

First Congregational United Church of Christ

*Empowered by the Holy Spirit and with the help of God,
we open our doors and hearts to all, in service and love as modeled by Jesus Christ.*



*Second Sunday of Advent
Peace*

*The Lord's Day
Second Sunday of Advent
Peace
Nine o'clock in the Morning*

The Worship of God

Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of the conscience by God's holiness; the nourishment of the mind with God's truth; the purifying of the imagination by God's beauty; the opening of the heart to God's love; the surrender of the will to God's purpose—all of this gathered up in adoration.

~William Temple

The Prologue

Each of the four Gospel narratives were written during a time of great social and societal unrest, political turmoil and upheaval, a very unsettled period in the history of the Roman Empire. Fueled by a very paranoid Caesar, non-Roman citizens received the brunt of persecutorial terror and torture, subjected to the worst brutality, an insidious evil, a wretched wickedness representing the most horrific atrocities the human mind could imagine and enact. The earliest Gospel, Mark, was written in about 65 CE, while the latest, John, was written around the year 100 CE. The second fall of Jerusalem took place in 70 CE, right smack dab in the middle of a period during which these stories describing the person and work of Jesus were being written, all this material composed at least thirty years after his death. There was no more peace on earth in Jesus' day than there is now! More than 2000 years later, humanity continues its warring ways despite longing and struggling to achieve a very illusive peace. So, what to do in the interim? Gotta, gotta be a peacemaker! Every time, all the time! Now is the time!

Gathering Music

The Call to Worship and Welcome

The Spirit of the still speaking God be with you.

And also with you.

The Music for Contemplation

The Lighting of the Altar Candles

The Gathering

Gather before the one who brings tidings of comfort to all people, preparing our hearts the way of the Lord! Make straight a pathway, a highway for our God!

Every valley shall be lifted up, raised to the highest heavens, and every mountain and hill made low, all ground becoming level, the rough places smoothed!

The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, all humanity awaiting “a new heaven and a new earth” in our midst!

We come seeking a world where righteousness and peace dwell together, empowering all humanity to live together as one!

Let us worship God!

The Introit, refrain

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

VENI EMMANUEL

Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

The Collect

Let us pray to the Lord,

God of steadfast love and peace, we have gathered in this sacred setting to worship the One whose glory has been revealed to all people, whose voice has been heard throughout the land; we are grateful that you are our God, the righteous One whose faithfulness has brought the way of salvation and forgiveness to us all; as we herald the good tidings of Emmanuel in our midst this day, speak once again to our hearts that we might prepare the way of peace in all the earth; all this we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the holy and still speaking Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

Amen.

*The Opening Hymn, No. 122 *Comfort, Comfort You My People*

GENEVA 42

*The Litany of Praise

The Holy One restores everyone who has found themselves in exile, forgiving our failures, joyfully pardoning all humanity!

We have heard the voice of the Holy, a word of peace to all the faithful as they turn their hearts to God!

Salvation is at hand for those who fear God, that the glory of God may dwell among us!

Steadfast love and faithfulness meet, righteousness and peace kissing one another as a glorious trust, a prophetic sign that the salvation of God is at hand!

The Holy One gives good things, faithfulness springing up from the ground as righteousness looks down from the sky!

Justice goes before our God, making a pathway for the steps of the Holy! Praise the Lord!

*Glory to the Creator, and to the Christ, and to the Comforter!
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
World without end! Amen! Amen!*

The Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Kelli and Steve Burrill

The Litany of Peace

We light the candle of peace!

This small flame reflects the brightest light of forgiveness and salvation, a glow shining forth upon all people!

All the earth cries out for peace in the land, a way prepared for the Lord as we patiently await the coming of the righteous One, our maker of peace!

Good tidings of steadfast love and faithfulness are heralded in our midst!

The Hymn for Advent (insert, stanza two) *Hope Is a Candle*

SIMPLY PERFECT

The Lighting of the Candle of Peace

The Call to Confession¹

God is patient with us, not wanting any to perish. Even so, it is easy to turn away from holiness and godliness. So often, we have chosen to fit into society rather than give leadership for a new day. In the silence and stillness of these moments, let us confess before the Holy.

The Silent Confession

The Corporate Confession²

Let us pray to the Lord,

God of glory, we confess we are frequently unable to recognize you in our midst, failing to listen for your voice. It is tempting to live as if we have no need to account for the life we have been given. It is far easier to focus more on our own survival than on our mission in the world. We come to you today with sincere repentance for our neglect. Help us prepare the way as Christ enters our everyday environment. Pardon and change us, we pray.

The Assurance of Pardon³

Beloved faith community, hear the good news of Advent peace. God speaks tenderly to us and assures us that our debt has been paid, our sins forgiven, our paths made straight. The glory of God is waiting to burst into the midst of all who accept the good news. Surely our salvation is at hand. Faithfulness will spring up from the ground while righteousness looks down from the sky.

Thanks be to God!

The Time for the Children

Tobi Johannsen

The Witness from the Hebrew Bible

ISAIAH 40:1-11

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the hand of the LORD double for all her sins. A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD! Make straight in the desert a highway for our God! Every valley shall be lifted up and every mountain and hill be made low! The uneven ground shall become level and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken!" A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All flesh is grass! Their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers! The flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows upon it! Surely the people are grass! The grass withers! The flower fades but the word of our God will stand forever! Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news! Lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news! Lift it up, do not fear! Say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" See, the Lord GOD comes with might and God's arm rules for the Holy One. God's reward is with God and the recompense before God. The Holy One will feed God's flock like a shepherd. God will gather the lambs in God's arms and carry them in God's bosom and gently lead the mother sheep.

Listen to what the Spirit of the still speaking God is saying!

Thanks be to God!

The Singing Response, PSALM 85:1-2, 8-13

FOREST GREEN

*The Lord has long with favor looked upon the chosen land!
To Jacob's heirs, the wealth of earth is lavished in their hand!
The captive chains of servitude are loosed, all slaves are free!
And through God's grace, the bonds of guilt give way to liberty!*

*Restore to us salvation, Lord, let your displeasure cease!
And still the tempest of your wrath with gentle winds of peace!
Our humble hearts the still small voice of your love yet attends!
The faithful God from death redeems, the fearful, God defends!*

*Your steadfast love and faithfulness will meet us face to face!
The arm of justice, mercy sways! The righteous, truth embrace!
May wisdom dwell in human law, and justice, courts display!
Let righteousness precede your steps and guide us on our way!*

The Witness from the Gospels

MARK 1:1-8

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ! As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying out in the wilderness! 'Prepare the way of the Lord! Make God's paths straight!'" So, John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And the

whole Judean region and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him and were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me! I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals! I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit!"

The Gospel for today!

Thanks be to God!

The Sermon

Wild Thing!

Timothy W. Shirley

The Music for Meditation

The Concerns of the Church

The Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

**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 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.**

The Receiving of Our Gifts

The Offertory

*The Doxology

OLD HUNDREDTH

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow!
Praise Christ all creatures here below!
Praise Holy Spirit, evermore!
Praise triune God whom we adore!*

*The Prayer of Thanksgiving

*The Closing Hymn, No. 153 *It Came upon the Midnight Clear*

CAROL

*The Extinguishing of the Altar Candles

*The Procession of the Light

*The Benediction and Blessing

To our guests! At your choosing, we invite you to join us in a long-standing tradition at First Congregational United Church of Christ as we form a circle, joining hands and singing together our Fellowship Song.

*The Fellowship Song

Let There Be Peace on Earth

WORLD PEACE

Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.

With every step I take, let this be my joyous creed.

To take each moment and live each moment in peace, eternally!

Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.

The Music for Reflection

*You are invited to stand as you are able.

Lector: Joy Turpin

Ushers: Mary Lou Congdon and Susan Krivichi

The color for the season of Advent in many churches is Blue, symbolizing royalty, this color has a long tradition in the history of the Church. Reflecting the seasonal images of hope and anticipation, and relating to Mary, the mother of our Lord, Blue is once more being used. Other churches, including First Congregational United Church of Christ continue to use Purple.

***The Flowers adorning the Chancel for today's worship
are given in memory of Russ Holperin by Kathy and Mark Holperin.***

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First Congregational UCC - Eagle River, WI

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