



The Return of the Dove to the Ark (1851) - John Everett Millais

NOVEMBER 27, 2022
FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT
HOPE

ANNOUNCEMENTS

“Get to Know You Question” for Sunday, November 27th: How do you know what is most important to you?

Advent Study - Immediately following worship, on the four Sundays of Advent, we invite everyone (both in-the-room and on Zoom) to join Pastor Emilia and the Spiritual Life team for a brief 15 min video and 15-20 min of discussion, reflection, and sharing. This year, the Advent video study is:

A conversation with Kathy Escobar discussing the spiritual and life practices, from her book "A Weary World: Reflections for A Blue Christmas" that she has found helpful when crawling through seemingly impossible loss when it collides with the hustle-and-bustle holiday season. This is more than a "How to survive the holidays" guide, it is her true-to-life work learning how to honor reality, be honest, hold paradox (both the dark and the light), and borrow hope when she had none.

If you find yourself weary and facing down a blue Christmas, we hope this series brings you company—you are not alone. You are held in our hearts and prayers and those of us who can are holding hope for you when you can't. Keep being true to yourself, we are with you.

Angel Tree: We have a Christmas tree posted on the bulletin board outside of the chapel with the gift tags from the Salvation Army...Gifts need to be at the church by Wednesday, December 14th—unwrapped. Thank You

Discernment Circle Gathering, next Sunday, December 4th from 9:30-10:15 am in the Chapel before worship. Please join us in-the-room or on Zoom.

Page Turners for November: We are reading “Reclaiming Spirituality” by Diarmuid O’Murchu, and all are invited to join us for the discussion on November 28th from 2-3pm in the Chapel at Wesley UMC or on Zoom.

The **Anti-Racism Study Group** will continue its work on Tuesday, December 6th from 7-8, on Zoom. All are welcome and need to first register with Pastor Emilia. This coming session, we will be reflecting on chapters 8-10 of “The Black Friend: On Being A Better White Person” by Frederick Joseph.

Time to **RETURN all KEYS** to the 177 N. Main Street building (this includes all skeleton keys for the sanctuary) that we still have, in our community, to the Coalition to End Homelessness. November 30th is the last date we are leasing part of the building. Please bring your keys to the current First Church office and we will deliver them all to CCEH at the end of the month. Thank you!

Welcome to First Congregational Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ

First Sunday of Advent—HOPE

November 27, 2022

***Please stand if you are able**

Welcome & Announcements

PREPARING THE ADVENT WREATH - FIRST CANDLE - HOPE - EARTH (by Nancy Rockwell)

Prelude

O How Shall I Receive You

Annie

Setting Intentions for Worship

*CALL TO WORSHIP: (written by Maren Tirabassi)

We come together in these dark days.

We must look to you now to light our mornings and our evenings.

We come seeking renewed joy.

We must look now to each other for our spirits to be improved.

We come carrying gifts along with the burdens of the year.

We now look within to bring tidings of great joy.

*Bringing Ourselves into God's Presence: (www.themuddyfork.org)

God of all that is, and was, and will be: May we pay attention to Your Spirit moving.

May we always be ready to respond with love. Amen.

*SONG: (116)

O Come, O Come, Immanuel (Public Domain)

1 O come, O come, Immanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Refrain: *Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.*

2 O come, O Wisdom from on high,
who ordered all things mightily;
to us the path of knowledge show
and teach us in its ways to go. **Refrain**

6 O come, O Bright and Morning Star,
and bring us comfort from afar!
Dispel the shadows of the night
and turn our darkness into light. **Refrain**

7 O come, O King of nations, bind
in one the hearts of all mankind.
Bid all our sad divisions cease
and be yourself our King of Peace. **Refrain**

Lighting the Advent Wreath

Introduction to the Ritual

First Candle - Hope & Grief

We light the first candle to share our grief: grief over loved ones who have died, over relationships that have ended, over the many kinds of loss and change we have experienced. Often it is during these holiday times, these times that are filled with memories, what we feel most deeply the absence of those we have loved and lost. May this candle bring light to our grief.

Moment of Silence

"Mary Hears from God"

We are waiting. We are frustrated and tired. So much of our world seems caught in turmoil. Many are dying of disease as well as terrorism. The darkness closes in on us. Where is the hope?

In the darkness God lights the first candle of Advent. The divine word is sent to a young teen in a land in the Mideast. "I'm going to bring a new life into the world, to bring about change, to offer love and salvation." What will be her answer? We listen with bated breath.

"Let it happen as you say, O God. May the fruit of my womb bring good news to us all."

Lighting the First Candle

Unison Prayer:

As you brought the word of hope to Mary and through her to our world, rekindle anew in us this season a sense of hope as we prepare to honor your nativity. Amen.

Hear now Psalm 51 from the Rev. Benjamin Chavis psalter...

Psalter Lesson Psalm 51

Here ends the Psalter Lesson.

Amen.

Hear now from the Hebrew scriptures...

Hebrew Scriptures Genesis 8:8-12 Isaiah 9:1-7 (NRSVUE) Phil Kimball

Here ends the Lesson.

Amen.

SERMON

Following the Spirit, in Darkness and Light

Rev. Emilia Halstead

SONG: (133) O little town of Bethlehem (Public Domain)

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 For Christ is born of Mary,
and, gathered all above
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars, together
proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King
and peace to all the earth.

3 How silently, how silently,
the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of his heav'n.
No ear may hear his coming,
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still
the dear Christ enters in.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

(Response to each prayer:)

Advent Spirit,

Receive our prayers.

PASTORAL PRAYER (written by Nancy C. Townley)

Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, which 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Sung Amen: (133) O little town of Bethlehem [Verse 4] (Public Domain)

4 O holy Child of Bethlehem,
descend to us, we pray,
cast out our sin and enter in,
be born in us today.

We hear the Christmas angels
the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
our Lord Immanuel!

Offertory

Invitation (written by Maria I. Tirabassi)

GRATITUDE MUSIC

Watcher, Tell Us of the Night

Annie

PRAYER OF DEDICATION (written by Maria I. Tirabassi)

When we have drowned ourselves in sin, God has forgiven us. When we turn our faces from God's healing, we are not thrust away. And when we do as much as we can to help others, our generosity does not go unnoticed. Thanks be to God!

*CLOSING SONG: #108

Isaiah the Prophet of Old

Isaiah the Prophet Has Written of Old, Joy F Patterson, Sydney Carter

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SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK AHEAD

SENDING & BLESSING (written by Jacqueline A. Burnett)

POSTLUDE

Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates

Annie

HANGING OF THE GREENS!

ADVENT VIDEO AND DISCUSSION