

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
— Stockbridge, Massachusetts —

Some Thoughts on Applause

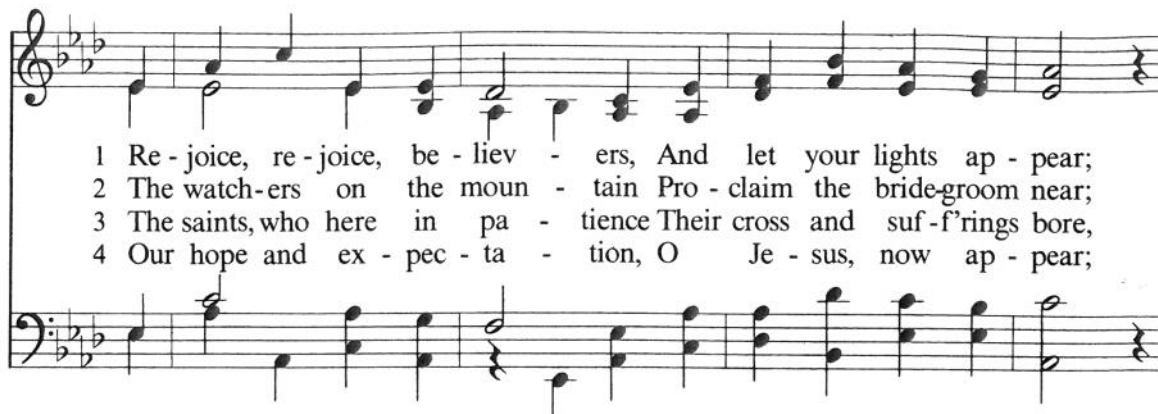
A central part of gathering in worship is the joy we experience in the love of God and neighbor. Joy breaks forth in the welcoming of new members, in the singing of children, in profound musical experiences, and in many other ways. We hope that coming to worship brings you depth, faith, hope, love, truth, and joy!

Church leadership has recently been exploring one way that joy has been regularly expressed during worship – applause. Applause can be a wonderful way of showing joy in non-liturgical moments – such as welcoming new members into the congregation, acknowledging significant milestones (birthdays, anniversaries), or showing appreciation for a special gift to the congregation. In such cases, applause is a joyful and welcome expression of appreciation.

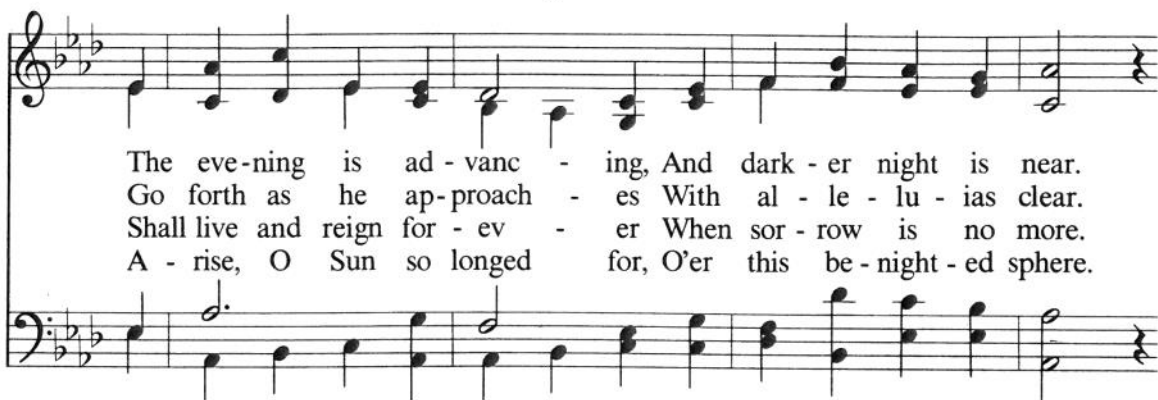
In worship, especially following music, applause can be interruptive to the moment or difficult for the one offering the gift, suggesting the music was a “performance” rather than a part of worship. In cultural settings, applause is often given in recognition of being entertained or for the excellence of musical achievement. In worship, music is a beautiful gift that often pushes us beyond itself to moments of tranquility. Applause in these moments can be a distraction, so we ask that it be withheld.

If you are bursting with joy, consider offering an “Amen” or raising your arms in a sign of praise. To express appreciation for music, applause is better saved until after the postlude (when worship is over). We are pleased that you are with us today and are grateful for your presence during this worship service.

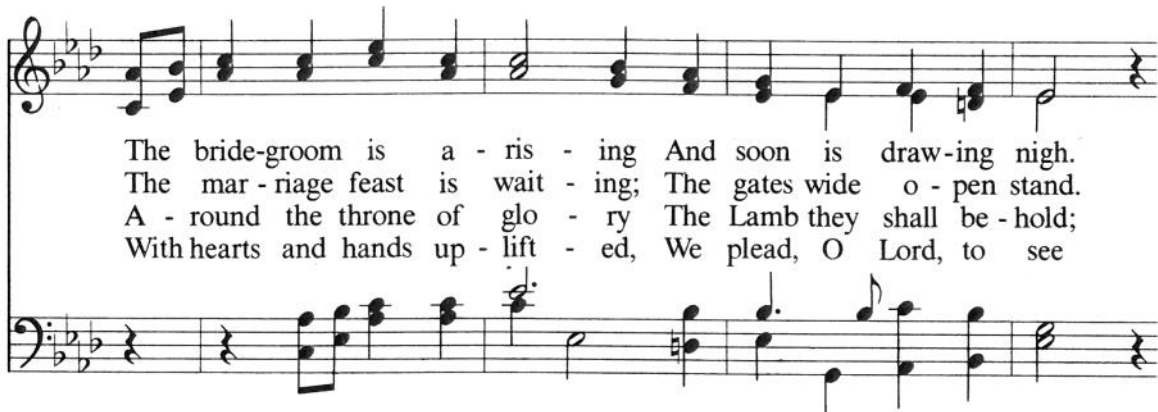
Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers



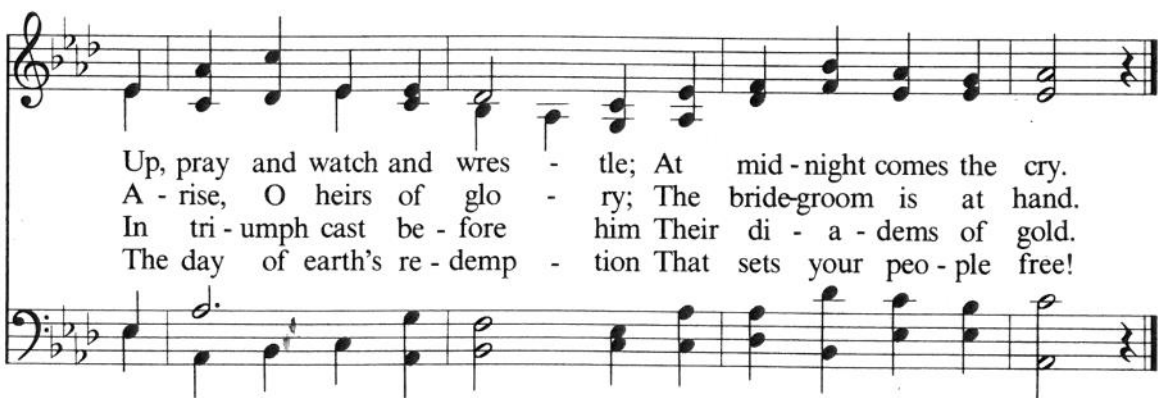
1 Re - joi - ce, re - joi - ce, be - liev - ers, And let your lights ap - pear;
 2 The watch - ers on the moun - tain Pro - claim the bride - groom near;
 3 The saints, who here in pa - ti - ence Their cross and suf - f' - rings bore,
 4 Our hope and ex - pec - ta - tion, O Je - sus, now ap - pear;



The eve - ning is ad - vanc - ing, And dark - er night is near.
 Go forth as he ap - proach - es With al - le - lu - ias clear.
 Shall live and reign for - ev - er When sor - row is no more.
 A - rise, O Sun so longed for, O'er this be - night - ed sphere.



The bride - groom is a - ris - ing And soon is draw - ing nigh.
 The mar - riage feast is wait - ing; The gates wide o - pen stand.
 A - round the throne of glo - ry The Lamb they shall be - hold;
 With hearts and hands up - lift - ed, We plead, O Lord, to see



Up, pray and watch and wres - tle; At mid - night comes the cry.
 A - rise, O heirs of glo - ry; The bride - groom is at hand.
 In tri - umph cast be - fore him Their di - a - dems of gold.
 The day of earth's re - demp - tion That sets your peo - ple free!

Text: Laurentius Laurentii, 1660-1722; tr. Sarah B. Findlater, 1823-1907, alt.
 Tune: Swedish folk tune

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