

# 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.*



*Third Sunday of Advent  
Joy  
Gaudete! Rejoice!*

*The Lord's Day  
Third Sunday of Advent  
Joy  
Gaudete! Rejoice!  
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**

Today we travel from waiting and longing for Emmanuel to the celebration of, Incarnation, God made flesh. I can think of no better way to express the adventure of Advent and Christmas than through music. We will hear both the haunting and hopeful tones of Advent and the joyful sounds of Christmas, declaring that for which we have been waiting has come to pass. A Savior is born! The Prince of Peace has come! Hear the angels declare the glory of God! Follow the star! The star leads to Emmanuel, God with us! Celebrate, listen, sing, praise, and worship, for "The Lord has come!"

### **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**

With all your being, rejoice in the glory of the Holy One! Rejoice in the One who clothes us with garments of salvation, covering us with a robe of righteousness!

**The Spirit of God is upon us, anointing us as bearers of good news, shouts of joy welling up from within us!**

Declare justice in all the earth, the peace of the Holy One filling the hearts of all people everywhere, for now is the year to proclaim the Lord's favor!

**Righteousness and praise spring up before all nations! Let us rejoice in the one for whom we wait and watch! Gaudete!**

Let us worship God!

The Introit *Veni Emmanuel* 15<sup>th</sup> century French melody  
Chime Choir; Susan Krivichi, director

The Choral Introit *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* 12<sup>th</sup> century Latin hymn  
Chancel Choir

### The Collect

Let us pray to the Lord,

Faithful God, with shouts of joy, we offer our prayers to the One who brings glad tidings of great joy, gathering before the One whose Holy Spirit is upon us; we are humbled that you have anointed us to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to those who are imprisoned; as we wait and watch for the coming of the Christ in our midst, be with us in this hour, shining the light of your presence upon us, filling us with the joy of your advent; sanctify us and keep us blameless, blessing us each day as we proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, the fulfillment of your goodness and grace, your hope, peace, joy, and love to all humanity; 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 Processional Hymn, No. 142 *People, Look East* BESANÇON

### \*The Litany of Praise

Our mouths are filled with laughter, our tongues with shouts of joy, proclaiming the year of the Lord's favor! Those who have sown in tears will rejoice!

**When the Lord restores the fortunes to all the oppressed and brokenhearted, all who are captive and imprisoned, we will be like those who dream!**

The Holy One anoints us with garlands instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit!

**Then will it be said among all nations, "The Lord has done great things for them," for they have been comforted!**

For all who go out weeping will come home with shouts of joy, clothed with the garments of salvation, covered with robes of righteousness!

**Rejoice, for we are a people blessed by God! Gaudete! Rejoice always! Praise the Lord!**

\*The Gloria GREATOREX

*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

Eric Olsen and Phoebe Spier, Arvid and Seren

The Litany of Joy

We light the candle of joy!

**A subtle flame illuminating the great rejoicing in our hearts!**

A light to guide our paths on the way of the Holy!

**With singing and an everlasting joy, we continue our Advent journey!**

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

SIMPLY PERFECT

The Lighting of the Candle of Joy

The Call to Confession<sup>1</sup>

We are told in the Gospels that like a winnowing fork, God will separate the faithful from the unfaithful, the honest from the dishonest, the gentle from those who vent their anger against the innocent. God seeks to remove the chaff from our lives that we might recognize our own true worth as children of God. In the silence and stillness of these moments, let us confess before the Holy.

The Silent Confession

The Corporate Confession<sup>2</sup>

Let us pray to the Lord,

**Faithful God, we confess our worry and anxiety over unimportant matters. We admit the fears that make us defensive, even tinged with a hint of paranoia, instead of being the loving people you have created us to be. We acknowledge our resentment over losses we have sustained and oppression we perceive to have suffered. We recognize that all too often we have been far more concerned for our own welfare than for building up the body of Christ, the Church. In our congregation, it is sometimes much easier to focus on survival more than service. It is tempting to look for what we can gain more than what we can give. Establish your rule and reign among us, we pray, and save us from ourselves.**

The Assurance of Pardon<sup>3</sup>

Hear the good news of Advent joy! God offers glad tidings of great joy, freeing oppressed and captive people, bringing comfort to the brokenhearted and those who mourn, giving glimpses of hope to those who have been devastated by the slings and arrows of life. God offers salvation and welcomes us into covenant relationship, beloved faith community all! Surely our hearts will know joy, our voices ringing with laughter. God is faithful, granting us the hope for peace and abiding love. Rejoice always! Gaudete!

**Thanks be to God!**

## The Witness from the Hebrew Bible

ISAIAH 61:1-4, 8-11

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me because the LORD has anointed me! God has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display God's glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins! They shall raise up the former devastations! They shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations! For I, the LORD, love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing! I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed. I will greatly rejoice in the LORD! My whole being shall exult in my God, for God has clothed me with the garments of salvation! God has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations!

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

**Thanks be to God!**

## The Responsorial Psalm (insert)

PSALM 126

Timothy W. Shirley, cantor

## The Witness from the Gospels

JOHN 1:6-8, 19-28

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed and did not deny it, but he confessed, "I am not the Messiah!" And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not!" "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord!', as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, "Why, then, are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water! Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me! I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandal!" This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

The Gospel for today!

**Thanks be to God!**

The Anthem *Canticle of the Turning, Magnificat* Hal H. Hopson  
Chancel Choir; Connie Pellman, flute; Norma Yaeger, piano

The Placing of the Creche The Children

LUKE 1:26-28

The Solo

*Of the Father's Love Begotten* Aurelius Clemens Prudentius  
Phoebe Spier, alto

LUKE 2:1-7

The Duet

*Mary, Did You Know* arr. Camp Kirkland and Jay Rouse  
Mindy Bergman, alto; Tom Bergman, tenor

LUKE 2:8-14

The Carol, No. 155

*Angels We Have Heard on High*

GLORIA

LUKE 2:15-20

The Anthem

*Run, Shepherds, Run* William Drummond Hawthornden  
words and music, William M. Schoenfeld  
Chancel Choir; Dale Bishop and Connie Pellman, flute

MATTHEW 2:1-12

The Trio

*We Three Kings* John Henry Hopkins; arr. Cindy Blevins  
Mindy Bergman, violin; Lori Hunter, piano; Connie Pellman, flute

The Poem *Heaven Is Here Unfolding* Charles Anthony Silvestri  
Donna DePape, reader

The Hymn, No. 170 *How Great Our Joy!* JUNGST

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. 143

*Joy to the World*

ANTIOCH

\*The Extinguishing of the Altar Candles

\*The Procession of the Light

\*The Benediction<sup>4</sup>

*Wait*

Sharlande Sledge

We wait for peace to come to all hearts and all nations,

**But we are reluctant to let our vision of the world be changed.**

We wait for love to be born afresh in the world each day,

**But we forget that the light we reflect in our words and actions is how the light of Advent shines in the world.**

We wait for Christ to be born again this season,

**But we confess that we find the coming birth yet another event in our crowded lives.**

We wait with the dream of getting our tasks accomplished once and for all,

**But we catch ourselves in the mode of “hurry up and wait,”**

We wait, listening to the familiar songs and stories of the season,

**But we leave no room for the surprising newness of the prophets’ expectation.**

We want to wait with the anticipation of children,

**But we are far too “grown up” to love without calculating the cost of your friendship.**

We wait to be the people God intended us to be,

**But we forget that the grace of our becoming is a gift of God.**

We wait with hope in the darkness and focus our eyes upon the one small glimmer of light,

**For in it we shall see the salvation of the Lord,**

And we shall wait no longer!

\*The Blessing

\*The Benediction Response

*A Christmas Blessing, Traditional Irish Blessing*

John Purifoy

Chancel Choir

The Music for Reflection

\*You are invited to stand as you are able.

Lector: Mark Holperin

Ushers: Bill Marshall and Carlton Schroeder

*The color for the Third Sunday of Advent is Rose symbolizing the celebratory nature of the day and a lightening of the disciplines of penance, reflection, and contemplation that are the guiding themes of the season. The theme for today is "Gaudete," a Latin term meaning "Rejoice".*

*The Third Sunday of Advent is considered the cousin Sunday of the Fourth Sunday in Lent, which conveys the same emphasis. The use of the color Rose originated with the Papal tradition of the blessing and bestowing of the Golden Rose by the Pope to worthy recipients in appreciation of their service to the Church.*

***The Flowers adorning the Chancel for today's worship are given by  
Ken and Patti Fox in honor of their 49<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.***

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### **CHURCH STAFF**

*Timothy W. Shirley, Pastor  
Debbie Brown, Church Administrator  
Sharon Breit, Director of Christian Education  
Lori Lee Hunter, Director of Music  
Norma Yaeger, Pianist  
Christine Clough, Cleaning Service*

### **CHURCH COUNCIL**

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