



FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST
 CONGREGATIONAL
 SUFFIELD, CT

AN OPEN & AFFIRMING CONGREGATION
 OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
DECEMBER 10, 2023
 THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Order of Worship

GATHERING MUSIC (Piano)

LIGHTING OF PEACE CANDLE (Lectern)

FIRST CHURCH MISSION STATEMENT (Lectern)

As disciples of Jesus and stewards of God's creation, we joyfully worship, faithfully serve, and generously give so that lives may be transformed.

PRELUDE (Bells, from floor)

The First Noel

arr. Cynthia Dobrinski
 Sonotori Handbell Choir

WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS (Center)

We are glad you are worshiping with us! When we gather together for worship, we are entering into a larger story. We yearn for the Holy Spirit to enter into our spaces and illuminate our magnificent God as we seek to follow in the ways of Jesus the Christ.

***CALL TO WORSHIP (Lectern)**

One: Be still!

Many: **We come to quiet ourselves in this haven of holiness.**

One: Be still and know . . .

Many: **we come to discern the Word which can set us free.**

One: Be still and know that God is

Many: **our Hope, our Help, our Refuge, and our Redeemer.**

OPENING PRAYER (Lectern)

We come together as one, united in our common loyalty to Jesus Christ. We come to worship and praise the God who calls us here. Let's open our hearts to one another, just as Christ has opened his heart to us, and God will be glorified. **AMEN**

ADVENT WREATH LIGHTING (Lectern)

One: Last Sunday we lit the first candle—the candle of hope. Today we light the second candle, the candle of peace. We light it knowing full well that peace is elusive, and in some parts of the world, it is almost completely absent. Yet in this season of Advent, we trust that God is never absent from us. God is always preparing something new. And even where there is war and discord, whether between countries, within families, or within our own hearts, God is present, gently leading us to new possibilities.

<Two purple candles are lit.>

**All: Loving God, in this time of preparation and planning,
We thank you for the hope and peace you unfailingly offer us.
Show us the creative power of hope.
Teach us the peace that comes from justice.
Prepare our hearts to be transformed by you,
That we may walk in the light of Christ.**

MUSICAL RESPONSE (Piano)

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Pilgrim Hymnal #110, vs. 2

*O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer
Our spirits by thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!*

A MESSAGE FOR ALL AGES (Center)

Nancy LaPlante

PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER (Pulpit)

Holy, beloved God, we come before you seeking strength, and comfort, someone to help us bear the load, or to give us a load worth bearing. In our praying give us open ears to hear your assurances and open hearts to feel your peace, even as we pray together.

We pray for the Church, the family of hopeful people, persistent in faithfulness and graciousness, marked by a willingness to work in kindness and not count the hours or the cost. As the world darkens and the days grow short, may our light, Christ's light in us, shine with a steady flame, bringing light, bringing healing, bringing reconciliation, and bringing peace. We pray for common-sense, and the touch of faithful humility that marked the life of Your Son, our Saviour, that we may determine to live lives of kindness and grace.

God of faithfulness and truth, we pray for the world around us, for peoples whose names we do not know yet whose hurts fill the news, and whose afflictions touch us not nearly long enough. We can change a channel, or turn a page, but they endure the long days and months of famine and thirst, of war and feud, of corruption and despair. Solutions may not be easy for all the ills of this world, but in each hurting place send Your Spirit, that those who do have the power to effect the changes needed for justice, peace and honor may use their power for the well being of all.

In this season of Advent, where many watch and wait, be with those who at this time wait by a hospital bedside, watch anxiously for results in exams and tests, wait for news of an interview, watch for a loved one to return. May all who wait with anxiety find your peace, and all who watch with fearfulness be calmed by your steady heart.

For ourselves, the hopes and hurts, the brightness and gloom that populate our waking and our sleeping hours. Help us to separate our needs from our wants, that we may discern where priorities in our ordered lives should lie. In a world where consumption rules and many have become accustomed to plenty, remind us of the privileges we take for granted, and the bounty we believe is our right, and not Your gift. Soothe our spirits, and fill us with good things—the things which make for peace.

We pray in silence for those who lie close to our hearts: <Silence> God of peace, hear our prayers.

...We pray this in the name of Jesus, who taught his disciples these words; Our Father...

GIFT OF MUSIC (Choir mic, Piano)

O Come, Divine Messiah!

16th century French Noël, arr. Todd Marchand
Chancel Choir

HEBREW SCRIPTURE (Lectern)

Psalms 46

Psalms 46 is a psalm of great faith with historical movements, movements in creation and future perfected days. Each segment is set off by the word "Sela", a term occurring frequently at the end of a verse in psalms, probably as a musical direction. The Lord of hosts is both outside our world (transcendent) and in it (immanent) and will bring both an end to war and peace to the earth.

CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURE (Pulpit)

Matthew 1.18-25

MUSICAL RESPONSE (Piano)

Spirit of the Living God

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me;

The New Century Hymnal #283

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.

Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me.

MEDITATION (Center)

Joseph

The Rev. Diann H. Bailey

***OFFERING OUR GIFTS TO GOD (Center/Pulpit/Organ)**

Musical response (Organ) *In the Bleak Midwinter*

Pilgrim Hymnal #128, v. 4

*What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man, I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give Him - Give my heart.*

Offering Prayer (Center)

God of all good gifts, who gives freely to us, have mercy on us and grant us the peace that only the Prince of Peace can provide. Amen

***HYMN (Organ)**

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

Pilgrim Hymnal, #103

BENEDICTION (Center)

One: A new day is dawning!

Two: Despite what we see and hear in the world around us, the sunrise is coming.

One: When it comes, it will break through the darkness of our world—

Two: darkness caused by violence and death and hunger and despair.

One: And all those who now sit huddled in the shadows will be able to rise and walk with confidence in the light.

Two: So go from here with courage and hope, to love and serve the Lord. Amen.

POSTLUDE (Organ)

Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan

Johann Krebs

(During the Postlude, you may use the time for personal reflection, greet your neighbor, or exit for coffee time in the Ebenezer Gay Room.)

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The chancel flowers are given to the glory of God by Sharen Lingenfelter, in loving memory of her husband, Ray; and in honor of Roger and Mary Margaret Tracy, who celebrated 71 years of marriage on Dec 6th, gifted by their extended family.

Join us in the Gay Room following worship for our Coffee & Conversation time, hosted by Cathie Ellithorpe.

Our Going the Extra Mile Mission Offering for the month of December is The Christmas Fund for Veterans of the Cross. The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees.

### Today's Worship Leaders:

The Rev Diann H. Bailey, Senior Minister

Ali Hager, Seminarian Associate

Amy Pott, Director of Worship Arts

Elizabeth Kaplan, Director, Sonotori Handbell Choir

Kaylon Hall, Lynnae Labato, and Lisa Nappi, Section Leaders

Linda Scavotto, Jill Wiganowske, Kristin Liquori & Jonah Sodekson, Advent Wreath Candle Lighters

Len Hodgman, Lay Leader

Marsha Fahrenholz, Deacon Greeter

Nancy LaPlante, Message for All Ages

Zak Wosko, Video and Audio Technician

Cyndie DeMur, Chancel Guild

Amber Dawne Bigley, Office Manager

### Notes about our worship service:

- \*(Asterisk) Please stand together in body or in spirit.
- Words in **Bold**, we speak together as a congregation.
- Our order of worship, hymn lyrics, unison readings, prayers and responses are projected on the monitors.
- Worship is always available virtually through our [YouTube](#) channel.
- **Subscribe** to our emails & newsletter to stay up-to-date on First Church info.
- Thank you to Don DaRos for our Hebrew Scripture Introduction.
- Thank you to Nancy LaPlante, Amanda Rogers and Grace Sauer, our Hands on Faith Volunteers. Gifts of offering can be mailed to the church or placed in the collections baskets at the front or back of the Sanctuary; utilize online-giving through the [church giving site](#) hosted by Vanco, if possible.
- First Church is a *Green Church*. We encourage use of electronic bulletins via the QR code and virtual giving!

### Works Cited:

Call to worship: Thom Shuman, and posted on Lectionary Liturgies. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.ca/>

Advent Wreath Liturgy Advent Liturgy and Pastoral Prayer: Deep Well Worship by Carol Prickett.

Hebrew Scripture Introduction by Donald J. DaRos, First Church member.

Offering: Adapted from; Thomas Turner, and posted on Everyday Liturgy. <http://everydayliturgy.com/prayer-for-epiphany/>

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