



*The First Congregational Church
of the United Church of Christ
Stockbridge, Massachusetts*

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT
December 10, 2023 – 10:00 a.m.

You may leave the plants you may have brought in the Narthex or JE Room.

Each week in worship we welcome people to share their prayers. If you like for a worship leader to read your prayer, please fill out a prayer slip.

PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

GATHERING MUSIC

PRELUDE *Savior of the Nations, Come* Hui-Mei Lin, organ

FRAMING WORDS FOR ADVENT Pastor Brent Damrow

GATHERING FOR WORSHIP

CHIMING OF THE HOUR

UNISON PRAYER OF INVOCATION *The Narrative Lectionary* Ron Hanft

God of the prophets, you sent John into the world to proclaim the coming of your son. Give us ears to hear the proclamations of your promises and eyes to see your presence in this world. Amen.

*HYMN *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* vss. 3 & 4

3 O come, O come, O Adonai,
who came to all on Sinai high,
And from its peak a single law
proclaimed in majesty and awe.

Refrain:

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel!

4 O come, O shoot of Jesse, free
your own from Satan's tyranny,
From depths of hell your people save,
and give them victory o'er the grave.

[Refrain]

CANDLE LIGHTING *Candles and Conifers*, Ruth Burgess (adapt.)

Rich Geiler and Michael Monroe

One: A candle burns, the sign of our joy!

All: God of love, bring us the gift of unexpected surprise again this Advent.

One: We light the first candle bringing brightness to our hopes.

(Light the first Candle)

All: To that light we add the flickering serenity of peace.

(Light the second Candle)

One: Today we find joy in the transformational message of the Baptising One.

All: We light the third candle in joy just at Zachariah sung out in joy at the Birth of his son John the Baptist.

(Light the third Candle)

One: May we have faith that renews our lives.

All: May we live in the light of God's promises.

SUNG RESPONSE *We Are In Darkness*, by Anne McKinstry, verse 3
(to the tune of "Away in a Manger")

Your star in the east bids us follow its course;

Inviting and guiding our steps to a child.

This brightest of stars is asleep in a barn.

Rejoice; for my gift it now pierces your gloom.

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

TIME WITH CHILDREN

The Lord's Prayer

Our God, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Children may go to music / story time.

INTROIT *From Heaven High I Come to You Traditional*, arr. Stokes

CALL TO WORSHIP Written by Rev. Stephen M. Fearing - stephenmfearing.com
Ron Hanft

One: Lift up your hearts, people of God, for the Lord has looked favorably upon us and is sending us his beloved son.

All: He is raising up for us a mighty savior in the house of his servant David.

One: God is showing the mercy promised to our ancestors,
and has remembered his holy covenant,
the oath he swore to our ancestors Abraham and Sarah,
that we might serve him without fear.

**All: We go before the Lord, following John the Baptist,
to prepare the way of the Lord.**

One: Come, let us worship God and listen to the voice crying out in the wilderness.

TIME OF REFLECTION, HONESTY, AND CONFESSION
written by Thom Shuman

Pastor Brent

Refining God,

it is not easy for us to admit we are not a blameless people.

We trust the promises of politicians,

but have trouble believing the ones you have made.

We find ourselves captive to emotions and lusts which stun us,

but doubt you can save us.

We prefer the shadowy streets of the world,

rather than walking in your Light.

Forgive us, Faithful One.

May the Light of Christ show us your way;

may the Love of Christ overflow from our lives to others;

may the Life of Christ be our model as we seek to be your people.

Silence is kept

Assurance of Pardon

One: Do you feel it?

God's tender mercy rests on you, heals you, transforms you.

Do you see it?

God's Light breaks into our lives, and shows us the way.

**All: Renewed and made whole,
we see the path God has prepared for us —
the way of peace, the way of hope,
the way of grace, the way of service.
Thanks be to God. Amen. (Time for silent prayer.)**

SUNG RESPONSE Taize — *Nada te Turbe* See page 5

GOOD NEWS

THE GIFT OF THE WORD

SCRIPTURE READING Luke 1:57-80 Ted Randolph

SERMON *Silence, Waiting, Singing!* Pastor Brent

*HYMN *Now Bless the God of Israel* See page 6

STEWARDSHIP MOMENT Frank Russell

OFFERING OURSELVES AND OUR GIFTS

CALL TO THE OFFERING *In The Bleak Midwinter*, arr. Ingram

OFFERTORY ANTHEM

*DOXOLOGY Lasst Uns Erfreuen

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Christ the Word in flesh born low; Alleluia, Alleluia.
Praise Holy Spirit evermore; One God, Triune, whom we adore.
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.**

*BLESSING OF THE GIFTS

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

PRAYER RESPONSE

GOING FORTH INTO THE WORLD

INVITATIONS

MISSION MOMENT *Veterans of the Cross* Rick Floyd

*HYMN *People Look East* vss. 1, 4, & 5 See page 7



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Nada te Turbe

*Text: The Taizé Community, 1991;
based on the writings of St. Teresa of Avila, 16th century*

Music: Jacques Berthier, 1991

Am Dm7 G CM7 F Dm6

Na - da te tur - be, na - da te es - pan - te. Quien a Dios tie - ne
Noth - ing can trou - ble, noth - ing can fright - en. Those who seek God shall

Esus4 E Am F Dm6 E Am

na - da le fal - ta. So - lo Dios bas - ta.
nev - er go want - ing. God a - lone fills us.

The New Century Hymnal (1995)

Christmas

December 24 No morning worship

December 24 Candlelight Christmas Eve 5:00pm

December 25 - January 2 Church Office Closed

December 31 Joint worship with West Stockbridge Village Community Church

Luke 1:68-79; Ps. 18:1-3; Isa. 9:2-7

Ruth Duck, 1985

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!

This text by United Church of Christ clergywoman Ruth Duck is a paraphrase of the "Benedictus," which is often sung at morning prayer. She came to appreciate daily prayer while studying at the University of Notre Dame.

Tune: FOREST GREEN C.M.D.
 Traditional English melody
 Harm. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1906

People, Look East

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Verses
1, 4, & 5

Eleanor Farjeon (1881-1965)
As in *Oxford Book of Carols*, 1964

BESANÇON 8.7.9.8.8.7

French folk melody
Harm. Martin Shaw (1875-1958)



1. Peo - ple, look east. The time is near Of the crown-ing of the
2. Fur - rows, be glad. Though earth is bare, One more seed is plant-ed
3. Birds, though you long have ceased to build, Guard the nest that must be
4. Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim One more light the bowl shall



year. Make your house fair as you are a - ble, Trim the
there: Give up your strength the seed to nour - ish, That in
filled. E - ven the hour when wings are fro - zen God for
brim, Shin - ing be - yond the frost - y weath - er, Bright as



Peo-ple, look east and sing to - day:



hearth and set the ta - ble. Peo-ple, look east:
course the flower may flour - ish.
fledg - ing time has cho - sen.
sun and moon to - geth - er. Peo-ple, look east:



Love the guest is on the way.
Love the rose is on the way.
Love the bird is on the way.
Love the star is on the way.
Love is on the way.



5. Angels, announce with shouts of mirth
Christ who brings new life to earth.
Set every peak and valley humming

With the word, the Lord is coming.
People, look east and sing today:
Love the Lord is on the way.

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Christmas Fund for Veterans of the

Cross: December 17 and 24

It is our tradition to donate part of our Christmas Eve offering to the Christmas Fund each year. This year we will also receive the offering for this worthy cause on December 17. Look for more information in the weekly emails.

Christmas Pageant – Dec 17

We invite folks of all ages and all acting experiences to participate.

Poinsettias for Christmas Eve

Please find forms in the JE Room (you can pay later if you want to fill out a form today). Deadline for listing in the bulletin is December 15.

Meal Train for Gary and Beth Cilley

Please join the Meal Train for the Cilleys. Beth is now home from a long hospital stay and is recuperating with the help of visiting nurses. Contact the office for information.

Community Meal – Wednesday 12/13

Eating together nourishes our bodies and our souls. All are welcome to a community meal on December 13 at the church. The food will be ready at 5:30 p.m. The food will be simple, nut-free, with vegetarian and gluten-free options. No one is obligated to bring anything, but are welcome to do so.

Music Notes ~ Rev. Brent Damrow

During Advent we are using a song written by Anne McKinstry for the response to the Candle Lighting. Anne is a long-time and deeply-beloved member of our congregation. She has a gift for hymn writing and one of her hymns is published in the New Century Hymnal ("With Joy Draw Water"). Anne has also written more than a dozen hymn books with a variety of approaches including pairing famous prayers with familiar tunes, writing service music, songs aimed at helping children learn to sing, hymns on justice and peace, setting Christ's words to tune, and incorporating the poetry of saints and the writings of Reinhold Niebuhr. She and her husband Rev. John McKinstry live in nearby Great Barrington.

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

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