

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*



*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

Mary! The very name stirs the imagination. She has been called the Blessed Virgin and the Mother of God. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was created in her honor. To say that she plays an important role in Christian history and liturgy is an understatement. As *The New Westminster Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship* declares, "The Christian church has always held Mary the Virgin in special honour." Perhaps too much, some might say. For just like her firstborn son, she was a very real human being chosen for a uniquely divine purpose. Today, we read about Mary. We sing her song and tell once more the story of *The Annunciation*, the visit of the angel Gabriel to this one chosen of God. Beyond the myth and legend, the magic and superstition, what can Mary teach us about the one to whom we offer our gifts of worship and adoration? On this blessed and holy day, may we see the Divine through the eyes of this most humble servant of the most high God.

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

Come and magnify the Lord with all your heart and soul, gathering to let our spirits soar,
rejoicing in the One whose salvation is upon all people!

The Lord has called us blessed, God looking with favor on the servants of the Holy One!

The One who holds the wisdom of the ages has disclosed the great mysteries of the universe
before us!

**We gather before the One whose mercy is great, whose spirit rests upon us in the sacred
setting of this sanctuary!**

Let us worship God!

The Introit

Veni Emmanuel

15th century French melody

Chime Choir; Susan Krivichi, director

The Choral Introit

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

12th century Latin hymn

Chancel Choir

The Collect

Let us pray to the Lord,

God of wisdom and mercy, we have gathered in this house of love to magnify the one whose salvation is upon us all, the One who has looked with favor on each one of us, calling us all servants of God; come and be with us this day, God most holy, your presence manifest to us through your Holy Spirit, that the power of the most high God 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. 149 *Angels, from the Realms of Glory* REGENT SQUARE

*The Litany of Praise

O magnify the Lord, rejoicing in God, the One who has come bringing salvation to all people!

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, the mercy of God blessing all people from generation to generation!

Holy is the name of God and merciful is the Lord to all those who long for the presence of the Holy!

The arm of God is strong, scattering the thoughts of the proud, bringing down the powerful, lifting up the lowly, filling the hungry with good things!

The Holy One has kept the covenant of old, honoring the promises made to Abraham and all his descendants, including 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 Love

Connie Pellmann

*The Litany of Love

As we conclude our Advent journey today, the candle of love is lighted!

Its bright flame magnifying the salvation of God upon all people!

May the love of God fill this holy house from generation to generation!

For nothing is impossible with the Holy One! Let it be according to the word of God!

*The Hymn for Advent, No. 128; stanza 4 *One Candle Is Lit*

CRADLE SONG

The Call to Confession¹

We do not like to think that God might be angry with us. Yet, we know the emptiness that can accompany our prayers. We are in touch with the greed of our consumption, the limits of our compassion, God understanding more profoundly our failure to become the people we are intended to be. Be open to the wisdom and forgiveness of the creator. 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,

Merciful God, when we sense who you are, it is reasonable that we are ashamed. How do you tolerate our pettiness? The abundance you have given us has made us proud more than thankful. We act as if our accomplishments were all our own doing. We seldom acknowledge your generosity or let you rule our lives. God of grace, we know that we always need to change.

The Assurance of Pardon³

Hear the good news of the love of Advent! Those who allow themselves to know God are already in touch with the mercy of God. The gracious love of God is a renewed experience with us every day, available to the least of us and the greatest. All whose spirits hunger for God discover how richly they have been fed, God doing great things for us. Let us commit the bodies God has given us to do the will of God. May our spirits rejoice as we magnify our God together.

Thanks be to God!

The Time for the Children

Carol Marshall

The Witness from the Hebrew Bible

MICAH 5:2-5a

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore, he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth. Then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth, and he shall be the one of peace.

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

Thanks be to God!

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

MORNING SONG

The Witness from the Gospels

LUKE 1:39-45

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

The Gospel for today!

Thanks be to God!

The Sermon *A Song to End All Songs!* Timothy W. Shirley
The Advent Hymn, No. 184 *Sing of Mary, Pure and Lowly* PLEADING SAVIOR
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

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

OLD HUNDREDTH

*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: Marty Rosenthal

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 as a Merry Christmas to our church family.***

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LOVE



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First Congregational UCC - Eagle River, WI

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