



*The First Congregational Church
of the United Church of Christ
Stockbridge, Massachusetts*
SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT
December 3, 2023 – 10:00 a.m.

You may leave the flower stems 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

Peter Frost

PRELUDE

Duet: *Sleepers, Wake!* (Wachet Auf) Walter Anderson

FRAMING WORDS FOR ADVENT

Pastor Brent Damrow

GATHERING FOR WORSHIP

CHIMING OF THE HOUR

UNISON PRAYER OF INVOCATION *The Narrative Lectionary* Jo Ann Levitt

**Holy Lord, a voice has been heard in the wilderness preparing the way
for your son to arrive in this world. Prepare our hearts to receive your
gift and help us to prepare for his coming. Amen**

*HYMN

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel vss. 2 & 6

2 O come, O Wisdom from on high,
and order all things far and nigh;
To us the path of knowledge show,
and help us in that way to go.

Refrain:

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

6 O come, O Day-spring, come and cheer
our spirits by your advent here;
Love stir within the womb of night,
and death's own shadows put to flight.

[Refrain]

CANDLE LIGHTING *Candles and Conifers*, Ruth Burgess Cindy & Patty Strauch

One: A candle burns, the sign of our peace.

All: God of the prophets, come to us again this Advent.

(Light the first candle)

One: The first candle continues to light our way to hope.

All: To that light we light the candle of peace.

(Light the second candle)

One: May your Word be a lamp to our feet.

All: May it be a light on our path to peace.

SUNG RESPONSE *We Are In Darkness*, by Anne McKinstry, verse 2
(to the tune of "Away in a Manger")

We see the first rays of a promised-filled dawn.

And what of the night; will you tell us its signs?

These beams are a pure revelation of love.

Salvation has come; you are children of light.

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

Children may go to music / story time.

INTROIT *Veiled in Darkness Judah Lay* by Penna Rose

CALL TO WORSHIP Marilyn Strauch

(Left refers to the "JE Room" side of the church; Right refers to the "piano" side.)

One: Can you hear? A voice is heard in the darkness, the voice of one
crying out in the wilderness:

Left: Make way! Level the valleys! Straighten the paths!

Right: Prepare the way for his coming: The coming of the Lord!

One: God, your servant cries out to us:

Left: Repent; turn and be restored.

Right: Can you hear?

One: The grass withers and the flower fades:

Left: But your Word, O God, will stand forever.

Right: God help us to hear and help us to know.

written by Scott Bullock

Almighty God, you have surprised us with your presence in unexpected ways. In the expectations of our routine, we have missed the treasure that you place before us. We come to worship you in community often expecting nothing more than the usual. We begin our days, our weeks, assuming all will run as it always has. We do not look for the unexpected, for your active presence in our daily lives and for that we confess our sorrow. Forgive us for not allowing our eyes to catch the unexpected, to glimpse your glory in the ordinary. May this season, we see the presence of your Son by the power of your Spirit in new and transformative ways.
(Time for silent prayer.)

SUNG RESPONSE

Taize – *Nada te Turbe*

See page 5

GOOD NEWS

THE GIFT OF THE WORD

SCRIPTURE READING Isaiah 40:1-11

Patty Strauch

Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the Lord's hand
double for all her sins.
A voice cries out:
'In the wilderness prepare the way of
the Lord, make straight in the desert a
highway for our God.
Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.
Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'
A voice says, 'Cry out!'
And I said, 'What shall I cry?'

All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.
The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.
The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand for ever.
Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good tidings;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,
lift it up, do not fear;
say to the cities of Judah, 'Here is your God!'
See, the Lord God comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.
He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep.

REFLECTION *Comfort and Might* Pastor Brent

*HYMN *Comfort, Comfort You My People* See page 6

OFFERING OURSELVES AND OUR GIFTS

CALL TO THE OFFERING

For today, if you wish to lift a prayer, you must write it on a slip. They will be read as written. During the prayers, people will be invited to lift the names of those they are remembering.

OFFERTORY ANTHEM *Oh Come, O Come Emmanuel* arr. Parker/Shaw

*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 *Song of Simeon*, arr. A. Morris Buchanan

THE SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION

INVITATION TO THE TABLE Pastor Brent

THE STORY / THE FEAST

We will be sharing the meal through the practice of intinction. Whenever you are ready you may come forward to receive the bread and cup. If you would prefer, we also have kits which you can take back to your pew to consume there. If you cannot come forward we will bring the meal to you.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

THE LORD'S PRAYER (spoken)

GOING FORTH INTO THE WORLD

INVITATIONS

*HYMN

Prepare the Way, O Zion

See page 7

*BENEDICTION



POSTLUDE

Voluntary: Francis Linley


All are invited to a Potluck Lunch, beginning after worship. This is following by a craft party, ending about 1:30. This event is open to children and adults of all ages.

772

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.

Comfort, Comfort You My People

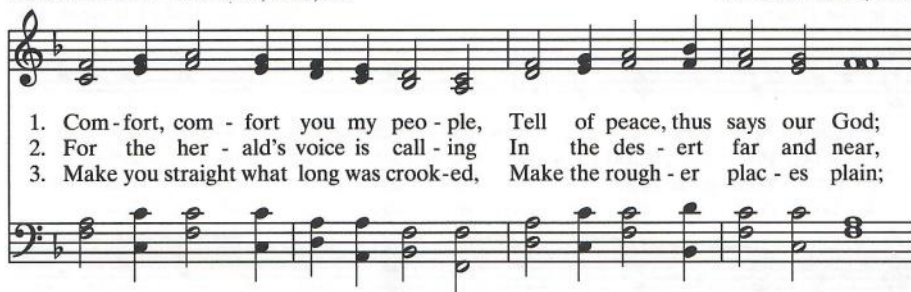
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PSALM 42 8.7.8.7.7.8.8

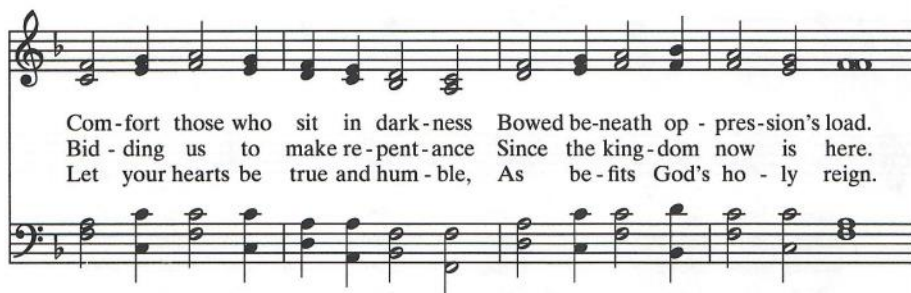
Johannes Olearius, 1671

Trans. Catherine Winkworth, 1863; alt.

Genevan Psalter, 1551



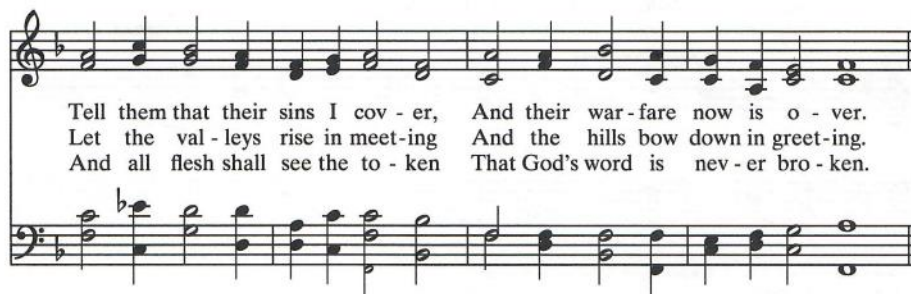
1. Com - fort, com - fort you my peo - ple, Tell of peace, thus says our God;
2. For the her - ald's voice is call - ing In the des - ert far and near,
3. Make you straight what long was crook - ed, Make the rough - er plac - es plain;



Com - fort those who sit in dark - ness Bowed be - neath op - pres - sion's load.
Bid - ding us to make re - pent - ance Since the king - dom now is here.
Let your hearts be true and hum - ble, As be - fits God's ho - ly reign.



Speak you to Je - ru - sa - lem Of the peace that waits for them;
O that warn - ing cry o - bey! Now pre - pare for God a way;
For the glo - ry of the Lord Now o'er earth is shed a - broad;



Tell them that their sins I cov - er, And their war - fare now is o - ver.
Let the val - leys rise in meet - ing And the hills bow down in greet - ing.
And all flesh shall see the to - ken That God's word is nev - er bro - ken.

Prepare the Way, O Zion

1 Pre - pare the way, O Zi - on, your Christ is draw - ing near!
 2 He brings God's rule, O Zi - on; he comes from heaven a - bove.
 3 Fling wide your gates, O Zi - on; your Sav - ior's rule em - brace.

Let ev - ery hill and val - ley a lev - el way ap - pear.
 His rule is peace and free - dom, and jus - tice, truth, and love.
 His tid - ings of sal - va - tion pro - claim in ev - ery place.

Greet One who comes in glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry.
 Lift high your praise re - sound - ing, for grace and joy a - bound - ing.
 All lands will bow be - fore him, their voic - es will a - dore him.

Refrain

Oh, blest is Christ that came in God's most ho - ly name.

WORDS: Frans Mikael Franzen (1772-1847); tr. composite;
 adapt. Charles P. Price (1920-1999)
 MUSIC: *Then Svenska Psalmboken*, 1697

BEREDEN VÅG FÖR HERRAN
 7.6.7.6.7.7.Ref.

Words © 1982 Hope Publishing Company

Worship & Rejoice (2001)

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Christmas Giving Tree

Please share in the tradition of the Christmas Giving Tree, which offers a wish list of gifts you can purchase that will help make a brighter holiday for some of our South County neighbors. Instructions can be found next to the Giving Tree is in the JE Room.

Christmas Pageant – Dec 17

We invite folks of all ages and all acting experiences to participate. We will be holding rehearsals at the church:

- Today: 11-11:30 (for families unable to attend the Nov 30 rehearsal.

- Sunday, Dec 10 – 11:20-12:50
Thursday, December 14 - 5:15 p.m.
PIZZA to be served - finish by 6:45.
- On Sunday, December 17 9:00am to put on costumes and go through the final details.

Christmas

December 24 No morning worship

December 24 Candlelight Christmas
Eve 5:00pm

December 25 - January 2
Church Office Closed

Music Notes ~ Terry Wise

Penna Rose was Minister of Music at this church from 1992 to 1996. She brought the music program to life with excellent skills on organ and piano, and enthusiastic choral conducting. She built up a Youth Choir to sing in worship services and perform musical theater on biblical themes. Intergenerational Christmas pageants with colorful costumes and plentiful singing became the norm. The Bell Choir was revived under her leadership. Penna founded the Festival Chorus, inviting local singers for an enhanced chorus to undertake presentation of major choral works in the worship service on Palm Sunday and one Sunday in Advent. Penna set a high standard for our congregation's music program, which continues to this day.

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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