



"Center Christ" by Lauren Wright Pittman

December 24, 2023
Christmas Eve

First Congregational United Church of Christ
945 G Street NW, Washington, DC

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

ORDER OF WORSHIP

PRELUDE

Cradle Song
Mary Hayes, violin

Frank Bridge

WELCOME

Rev. Amanda Hendler-Voss

*CAROL

“O Come All Ye Faithful”
Verse 2: Choir only

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CALL TO WORSHIP

Sophie Jones

One: There is room for you here.
If you're weary and worn, or hopeful and patient.
Many: **If you're tired and lost, or wrapped up in hope.**
One: If you're new to this place, or have been here before.
Many: **Come in, Come in. There is room for you here.**
One: The angels are singing,
Many: **“Be not afraid.”**
One: The angels are singing,
Many: **“Good news and great joy!”**
One: So come in, come in!
Many: **There is room for us here.**

LESSON 1: NEW TRUTH

Rev. Sydney Avent

Luke 1:26-38

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. Her name was Mary. And the angel 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 two months 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.

The candle of Hope is lit.

*CAROL

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”
Verses 1, 3-4

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* PASSING THE PEACE OF GOD

Rev. Sam McFerran

Please greet those around you (unmute if on Zoom) with words such as “The peace of God be with you.” Let us bless one another with deep peace across time and space.

MUSICAL OFFERING

In the Bleak Midwinter
Robin Olson, trombone

Traditional

LESSON 2: STAYING TRUE

Kristy Goodfellow

Matthew 1:18-24

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife.

The candle of Peace is lit.

CHILDREN'S MOMENT

Rev. Sam McFerran

*CAROL

"Away in a Manger"
Verses 1 & 3

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LESSON 3: EXTRAVAGANT WELCOME

Riley Kiss

Luke 2:1-7

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

The candle of Joy is lit.

CHORAL ANTHEM

"Sussex Carol"

David Willcocks

CHRISTMAS PRAYER & THE PRAYER OF OUR SAVIOR

Rev. Amanda Hendler-Voss

**Our God, 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 debts as we forgive our debtors;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;
for thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

Luke 2:8-20

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom God favors!" When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

The candle of Love is lit.

*CAROL

"It Came Upon a Midnight Clear"

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Verses 1, 3, 4

OFFERING

Rev. Sam McFerran

As we worship virtually and in person, we invite you to give in a variety of ways. Place your offering in the plate, send your check to the office, [give online](#) through our website at www.firstuccdc.org, which includes options to give through PayPal or Vanco. Consider signing up for auto-giving.

LESSON 5: HOME BY ANOTHER ROAD

Jaimie Orr

Matthew 2:1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

Rev. Sam McFerran

A LIGHT SHINES IN THE DEEPEST NIGHT

Rev. Amanda Hendler-Voss

John 1:1-5, 14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through the Word, and without the Word was not anything made. In the Word was life, and the life was the light of all. The light shines in the deepest night, and the night has not overcome it....and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.”

SHARING IN THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

Rev. Sam McFerran

*CAROL

“Silent Night”

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BENEDICTION

Rev. Amanda Hendler-Voss

Please depart in silence, returning to the wonder of this holy night.

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* Indicates “Please Rise in Body or in Spirit”

Advent Candle Liturgy and benediction were adapted by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed, A Sanctified Art LLC, sanctifiedart.org.

Participating in Worship

Mary Hayes, violin
Robin Olson, trombone

Connect with us!

If you are worshiping from afar but would like to connect with the First Church community, please [click here](#) to fill out an online Visitor's Card and check out our newsletters at our website, www.firstuccdc.org. We are so grateful to be extending our reach beyond the DC region and welcome you warmly!

Christmas Eve Special Offering: Olaiya's Cradle



On Christmas Eve please donate generously to support young mothers and their babies in the Olaiya’s Cradle program. Olaiya’s Cradle is a supportive, independent living program for homeless young mothers ages 18-21 and their children, for up to 18 months. Women are self-referred, and receive individual counseling, comprehensive maternal and infant health care, life skills training, education and career guidance, and child care support and parenting training to enable them to achieve self-sufficiency. Residents graduating from the program receive follow-up support and housing assistance to help them maintain stability. Olaiya's Cradle is a program run by Sasha Bruce

Youthwork, our partner in carrying out the Youth Drop In Center here at First Church for young adults who lack secure housing.

Christmas Flower Dedications

| | |
|---|---|
| Jean Alexander | In celebration of the lives of Bruce Hanson & Bill Moremen |
| Susan Anderson | In celebration of the life of Jane Petrocchi |
| Diane Brenneman | In honor of the First Church Choir |
| The Bushmiller-Cacozza Family | In celebration of the lives of Richard Harman & Jane Petrocchi |
| Lucille Dickinson | In celebration of the lives of Bill and Isabel Dickinson |
| Lynn Gaaserud | In honor of loved ones |
| Barbara Gerlach Jessica & Scott, Peter & Sara, Antonio, Sofia, Xavier, Lucas & Maia | In celebration of the life of John H. Mack "Papa John" |
| Polly B. Gordon | In celebration of the life of my mother Pauline Palmer Barten, my brother Bruce Palmer Barten, & my husband Irving Gordon |
| The Hendler-Voss Family | In celebration of the life of Robert J. Voss |
| Nikie King | In honor of loved ones |
| Anne and Tom Mascolino | In celebration of the lives of Mary Margaret Mascolino & Lois Bliss Abshire |
| Tom, Courtney, Greta, & Barrett McCaffrey | In celebration of the lives of Jeff and Bonnie Rickert |
| Nan and Nick McConnell | In celebration of the lives of our parents |
| Eric and Carol Olson | In celebration of the lives of Oley & Sally Olson and Ingrid Olson; Ted Spellman, Byrdie Spellman Wilson and David Spellman |
| Dwan Reece | In celebration of the life of Pauline Reece. |
| The Saudek Family | In celebration of the lives of Vince Gurucharri & Chris Saudek |
| John, Cathy, Julia, & Lily Smeltzer | In celebration of the life of The Rev. John P. Smeltzer |
| Fredda Sparks | In honor of First Church's wonderful staff |
| Reina Wood-Jimenez | In honor of the Birth of Jesus the Light; Success, Cheer, Miracles, Wishes of Mirth |

O Come, All Ye Faithful 133

1 O come, all ye faith - ful, joy - ful and tri - um - phant; O come
 2 True God from true God, Light from light e - ter - nal, born
 3 Sing, choirs of an - gels; sing in ex - ul - ta - tion; sing,
 4 Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this hap - py morn - ing; Je -

ye; O come ye to Beth - le - hem! Come, and be - hold him,
 of a vir - gin, a mor - tal he comes; ver - y God, be -
 all ye cit - i - zens of heaven a - bove! Glo - ry to God, all
 sus, to thee be all glo - ry given; Word of the Fa - ther,

Refrain

born the King of an - gels!
 got - ten, not cre - at - ed! O come, let us a - dore him; O come, let
 glo - ry in the high - est!
 now in flesh ap - pear - ing!

us a - dore him; O come, let us a - dore him, Christ, the Lord!

O Little Town of Bethlehem

*Mic. 5:2; Luke 2:4-7**Phillips Brooks, 1868; alt.*

1 O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, how still we see you lie!
 2 For Christ is born of Mar - y, and gath - ered all a - bove,
 3 How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly, the won - drous gift is given!
 4 O ho - ly Child of Beth - le - hem, de - scend to us, we pray;

A - bove your deep and dream-less sleep the si - lent stars go by;
 While mor - tals sleep, the an - gels keep their watch of won - dering love.
 So God im - parts to hu - man hearts the glo - rious love of heaven.
 Cast out our sin and en - ter in; be born in us to - day.

Yet in your dark streets shines forth the ev - er - last - ing light,
 O morn - ing stars, to - geth - er pro - claim the ho - ly birth!
 No one dis - cerns God's com - ing, but in this world of sin,
 We hear the Christ - mas an - gels the great glad tid - ings tell;

The hopes and fears of all the years are met in you to - night.
 And prais - es sing, and voic - es ring with peace to all on earth.
 Where yearn - ing souls long to be whole, the dear Christ en - ters in.
 O come to us, a - bide with us, our Lord Em - man - u - el!

Away in a Manger

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Anon., United States, 1885; st. 3, 1892; alt.

Luke 2:7

F B \flat F

1 A - way in a man - ger, no crib for a bed, the
 2 The cat - tle are low - ing, the poor ba - by wakes, but
 3 Be near me, Lord Je - sus; I ask you to stay close

C7 F

lit - tle Lord Je - sus laid down his sweet head. The
 lit - tle Lord Je - sus, no cry - ing he makes. I
 by me for - ev - er and love me, I pray. Bless

F B \flat F

stars in the sky looked down where he lay, the
 love you, Lord Je - sus; pro - tect me, I pray, and
 all the dear chil - dren in your ten - der care, and

C7 F B \flat C7 F

lit - tle Lord Je - sus, a - sleep on the hay.
 stay by my side un - til night turns to day.
 fit us for heav - en to live with you there.

It Came upon the Midnight Clear

Luke 2:8-14

Edmund H. Sears, 1849; alt.



1 It came up-on the mid - night clear, that glo - rious song of old,
2 Still through the clo - ven skies they come, with peace-ful wings un - furled,
3 And you, be-neath life's crush - ing load, whose forms are bend - ing low,
4 For lo, the days are hasten - ing on, by proph-et bards fore - told,



from an - gels bend - ing near the earth to touch their harps of gold;
and still their heaven-ly mu - sic floats o'er all the wea - ry world;
who toil a - long the climb - ing way, with pain - ful steps and slow,
when with the ev - er - cir - cling years comes round the age of gold;



"Peace on the earth, good will to all, great news of joy we bring."
A - bove its sad and low - ly plains they bend on hover - ing wing,
Look now, for glad and gold - en hours come swift - ly on the wing;
When peace shall o - ver all the earth its an - cient splen - dors fling,



The world in sol - emn still - ness lay to hear the an - gels sing.
and ev - er o'er its Ba - bel sounds the bless - ed an - gels sing.
O rest be - side the wea - ry road, and hear the an - gels sing!
and all the world send back the song which now the an - gels sing.



Joy to the World!

Isaac Watts, 1719; alt.

Ps. 98:4-9; Luke 2:11-15

1 Joy to the world! the Lord is come: let earth its
 2 Joy to the earth! the Sav - ior reigns! Let all their
 3 Christ rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the

prais - es bring; Let ev - ery heart pre - pare Christ room,
 songs em - ploy; While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
 na - tions prove The glo - ries of God's righ - teous - ness

and heaven and na - ture sing, and heaven and na - ture
 re - peat the sound - ing joy, re - peat the sound - ing
 and won - ders of God's love, and won - ders of God's

and heaven and na - ture sing, and
 re - peat the sound - ing joy, re -
 and won - ders of God's love, and

sing, and heaven, and heaven and na - ture sing.
 joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
 love, and won - ders, won - ders of God's love.

heaven and na - ture sing,
 peat the sound - ing joy,
 won - ders of God's love,

Silent Night, Holy Night

Joseph Mohr, 1818

Transl. John F. Young, c. 1863; alt.

Luke 2:1-20

1 Si - lent night, ho - ly night, all is calm, all is bright
2 Si - lent night, ho - ly night, shep-herds quake at the sight,
3 Si - lent night, ho - ly night, Child of God, love's pure light,

The first system of music features a treble and bass staff in 6/8 time with a key signature of two flats. The treble staff includes four measures with chords Bb, Bb, F, and Bb. The lyrics are arranged in three lines corresponding to the three verses.

Round you vir - gin moth-er and child. Ho - ly in - fant so ten - der and mild,
Glo - ries stream from heav-en a - far, heav-en-ly hosts sing Al - le - lu - ia;
Ra - diant beams from your ho-ly face bring the dawn of re - deem - ing grace;

The second system continues the melody with four measures in the treble staff, featuring chords Eb, Bb, Eb, and Bb. The lyrics are arranged in three lines.

Sleep in heav - en-ly peace, sleep in heav - en-ly peace.
Christ the Sav - ior is born, Christ the Sav - ior is born.
Je - sus Christ at your birth, Je - sus Christ at your birth.

The third system concludes the piece with seven measures in the treble staff, featuring chords F, F7, Bb, Bb, F, F7, and Bb. The lyrics are arranged in three lines.

Prayer List

Prayers of lament and peace for Palestine and Israel, especially the children.

Prayers of joy as we celebrate the marriage of the

Rev. Jason Carson Wilson and Jim Sweeney

Prayers of joy for Erin Griffith and Mike Zawada as they welcome baby Echo.

Prayers of comfort for Garnell Yarbrough following the death of his father.

Prayers for the people of Maui following the wildfire devastation,
including Waiola UCC in Lahaina.

Prayers of joy for Abigail Cipparone and Michael Hopkins following their engagement.

Prayers of comfort for Jennie Hunt following the death of Bob Crossley.

Prayers of mercy for the people of Afghanistan
and Afghan families resettling in the U.S.

Prayers of peace and liberation for Sudan, Ukraine, Nicaragua, Cuba, and Haiti.

Prayers of mercy for families struggling to eat and make ends meet.

Prayers for Peoples Congregational UCC, our sibling congregation,
as they welcome a new Interim Minister.

Rev. Laura Simmons and Rev. Diana Gomez de Molina, who serve as chaplains.

We are an Open & Affirming congregation, welcoming all LGBTQ+ individuals and families into the full life and leadership of our church.



Welcome to First Congregational UCC. We were founded in 1865 by abolitionists as the first racially integrated church in Washington, D.C. In 1867 our mission committee played a prominent role in the founding of Howard University. The church has been located at its present site at 10th and G Streets NW since 1868. In more recent years, the church affirmed its vision as an Open and Affirming (ONA) Church (1987), a Just Peace Church (1985), Multiracial/Multicultural Church (2003), and an Anti-Racist Church (2021). Our new building, constructed according to Gold LEED standards, was dedicated in 2012. First Church continues to follow its faith journey into the future and to be a prophetic voice for the Spirit in the nation's capital. If you would like to know more about First Church or would like to make it your spiritual home and community, please contact churchoffice@FirstUCCDC.org or 202.628.4317.



**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**



Ministers – Friends & Members of the Church
Senior Minister – Rev. Amanda Hendler-Voss
Associate Minister – Rev. Sam McFerran
Director of Music Ministry – Ms. Leela Koilpillai
Administrative Assistant – Ms. Whitney McColley
Building Manager – Mr. Byron Adams
Sexton – Ms. Ines Marquez
Members in Discernment – Lynaya Morris, LaTayna Purnell

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