



Candlelight Christmas Eve Service

The First Congregational Church of Stockbridge
United Church of Christ
December 24, 2024 ~ 5:00 p.m.

Welcome to worship tonight. We ask you to silence your phones and open your hearts to the greatest story ever told. Please see an usher for assistance and know that large print bulletins are available. Children are welcomed and encouraged to remain in the sanctuary during the service. A space is available for you to take your children in the Sunday School wing should you need it.

Battery powered candles are available for children and those who need one.

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

<i>Heresfordshire Carol</i> , by V. Williams	John Demler
<i>Gesu Bambino</i> by Pietro A. Yon	Amy Shake
<i>Comfort Ye My People/Every Valley Shall Be Exalted</i> by G.F. Handel	Rich Geiler
<i>Cantique de Noël</i> by Adolphe Adam	Amy Shake and John Demler
<i>BOSTON</i> , by William Billings	Quartet
<i>Adam Lay Ybounden</i> by Philip Stopford, 15th C words	Choir

GATHERING IN WORSHIP

SCRIPTURE READING Isaiah 9:2-5 (adapted)

Anne Hutchinson

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. The choir will bathe the process in song. **After the four candles are lit, we invite you to stand and join in singing the final verse of *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* as printed below:**

O come, Desire of Nations, bind
All peoples in one heart and mind;
Make envy, strife, and quarrels cease;
Fill the whole world with heaven's peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

*LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE (based on Isaiah 9:6-7) Kaylin Fredsall

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: May it be "a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path!"

*HYMN

O Come, All Ye Faithful (sing v. 3 in unison)

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

During the passing of the peace, children are invited to come down to gather on the rug for the children's time.

TIME WITH CHILDREN

Merry Christmas

Pastor Brent

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.

ANTHEM

I Am So Glad Each Christmas Eve

Choir and bells

Tune JEG ER SAA GLAD, arr. Marty Haugen

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 heav'n above to help a world in need.
When mother trims the Christmas tree that 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 ev'ry day I know so well is true.

SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS

LESSON – Luke 1:26-35, 38

Ronnie Cunningham

Please rise as you are able to sing the following hymn and remain standing through the Gospel reading from John (on page 8).

*HYMN

The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came

Basque carol

Para. Sabine Baring-Gould (1834-1924)

Arr. by Edgar Pettman and John Wickham

1. The an - gel Ga - bri - el from heav - en came, His
2. Of her, Em-man - u - el, the Christ, was born In

wings as drift - ed snow, his eyes as flame; "All
Beth - le - hem, all on a Christ - mas morn, And

hail," said he, "O low - ly maid - en Ma - ry,"
Chris - tian folk through-out the world will ev - er say: Most

high - ly fa - vored la - dy, Glo - ri - a!

*HYMN

Gentle Mary Laid Her Child vss. 1 & 3

Joseph Simpson Cook, 1919

Piae Cantiones, 1582
Arr. Ernest C. MacMillan, 1930

1. Gen-tle Ma - ry laid her child Low - ly in a man - ger;
 2. An - gels sang a - bout His birth, Wise men sought and found Him;
 3. Gen-tle Ma - ry laid her child Low - ly in a man - ger;

There He lay, the un - de - filed, To the world a stran - ger.
 Heav-en's star shone bright-ly forth, Glo - ry all a - round Him.
 He is still the un - de - filed, But no more a stran - ger.

Such a babe in such a place, Can He be the Sav - ior?
 Shep-herds saw the won-drous sight, Heard the an - gels sing - ing;
 Son of God, of hum-ble birth, Beau - ti - ful the sto - ry;

Ask the saved of all the race Who have found His fa - vor.
 All the plains were lit that night, All the hills were ring - ing.
 Praise His name in all the earth, Hail the King of glo - ry!

*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!

*LESSON – Luke 2:15-20

Joe Catino

*HYMN *The First Nowell* vss. 1 & 2

1. The first Nowell the angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields
as they lay;
In fields where they lay a-keeping their
sheep,
On a cold winter's night that was so
deep.

2. They looked up and saw a star
Shining in the east beyond them far,
And to the earth it gave great light,
And so it continued both day and
night.

(refrain)

Refrain:

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
Born is the King of Israel.

*GOSPEL READING – John 1:1-14

Charlotte Rodgers

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE *Receiving Him*

Pastor Brent

SUNG RESPONSE *O How Shall I Receive You*

Choir

CALL TO THE OFFERING

*Proceeds from the offering this evening will be given to the Christmas Fund
(retired and emergency Minister's Fund).*

ANTHEM *A Christmas Blessing* Words from Church of Ireland Book of
Common Prayer, arr. Philip Stopford

SERVICE OF LIGHT

INTRODUCTORY WORDS

Pastor Brent

PREPARING TO RECEIVE THE LIGHT

Choir

Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light

ERMUNTRE DICH, arr Charles Callahan

*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. Please use caution and watch the use of candles by smaller children (battery powered candles are available and encouraged for young ones).

*MUSIC DURING SHARING A *Stable Lamp is Lighted*

Words by Richard Wilbur, Music by David Hurd

*HYMN

Silent Night

You are invited to raise your candle 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 - diant 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.

*CHRISTMAS CREED FROM LATIN AMERICA (unison)

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.

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.

GOING FORTH INTO THE WORLD

*BENEDICTION

Pastor Brent

We close this service as we began it: in a spirit of quiet anticipation. We have only a few hours remaining to prepare our hearts to welcome Christ's coming. Following the closing song, you may either linger for the postlude, or head back into the world to receive Him.

CLOSING SONG *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

Verse 1. O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!

Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.

Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light;

The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

2. choir 3. soloist 4. piano

POSTLUDE

Silent Night, arr. Chip Davis

Tracy Wilson, *piano*

Sanctuary Flowers

These poinsettias have been given in loving memory of ...

My parents, Rob and Anita Anderegg, *from David Anderegg*

My brother Tom and my husband John, *from Vicky Cooper*

Loved ones, *from Olga Schwede*

My brother David Parker, *from Fay Parker*

Lin Moore, *from Fay Parker*

Our beloved parents, *from Liza & Joe Catino*

Russell Fadding, *from Patty Fadding*

Terry Moor, *from Susan Moor*

Marion and Lloyd McMillen, *from Susan Moor*

Terry Dunn, *from Asa Peabody*

Virginia "Ginny" Derrick, beloved mother and Oma to Maryphena, Hannah, and
Asa Peabody, *from the Peabody family*

My angel Gretchen, *from Mary Hoeltzel*

Lola Belle, W.O. (Bull) and Ros Johnson, *from Lisa Johnson*

Our parents, grandparents, and Ezra, *from the Rodgers family*

Loved ones, *from Tom and Kim Ruffing*

My parents Mr. & Mrs. Charles Olwande & Mary Olwande, *from Constance
Olwande*

Al Wermuth, *from Muriel Wermuth*

Alexander C.D. Williamson, his family, brother David, and parents, *from Margaret
& Heather Williamson*

Lee Dixon, *from Ron Hanft*

Alan Ferrara, *from Ron Hanft*

Bob Norris, *from Cathy Clark and Ed Ioas*

Loved ones, *from Liza & Joe Catino*

My husband Gil, *from Jane McCormick*

Rynn Booher, *from Jeannene Booher*

The Hoddy and Tracy families, *from Linda Hoddy & John Tracy*

Loved ones, *from Rich Geiler & Michael Monroe*

A poinsettia has been given with love, to ...

Michael Symons, *from Elizabeth Young*

News and Upcoming Events

Community dinner - all are welcome on the Second Wednesday of every month for dinner beginning at 5:30pm and wrapping up at 6:45. We provide main dishes including vegetarian options. Folks are welcome to bring **nut-free** side dishes or desserts but not required. Questions – call the church office. Next up: **Chili Bar** on January 8.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the **Giving Tree**. 130 gifts went out from the church to both children and adults through a variety of local support agencies. Also, thanks to those who donated 384 pounds of clothing to those affected by the November hurricane in North Carolina.

Come join the **Supper Book Club!** We are kicking off this new venture with former local pastor Mark Longhurst's wonderful new book, *The Holy Ordinary*.

Copies of the book are available in the church office. We will gather for a potluck meal on Wednesday January 22 at 6:00pm to cover the first two sections of the book. Give Pastor Brent a call to learn more.

Come back for worship on Sunday December 29 at 10:00am. We will be singing many of the wonderful Christmas carols we didn't get a chance to sing tonight. This family-friendly and uplifting service will include a blessing of our Christmas presents so pick out one to bring with you. We will have a special continental breakfast out at 9:00am and we will linger afterwards too.

The youth are excited to return to **Winter Lights** this year. Call the church office for more info. All youth welcome.

The church is closed until January 2.

As followers of Christ and committed to Isaiah's charge to "maintain justice and do what is right," we acknowledge with gratitude and humility that we are learning, speaking, gathering, and worshiping on the ancestral homelands of the Mohican people, who are the indigenous peoples of this land. Despite tremendous hardship in being forced from here, today their community resides in Wisconsin and is known as the Stockbridge-Munsee Community. We pay honor and respect to their ancestors past and present as we commit to building a more inclusive and equitable space for all.

Pastor: The Rev. Brent Damrow - bdamrow@stockbridgeucc.org

Minister of Music pro tempore: Tracy Wilson - music@stockbridgeucc.org

Administrator/Sexton: Will Garrison - office@stockbridgeucc.org

Financial Secretary: Marion Pomeroy - finance@stockbridgeucc.org

(413) 298-3137 | stockbridgeucc.org

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