



First Congregational Church UCC – Founded 1812
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*Come with hope or despair, expectation, or disappointment,
and seek God even as God seeks you.*

ORDER OF WORSHIP
FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT & HOLY COMMUNION

December 3, 2023

10 a.m.

*Hearing devices and large print hymnals are available—
please ask an usher if you require them.*

Thank you for turning off electronic devices before worship begins.

**Please stand if you are able.*

RINGING THE BELL

9:45 a.m.

LIGHTING THE CANDLES

PRELUDE

*People, Look East
Creator of the Stars of Night*

arr. Page
arr. Lau

WELCOME

CHORAL INTROIT

Like a Child

Damon

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE (responsively)

One: We light this candle as a symbol of the hope we in the promise of the Lord's coming. For the Lord will fulfill his promise: a righteous Branch will spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

All: Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved.*

As the candle is lit, please sing these words to the tune *Away in a manger*:

A candle is burning, a flame warm and bright;

A candle of HOPE in December's dark night.

While angels sing blessing from heaven's starry sky

Our hearts we prepare now, for Jesus is nigh.¹

*CALL TO WORSHIP (responsively)

One: In anticipation we gather.

All: With expectation we wait.

One: We gather to hear Good News.

All: Open our ears and hearts, O God, that we may hear with joy the word you speak.

One: In this spirit let our praise begin.

All: Let our prayers be lifted.

One: Let our celebration bring new life.

*HYMN

Christians all, your Lord is coming

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*OPENING PRAYER (unison)

Compassionate God, greet us with your grace this day, for we need you. Today we would be quiet enough to hear your voice. Today we would be still enough to feel your touch. Help us to find that place where we can receive as well as give, wait as well as act, and listen as well as speak. Our whole world needs your peace. Let us come before you and learn your ways. Come to us now, through Jesus the Christ. Amen.

(* Psalm 80:3)

CHILDREN'S TIME FOR ALL AGES

THE LORD'S PRAYER (unison)

Our Father, who 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

CHORAL ANTHEM

A Prayer for Advent

Nolan

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION (unison)

Holy One, through your Holy Spirit instruct us by the light of your prophets. Illumine our hearts, that we may hear your call to become your path into the world. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Old Testament

Isaiah 64:1-9

p.654 OT

Psalms 80:1-7, 17-19

p.503 OT

Gospel

Mark 13:32-37

p.44 NT

ADVENT MEDITATION

Rev. Keith Bowie

MORNING PRAYERS

Joys & Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

Prayer for those Celebrating Birthdays: Peter

Choral Response

Hear Our Prayer

Hamill

*HYMN

Let all mortal flesh keep silence
verses 1, 2 & 4 only

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HOLY COMMUNION

The Great Thanksgiving

One: God be with you.

All: And also with you.

One: Let us open our hearts.

All: We open them to our God.

One: Let us give thanks to the Holy One, our God.

All: It is right to lift up thanks and praise.

Preface

Prayer of Consecration

Words of Institution & Sharing the Elements

Prayer (unison)

God of grace, thank you for the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, God with us. In this season of hope, may the meal we have shared together nourish us to be Christ's body in the world, your kingdom come, your will done on earth as it is in heaven. With the angels in heaven, we join in singing your praises. Glory to God in the highest! Alleluia! Amen.

OFFERING OUR GIFTS & TITHES

OFFERTORY

Emmanuel

McGee

*DOXOLOGY (#46) & PRAYER OF DEDICATION

*HYMN

O come, O come, Emmanuel

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BENEDICTION

CHORAL RESPONSE

May the Peace of God Be Your Peace

McLaren

POSTLUDE

Picardy

arr. Wagner

¹ Words Sandra Dean (1986), former Director of Music at Southminster United Church in Ottawa, Canada.

Lynn Hall, *Organist*

Nancy Sargent, *Choir Director*

Sue & Ken Farkas, *Advent Candle Lighting*

Mary Morrow, *Liturgist*

Rev. Keith Bowie, *Transitional Minister*

Cindy & Charlie Sargent, *Ushers*

Lois Stevens, *Greeter*

Ruth & Troy Tainter, *Facebook, WDEA & Zoom*

John A. Lacey & Katharine Schrader, *November Deacons*

MASKING IS OPTIONAL IN THE CHURCH BUILDING.

Please respect the space of those who choose to mask.



5 P.M. CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE *Note time change for the 2023 service.* Everyone is invited to the traditional Service of Lessons & Carols, where we hear our favorite passages from Scripture and sing carols together. The evening concludes with lovely congregational candle lighting.



"YOU HAVE STOOD BY ME"

Among the many letters and notes the Pension Boards receives from recipients of gifts made possible by contributions to the Christmas Fund were these words from a retired clergywoman in Kentucky:

"Each year in the face of your unwavering faithfulness it becomes harder to know how to thank you! In such an unpredictable time with not only aging, but Covid and violent world events, faithfulness and something I can count on that brings concrete relief to ease the burden is a blessing.

"You have stood by me and given me financial help when I needed it. It has allowed me to live in a sustainable way where I, too, can show the faithfulness of God to my neighbor and the world. Thank you from the heart!"

Last year, because of your gifts, the Christmas Fund provided over \$1.3 million in pension and health benefits supplementation, emergency grants, and thank-you checks to retired servants of the church and their families. Every cent of that money came from the pockets of people like you. Please give as generously as you are able this year!

In 2022, gifts to the Christmas Fund enabled:

- Monthly pension supplementation for 218 retired clergy and lay employees (\$1,042,726)
- Health benefits supplementation for 86 retired clergy and lay employees (\$181,389)
- Emergency grants for 55 individuals and families (\$138,022)
- Christmas "Thank You" gift checks to 479 retired clergy and lay employees (\$278,500)

THE CHRISTMAS FUND

For the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund
Give online at www.christmasfund.org.

Our purpose,
First Congregational Church, UCC, Ellsworth, Maine:
To embrace the life, ministry and teachings of Jesus Christ
In meaningful and dynamic ways through
creative worship,
supportive fellowship,
compassionate outreach, and
stimulating Christian education for all ages;
To be a faithful community which, led by the Holy Spirit,
expresses hospitality,
nurtures spiritual growth, and
promotes a deep sense of belonging;
To strive to build on commonalities while seeking to
understand, accept, and
celebrate our differences;
To stand as a beacon of hope in a hurting and troubled world by
sharing the Good News of the Gospel, and
practicing God's love as embodied by Jesus Christ.
We welcome all to walk with us on the journey of faith.
As adopted by the Congregation at its Annual Meeting – January 22, 2012

