

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.*



*Fourth Sunday of Advent
Love*

*The Lord's Day
Fourth Sunday of Advent
Love
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

In the Witness from the Hebrew Bible in II Samuel we read the story of King David's desire to build a temple to house the ark of the Covenant, the ark of God. That was misconception number one! Eventually David's son Solomon would be granted the privilege of constructing that great edifice. Later in the same text the reader is told that the children of Israel would no longer be disturbed, that "cruel people will no longer trouble them . . ." That is misconception number two! In the Witness from the Gospels in Luke, part of the Christmas story, the Lukan writer declares that Jesus will be given the throne of his father David and would rule over the house of Jacob forever, no end to his kingdom. Misconception number three! Three strikes and we are deep into the story!

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

Magnificat! O magnify the Lord! Rejoice in the one whose salvation is upon all people!

Looking on the servants of God with favor, the Holy One has called us blessed!

Come before the One who has disclosed in our presence the great mystery of the ages!

We gather before the One whose mercy is great, whose Holy Spirit is upon us in this sacred setting!

Let us worship God!

The Introit

Sing of Mary, Pure and Holy

Roland F. Palmer; arr. John Egbert

Lori Hunter, soprano

The Collect

Let us pray to the Lord,

God of wisdom and mercy and gracious love, we have gathered in this sacred time and space to magnify the one whose salvation is upon us, the one who has looked with favor on all your servants; come and be with us this day, loving God, through your Holy Spirit, that the power of the Most High will overshadow us even as we proclaim your great name from generation to generation; 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. 140 *Hail to the Lord's Anointed*

SHEFFIELD

*The Litany of Praise

O magnify the Holy One! Rejoice in God your savior!

For God has looked on the lowly with favor and has called each one blessed!

The One called mighty has done great things for us!

Holy is the name of God and merciful is the Lord to those who fear God!

The arm of the Holy is strong, scattering the thoughts of the proud, bringing down the powerful and lifting up the lowly!

The Holy One fills the hungry with good things! 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 Litany of Love

The Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Barbara and Tom Helmick

We light the candle of love!

The glow of this small flame magnifying the salvation of God upon all people!

May God's love fill this holy house from generation to generation!

For nothing is impossible with God! Let it be according to God's word!

The Hymn for Advent (insert, verse three) *Hope Is a Candle*

SIMPLY PERFECT

The Call to Confession¹

The promises of God are meant for all to enjoy. Yet, throughout history, humanity has broken covenant relationship with the Holy and declared independence from the giver of life and love. In the final analysis, when we are honest with ourselves and brought down from the thrones of our pretension, we wonder why our lives seem so scattered, that something vital is missing from our humanity. 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,

Loving God, in whom all things are possible, we confess that we are skeptical, even cynical, doubting all the mystery that we cannot explain. Believing ourselves to be self-sufficient, leaning into our human tendencies to go it alone, we have sought strength and enjoyment apart from you. When we do so, we damage all our relationships with you and with others. Our ability to love is compromised. It is far easier to take pride in ownership than giving praise through stewardship. Many times, we have neglected to thank you in good times or when you have supported us during days of uncertainty. We can be stubborn, prone to resist the newness you offer. Forgive us, we pray, when we install ourselves as reigning deities. Nudge us, loving God, as you lead us in paths of truth and obedience.

The Assurance of Pardon³

Hear the good news of Advent love. God does not turn away from steadfast love even when we are unfaithful. The rock of our salvation keeps covenant with us despite our iniquity. God's mercy is extended to all who humbly seek it. If we have chosen to receive forgiveness and to move away from self-absorption, we will understand God's pardon and live joyously within it.

Thanks be to God!

The Time for the Children

Carol Marshall

The Witness from the Hebrew Bible

II SAMUEL 7:1-11, 16

Now when the king was settled in his house and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent!" Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind, for the LORD is with you!" But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, "Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?' Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel, and I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place and be disturbed no more, and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel, and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me! Your throne shall be established forever!"

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

Thanks be to God!

The Magnificat, No. 130 *My Soul Gives Glory to My God*, LUKE 1:46b-55 MORNING SONG

The Witness from the Gospels 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. 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 realm 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!

The Gospel for today!

Thanks be to God!

The Sermon

Misconception!

Timothy W. Shirley

The Hymn, No. 161

I Wonder as I Wander

traditional Appalachian carol and melody
arr. Donald P. Hustad

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. 159

There's a Song in the Air!

CHRISTMAS SONG

*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: Carol Marshall

Ushers: Mary Lou Congdon and Kamie Kolb

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 worship today are given by Barb Flaherty and family as we celebrate the birth of our savior Jesus Christ. We wish you all a Merry Christmas as you enjoy time with your family and friends.

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First Congregational UCC - Eagle River, WI

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