Sleep, sleep, sleep. Tis the eve of our Saviour's birth.

And Mary in her arms enfolding

Hope of all the world is holding.

Sleep, sleep, sleep. Tis the eve of our Saviour's birth.

Sing, sing, sing, sweet angel voices sing

While Jesus lies in manger dreaming

Seraph choirs from heaven are streaming

Light, light, light. Let all the earth be light

The holy star its news ablazing

Sign of hope for nations raising.

Light, light, light. Let all the earth be light.

## **SERVICE OF LIGHT**

INTRODUCTORY WORDS

Rev. Damrow

# SHARING OF THE LIGHT

We invite you into the ancient and beautiful tradition of passing candle light to mark the coming of God's light into the world through the Christ Child.

## WORDS OF LIGHT

Elizabeth Young and Hal Brink

## HYMN

### *Silent Night*

You are invited to raise your light as you sing verse 3.

1 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! All is calm, all is bright  
2 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Shep - herds quake at the sight,  
3 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Son of God, love's pure light,

'round yon vir - gin mo - ther and child; ho - ly in - fant, so ten - der and  
glo - ries stream\_ from hea - ven a - far, heaven - ly hosts\_ sing al - le - lu -  
ra - dant beams\_ from thy ho - ly face, with the dawn of re - deem - ing

mild, sleep in hea - ven - ly peace,\_\_\_ sleep\_ in hea - ven - ly peace.  
ia; Christ, the Sa - vior, is born!\_\_\_ Chris, the Sa - vior, is born!  
grace, Je - sus, Lord, at thy birth,\_\_\_ Je - sus, Lord, at thy birth.

# GOING FORTH INTO THE WORLD

BLESSING AND SENDING

Rev. Damrow

POSTLUDE

*Sussex Carol*

arr. Krug

*A note: We close this service as we began it; in a spirit of quiet anticipation. We have only a few precious hours remaining to prepare our hearts to welcome Christ's coming.*

Special Thanks to:

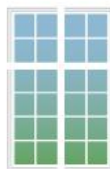
- \* Tracy Wilson, Andrea Bargabos, and Deryl Godshall for their collaboration and gift of music.
- \* The Bell Choir (Cathy Clark, Mary Jo Erickson Connor, Mary Hart, Rhonda Patrick, Andrea Rossi Pecor, Tracy Wilson) for bringing simplicity, beauty, and music to our Service of Light.
- \* The Deacons for their help in imagining this service, and to all the readers for making it happen.
- \* Jon Geldert for his work to film, produce, and bring this service to you via the internet.

## SANCTUARY FLOWERS

The poinsettias have been given in loving memory of loved ones.

*Courtesy of the Flower Committee.*

*All hymns reprinted under  
OneLicense.net A-723107*



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
Stockbridge, Massachusetts