

Welcome to First Congregational Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ

Second Sunday of Advent—December 6, 2020

PEACE

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

Atacama Desert

(Adele)

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR WORSHIP

*CALL TO WORSHIP: (BY JOHN BIRCH)

When does an ordinary life become extraordinary? When does a mundane day become revolutionary? When does a moment in time change history?

When God enters in, forgives sin, and allows us to begin again. When we repeat those words of Mary, 'May it be to me as you say.'

*BRINGING OURSELVES INTO GOD'S PRESENCE:

Loving Lord, when we have strayed, you have called us to come home to you: "Return to me with all your heart." With all our hearts we return to you, and gratefully accept your gentle love, for the sake of the one whose spirit lives in us, Jesus Christ, Amen.

*OPENING HYMN: #145 Once in Royal David's City (Trinity Psalter Hymnal)

1. Once in royal David's city
stood a lowly cattle shed,
where a mother laid her baby
in a manger for his bed:
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ, her little child.
2. He came down to earth from heaven
who is God and Lord of all,
and his shelter was a stable,
and his cradle was a stall:
with the poor, and mean, and lowly,
lived on earth our Savior holy.

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4. And our eyes at last shall see him,
thro' his own redeeming love;
for that child so dear and gentle
is our Lord in heav'n above:
and he leads his children on
to the place where he is gone.

*ADVENT WREATH LIGHTING – THE CANDLE OF PEACE:(by Maren Tirabassi) Sara Nichols

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 candle of hope.

We now light the candle of peace in spite of gun violence, anger, post-election violence, dangerous homes, depression, and addiction.

God's peace illuminates the possibility of reconciliation and healing and brightens the path to joy.

Emmanuel, God be with us, in the week to come, lighting hope and peace on the wick of our lives so that we may shine on our world. Amen.

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 1:26-38 (NRSV)

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

SERMON

Nothing Will Be Impossible with God

Rev. Emilia Halstead

HYMN: #128 In the Bleak Midwinter (United Methodist Hymnal)

1. In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
in the bleak midwinter, long ago.

3. Angels and archangels may have gathered there,
cherubim and seraphim thronged the air;
but his mother only, in her maiden bliss,
worshiped the beloved with a kiss.

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.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

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

2. King of kings, yet born of Mary,
as of old on earth he stood,
Lord of lords, in human vesture,
in the body and the blood,
he will give to all the faithful
his own self for heav'nly food.

Pastoral Prayer Written by Rev. Dr. Sheila Harvey-Guillaume
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.

RITUAL OF HANGING CHRISMONS

Meaning of & Our History of Hanging Chrismons

Sheila Swenson

Symbolically Hanging Chrismons: #127 Lo, How a Rose E're Blooming

1. Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming
From tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming
As men of old have sung.
It came, a flower bright,
Amid the cold of winter
When half-gone was the night.

2. Isaiah 'twas foretold it,
The Rose I have in mind:
With Mary we behold it,
The virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright
She bore to men a Savior
When half-gone was the night.

Blessing of the Chrismons:

**O Christ, our shield, our guardian,
Each day, each night, each light, each dark,
Be near us, uphold us; our treasure, our triumph. Amen.**



1. Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King:
peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
join the triumph of the skies;
with th'angelic hosts proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Refrain:

Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King"

2. Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
late in time behold him come,
offspring of the Virgin's womb:
veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
hail th'incarnate Deity,
pleased with us in flesh to dwell,
Jesus, our Immanuel. [Refrain]

3. Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
born that we no more may die,
born to raise us from the earth,
born to give us second birth. [Refrain]

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK AHEAD

*BENEDICTION & SENDING: (ADAPTED FROM LITURGY BY JOHN BIRCH)

Lord God, you choose the very least and raise them up to greatness,

For nothing is impossible with God.

You take the weak, the impoverished, and the blind and raise them into the Light.

For nothing is impossible with God.

Give thanks to the Lord, for God is good.

God's love endures forever.

Teach us obedience, Lord, in every part of our lives:

**Ears to hear your word; Hands to do your work; Feet to walk your path;
A heart for all your people; A mouth to shout your praise; A childlike faith,**

And confidence that says to the possible and the impossible alike,

**I am the Lord's servant may it be to me as you have said. Our worship is
ended-our service now begins. Amen.**