



Candlelight Christmas Eve Service

*The First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ, Stockbridge
December 24, 2023 ~ 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.** 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.*

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

- *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion*, (Messiah), G.F. Handel
Amy Shake, soprano; Hui-Mei Lin, piano
- *How Brightly Shines the Morning Star*, Philipp Nicolai Bell Choir
- *Dona Nobis Pacem*, Old German Canon
- *Sussex Carol*, Traditional English carol
- *He Shall Feed His Flock* (Messiah), G.F. Handel
Dustin Qian, flute; Hui-Mei Lin, piano
- *Sonata No. 5 for Flute and Piano*, G.F. Handel Dustin Qian, Hui-Mei Lin
- *Jesus, Jesus, Rest Your Head*, arr. by John Jacob Niles
John Demler, bass; Hui-Mei Lin, piano
- *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*, Bach Steve Felix, trumpet; Hui-Mei Lin, organ

GATHERING IN WORSHIP

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLES

Liza & Joe Catino

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 to thee, O Israel!

*LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

William Barrett

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 time for rejoicing is now! Let us praise God!

People: The time for rejoicing is now! Let us praise 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.

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

Pastor Brent Damrow

WELCOME

Pastor Brent

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Pastor Brent

BELL ANTHEM *He Is Born, the Holy Child (Il Est Né)* arr. Jason Krug

CHILDRENS TIME



SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS

LESSON – Isaiah 9:2-7

Hannah Fries

ANTHEM *And the Glory of the Lord (Messiah)* G.F. Handel

The Choir, Hui-Mei Lin, *piano*

*CAROL *The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came*

Para. Sabine Baring-Gould (1834–1924) Basque carol
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!

*CAROL

What Child is This vss. 1 & 2

1 What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mar-y's lap is sleep - ing?
2 Why lies the Child in man-ger bare where ox and ass are feed - ing?
3 Bring gifts of in - cense, gold, and myrrh; come, join in ju - bi - la - tion;

Whom an - gels greet with an - thems sweet while shep - herds watch are keep - ing?
Give heed, draw near; for sin - ners here the si - lent Word is plead - ing.
The Ho - ly Child, though meek and mild, has come with God's sal - va - tion.

This, this, the an - gels sing, is Christ, God's ho - ly of - fer - ing;
Nails, spear shall pierce him through, the cross be borne for me, for you;
Raise, raise the song on high, the moth - er sings her lul - la - by;

Haste, haste your praise to bring the babe, the child of Mar - y!
Hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe, the child of Mar - y!
Joy, joy, for Christ is born, the babe, the child of Mar - y!

*CAROL

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!

*CAROL

The First Noel

1. The first No - el the an - gel did say was to cer - tain poor
 2. They look - ed up and saw a star shin - ing in the
 3. And by the light of that same star three Wise Men
 4. This star drew nigh to the north - west, o'er Beth - le -
 5. Then en - tered in those Wise Men three, full rev - erent -

shep - herds in fields as they lay; in fields where they lay
 east, be - yond them far; and to the earth it
 came from coun - try far; to seek for a king was
 hem it took its rest; and there it did both
 ly up - on the knee, and of - fered there, in

keep - ing their sheep, on a cold win - ter's night that was so deep.
 gave great light, and so it con - tin - ued both day and night.
 their in - tent, and to fol - low the star wher - ev - er it went.
 stop and stay, right o - ver the place where Je - sus lay.
 his pres - ence, their gold and myrrh and frank - in - cense.

Refrain

No - el, No - el, No - el, No - el, born is the King of Is - ra - el.

WORDS: Trad. English carol (Lk. 2:8-14; Mt. 2:1-12)
 MUSIC: Trad. English carol; harm. from *Christmas Carols New and Old*, 1871

THE FIRST NOEL
 Irr. with Refrain

*GOSPEL READING: John 1:1-14

Pastor Brent

ANTHEM

Angel's Carol by John Rutter

OFFERING OUR GIFTS

CALL TO THE OFFERING

A large portion of the offering this evening will be given to the Christmas Fund.
(Retired and Emergency Minister's Fund)

From the UCC website regarding the Christmas Fund:

In this season when we magnify the Lord for the great things God has done through unlikely people and in unexpected ways, we give thanks that we, too, by God's Spirit, can do great things. We, too, can lift up those who are laid low. We, too, can fill the hungry with good things. We, too, through our open-hearted generosity, can proclaim that nothing will be impossible with God. We can do all of that and more by contributing to the United Church of Christ's Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross. Our gifts help retired clergy, church staff, and their surviving spouses to pay bills, maintain their health insurance, and meet emergency needs. These servants of the church have spent lifetimes baptizing and blessing, teaching and preaching, marrying and burying, comforting and empowering God's people. Now, through the Christmas Fund, we have the opportunity to sustain and empower them. Our contributions tell our former servants of the church that they are not forgotten, that they are loved, that they and their ministries are appreciated and remembered. In the words of one recipient, "The financial assistance is greatly appreciated, but just as valuable is knowing that I have not been forgotten by the church I love." For Love's sake, let's give generously.

OFFERTORY ANTHEM

Winter Child of the Morning by Gilbert M. Martin
John Demler, *bass solo*

SERVICE OF LIGHT

INTRODUCTORY WORDS

Pastor Brent

*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).

*WORDS OF LIGHT

Jon Geldert and Jake Damrow

*HYMN

Silent Night

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.

*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, and 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.

*CHORAL RESPONSE *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly*, (Polish carol),
arr. by Peter Frost

GOING FORTH INTO THE WORLD

*BENEDICTION

Pastor Brent

*HYMN

Joy to the World! (see back page)

POSTLUDE

Trumpet Movement by John Stanley

Steve Felix, *trumpet*; Hui-Mei Lin, *piano*

Joy to the World!

1 Joy to the world! the Lord is come: let earth re - ceive her
2 Joy to the earth! the Sav - ior reigns; let all their songs em -
3 He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the na - tions

King. Let ev - ery heart pre - pare him
ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and
prove the glo - ries of his right - eous -

room, and heaven and na - ture sing, and heaven and na - ture
plains re - peat the sound - ing joy, re - peat the sound ing
ness and won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his
and heaven and na - ture sing,
and

sing, and heaven, and heaven and na - ture sing.
joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.
heaven and na - ture sing,