

Welcome to First Congregational Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ

Third Sunday of Advent—December 13, 2020

JOY

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

First Peoples Land Acknowledgement

We want to acknowledge that we gather as First Congregational Church on the traditional land of the Wabanaki Confederacy, the Abenaki people and the Pennacook people, past and present, and honor with gratitude the land itself and the people who have stewarded it throughout a thousand generations. This calls us to commit to continuing to learn how to be better stewards of this land we inhabit as well.

PRELUDE

O Little Town of Bethlehem

(Adele)

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR WORSHIP

CALL TO WORSHIP: (ADAPTED FROM A PIECE BY R. VICTOR KLASSEN)

We will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever;

Our souls magnify the Lord;

With our mouths we proclaim God's faithfulness to all generations

Our spirits rejoice in God our saviour.

We declare that your steadfast love is established forever;

His mercy is to those who fear him from generation to generation.

Your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.

You are our God and the Rock of our salvation.

BRINGING OURSELVES INTO GOD'S PRESENCE:

Spirit of the Living God, You bring good news to the oppressed; bind up the brokenhearted; proclaim liberty to the captives; and release the prisoners. You comfort all who mourn, and shower your people with the oil of gladness instead of mourning; a mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. We greatly rejoice in the Lord, our whole being shall exult in God, for the sake of the one who brought righteousness to life, Jesus Christ, our guide and guardian. Amen.

OPENING HYMN: #131 It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

(Lyrics: United Methodist Hymnal)

1. It came upon the midnight clear,
that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth
to touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, good will to men,
from heaven's all-gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay,
to hear the angels sing.

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3. And ye, beneath life's crushing load,
whose forms are bending low,
who toil along the climbing way
with painful steps and slow,
look now! for glad and golden hours
come swiftly on the wing.
O rest beside the weary road,
and hear the angels sing!

4. For lo! the days are hastening on,
by prophet seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years
shall come the time foretold
when peace shall over all the earth
its ancient splendors fling,
and the whole world send back the song
which now the angels sing.

ADVENT WREATH LIGHTING, THE CANDLE OF JOY:(by Maren Tirabassi) Rebecca Maccini
In our homes we gather around wreaths to pray for our lost hopes, broken peace, limited joys,
and love so hard to find and share in this season of coronavirus. We affirm that these candles
mean that this is the season Advent, when God's light comes into the world and nothing can
overcome it. We relight the candles of Hope and Peace.

**We now light the candle of Joy - in spite of missing so many things we thought were
essential to a merry Christmas like: parties, photos with Santa, Christmas visits, and
chances to hug and kiss under the mistletoe.**

God's joy ignites embers under loss and sorrow and brightens the path to love.

**Emmanuel, God be with us, in the week to come, lighting hope, peace and joy on
the wick of our lives so that we may shine in our world with a simple smile; an
unexpected laughter. Amen.**

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 1:39-56 (NRSV)

with Magnificat by Work Of The People

³⁹ In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill
country, ⁴⁰ where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When
Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled
with the Holy Spirit ⁴² and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³ And why has this happened to me, that the
mother of my Lord comes to me? ⁴⁴ For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting,
the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ And blessed is she who believed that there would
be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

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⁴⁶ And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸ for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me,

and holy is his name.

⁵⁰ His mercy is for those who fear him

from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,

and lifted up the lowly;

⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things,

and sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,

in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors,

to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

⁵⁶ And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

SERMON

Leaping For Joy

Rev. Emilia Halstead

HYMN: #135

O Come, All Ye Faithful
(Lyrics: Public Domain)

1 O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant!
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!
Come and behold him, born the King of angels;

Refrain:

O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!

2 God of God, Light of Light eternal,
Lo! he abhors not the Virgin's womb;
Son of the Father, begotten, not created, [Refrain]

3 Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above:
"Glory to God, all glory in the highest!" [Refrain]

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

PUBLIC ACT OF MOURNING: #345 Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence
(Lyrics: Trinity Psalter Hymnal)

3. Rank on rank the host of heaven
spreads its vanguard on the way,
as the Light of light descendeth
from the realms of endless day,
that the pow'rs of hell may vanish
as the darkness clears away.

Pastoral Prayer Written by Rev. Timoth Sylvia
Produced by UCC National Office

Lord's Prayer: (Translation by Neil Douglas-Klotz in Prayers of the Cosmos)

O Birther! Father-Mother of the Cosmos, focus your light within us - make it useful. Create your reign of unity now-through our fiery hearts and willing hands. Help us love beyond our ideals and sprout acts of compassion for all creatures. Animate the earth within us: we then feel the Wisdom underneath supporting all. Untangle the knots within so that we can mend our hearts' simple ties to each other. Don't let surface things delude us, but free us from what holds us back from our true purpose. Out of you, the astonishing fire, returning light and sound to the cosmos. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN: #129 Good Christian Friends, Rejoice (Lyrics: Psalter Hymnal)

1 Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
give ye heed to what we say:
Jesus Christ was born today.
Ox and ass before him bow,
and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today!
Christ is born today!

2 Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
now ye hear of endless bliss:
Jesus Christ was born for this!
He has opened heaven's door,
and we are blest forevermore.
Christ was born for this!
Christ was born for this!

3 Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
now ye need not fear the grave:
Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all
to gain his everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save!
Christ was born to save

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK AHEAD

BENEDICTION & SENDING:

God will strengthen you and bless you with peace; Christ Jesus will bring forth justice among you; And the Holy Spirit will alight on you and affirm you as God's beloved ones. Go now as a light to the nations. Honor the Lord; share what you know of the risen Christ with joy.

In the name of Christ we go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Our worship has ended—our service now begins. Amen.

POSTLUDE

A Holly Jolly Christmas

(Adele)

