

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.*

An Open and Affirming Congregation



*First Sunday of Advent
Hope!*

The Lord's Day
First Sunday of Advent
Hope
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

Perhaps the biggest irony of the Advent season, a time of waiting and watching with excitement and anticipation, and yes, hope, is that the lections framing this liturgical celebration beginning a new Church Year are at first glance very foreboding. These texts are ominously dark and gloomy! Clouded by the frightful, yet ironically hopeful, images surrounding so many of the ancients who lived with fear and dread, these apocalyptic portrayals now send mixed messages. Throughout its history the Church has misinterpreted these narratives, feeding and fueling contemporary doomsday prophets who pander horrific end time scenarios with all the Armageddon bluster they can shovel. Once again, we are reminded to be of good cheer, hopeful people of faith, filled to the brim with comfort and joy. Today is a day devoted not to fear, but a day calling for the hope that is always present when we consider the presence of God, the Holy One mysteriously coming into our world, an advent that is out of this world, unlike any other.

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

To you, O Lord, we lift our souls in hope, a hopeful people gathered in this sacred setting for worship, attentively listening for your coming into our midst!

In you, God of loving promise, we place our trust in the One who leads us and teaches us, the One who is the God of our salvation!

Stand tall and lift high your heads, our spirits raised in this holy time and season, our faithful souls always alert, joyfully standing guard as we wait patiently for the Holy One!

We long for the glory and power of God to come among us, waiting according to the goodness and the steadfast love of the Holy One, our redemption drawing near!

Let us worship God!

The Choral Introit

My Lord, What a Morning

African-American spiritual

Chancel Choir

The Collect

Let us pray to the Lord,

God of Advent Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love, we pray to the one who is our righteous branch, the One in whom we place the hope of our faith as we gather in this, your house, this day; as hopeful people we anxiously await the advent of God in this holy setting, alert to your presence; remove our fears and doubts that our faith might be restored and emboldened, overflowing with love for you and for one another that our faithful hope may increase and abound; strengthen our hearts in holiness and blamelessness before the One who is our redemption, bringing salvation to all people; 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. 119 *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

VENI EMMANUEL

*The Litany of Praise

We lift our souls in hope before the Lord, listening intently for God coming into our midst, alert to the presence of the Holy One, always putting our trust in God!

No one who waits upon God is put to shame, for the promises of the Holy formerly made to the houses of Israel and Judah are being fulfilled among all the nations!

The ways of God are made known in all the earth, the Holy One teaching us the pathways that lead us toward salvation, God never remembering our transgressions!

The Lord leads us in truth, the faithful love of God assuring our salvation, guiding the faithful in the humble ways of God, leading humanity with the goodness of the Holy!

We long for God in this holy season, the One who is full of mercy, the One whose steadfast love endures forever for those who honor the covenant of the Holy One!

We wait for the One who is good and upright, the One whose paths are steadfast love and faithfulness, whose mercy is extended to all humanity! 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, the Candle of Hope

Kayla Elliott

*The Litany of Hope

As we begin our Advent journey, the candle of hope is lighted!

Its bright flame glowing like the face of the Holy!

Like a branch that becomes tender and puts forth leaves, may it grow into a raging fire!

Our hope is in God our shepherd, Emmanuel, the One who is faithful to give us life when we call on the name of the Holy One to save us!

The Hymn for Advent, No. 128; stanza 1 *One Candle Is Lit*

CRADLE SONG

The Call to Confession¹

A new Church Year is dawning, starting with worship today. An air of anticipation challenges us to fresh beginnings. Are we weighed down by the cares of life? Are we deceptive and untrustworthy? Do we project on others our own destructive habits? This is a time to rid ourselves of old ways and embrace the newness God offers. In the sacred 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 all possibilities and promise, we admit that we often color the world according to our own limited vision. Sometimes we are unjust in our judgments and faithless in our relationships. Help us to let go of our transgressions, to renew our covenant with you, and to live constructively with one another. We await the spirit of Christ Jesus, whose advent we anticipate with great expectation.

The Assurance of Pardon³

Hear the good news of the hope of Advent. The mercy of God is new every day. We are free to accept the difference it can make in us. The steadfast love of God is waiting to embrace us as whole people, to instruct us and to lead us in the paths of truth. Put your trust in God, for that is our greatest hope.

Thanks be to God!

The Anthem

A Light of Hope, A Light of Peace

Mark Burrows

Chancel Choir

The Time for the Children

Pat Tucker

The Witness from the Hebrew Bible

JEREMIAH 33:14-16

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness!"

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

Thanks be to God!

*To you, our Lord, we lift our souls, in you, our God, we trust!
Let vanity be put to shame, and languish in the dust!
And languish in the dust!*

*Help us to know your paths, our God, and lead us in your way!
To learn your saving truth, our hearts shall meditate each day!
Shall meditate each day!*

*The Lord is goodness, truth, and love, God's path the saints have trod!
And children of the covenant still walk beside their God!
Still walk beside their God!*

*Be mindful of your mercy, Lord, your love from ages past!
Forgive the weakness of our youth and bring us home at last!
And bring us home at last!*

The Witness from the Gospels

LUKE 21:25-36

“There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud’ with power and great glory! Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near!” Then he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees! As soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the realm of God is near! Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away!”

The Gospel for today!

Thanks be to God!

The Sermon

Half Glass . . .!

Timothy W. Shirley

The Advent Hymn, No. 124 *Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence*

PICARDY

The Service of Holy Communion

Gluten-free bread is available.

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. 125 *Come, O Long-Expected Jesus*

HYFRYDOL

*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: Ursula Charaf

Ushers: Susan Krivichi and Mike Mettler

*The color adorning the Chancel for the season of Advent is purple. In many churches
the color is blue, reflecting the seasonal images of hope and anticipation,
a color also associated with Mary, the mother of Jesus.*

The flowers adorning the Chancel for worship today are given by Barb Flaherty.

¹⁻³ Reprinted by permission United Church Press from *Led by Love: Worship Resources for Year B*, by Lavon Bayler. Copyright 1996 by United Church Press.

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HOPE

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First Congregational UCC - Eagle River, WI

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