

Welcome to this Advent Service of Worship at First Congregational Church as we share in the reality that God's love truly "Reaches 'Round the Earth." May the joy of this special season offer hope and rebirth in your life. In the words of poet T.S. Eliot:

"At the still point of the turning world.
Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards;
At the still point...there the dance is."

First Congregational Church of Greenwich declares itself to be open and affirming; open to all for participation, membership, leadership and employment, and affirming of all who wish to join us as children of God. We continue to give thanks for God's guidance in our journey of faith.

PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

*All who are able please stand
‡Seating of latecomers

PRELUDE

Jayson Engquist, organ
Nun komm', der Heiden Heiland *Johann Sebastian Bach*
(Savior of the Nations, Come)

CALL TO COMMUNITY

Dr. David D. Young
Please sign and pass the red book.

PRAISING GOD

CALL TO WORSHIP

‡*OPENING HYMN AND PROCESSION

Pilgrim Hymnal 110 to the tune VENI EMMANUEL

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

LIGHTING OF THE SECOND ADVENT CANDLE

Peter and Shirley Flierl

Opening Sentences

Scripture: Luke: 2 15-20

Prayer:

O God, now is the time of watching and waiting. Now is the season of hope unfolding. We await the Savior's coming with gladness and with expectation that in the Holy birth our hearts may leap with joy and our lives may be renewed.

Lighting of the Second Advent Candle

We light the second Advent candle remembering the joy of the shepherds along with the movement and message of the angels. May our hearts also dance as we draw near to Bethlehem to worship the Christ Child.

During the lighting of the Advent Wreath, The Palmer Handbells will play "What Is This Lovely Fragrance?" incorporating the French carol "Quelle est cette odeur agreeable" and the German tune "Es ist ein' Ros'" (Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming), arranged by Cathy Moklebust.

CONFESSING TO GOD

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (in unison)

We have so many things to do, O God. We are sure they must be done. Plans must be made. Details must be attended. Feverishly, we rush to complete them. We have so many things to say, O God. We are certain they are important. Our words tumble out. They catch us off guard. With urgency, we try to interpret them. Forgive us in this Advent season, for making your holy event a thing to do; for using the Christmas message as merely something to say. For we would have all things subject to your renewing presence, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

‡CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

William Ruland Bennett, son of Melissa and David Bennett

BAPTISMAL RESPONSE

sung to tune of "Morning Has Broken"

Water has cleansed us, bathed with forgiveness,

Has with clear blessings, washed sin away.

Jordan's strong currents God's son announcing,

Made a beginning, baptismal day.

HEARING GOD'S WORD

FIRST LESSON

Dr. Stuart *McCalley*

Jeremiah 31: 10-14

Hear the word of the LORD, O nations,
and declare it in the coastlands far away;
say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him,
and will keep him as a shepherd a flock.'
For the LORD has ransomed Jacob,
and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.
They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion,
and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD,
over the grain, the wine, and the oil,
and over the young of the flock and the herd;
their life shall become like a watered garden,
and they shall never languish again.
Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance,
and the young men and the old shall be merry.
I will turn their mourning into joy,
I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.
I will give the priests their fill of fatness,
and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty,
says the LORD.

E'en So, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come *Paul Manz*

Peace be to you and grace from him

Who freed us from our sins,

Who loved us all and shed his blood

That we might saved be.

Sing holy, holy to our Lord,

The Lord, Almighty God,

Who was and is and is to come;

Sing holy, holy Lord!

Rejoice in heaven, all ye that dwell therein,

Rejoice on earth, ye saints below,

For Christ is coming, is coming soon!

E'en so, Lord Jesus, quickly come,

And night shall be no more;

They need no light nor lamp nor sun,

For Christ will be their All!

SECOND LESSON

Luke 1: 20-38, 68-79

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, favoured 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 favour 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 for ever, and of his kingdom 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.

‡* HYMN

New Century Hymnal 104 to the tune PSALM 42
Comfort, Comfort Ye My People

SERMON

"The Dance of Eternity"

Dr. David D. Young

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (in unison)

We believe in Jesus Christ and in the beauty of the Gospel that began in Bethlehem. We believe in Him whom the kings of the earth ignored and the proud could never understand, whose paths were among the common people, whose welcome came from people of hungry hearts.

We acknowledge the glory of all that is like Christ.

The steadfastness of friends,

The blessedness of homes,

The beauty of Compassion,

The miracle of many hearts made kind at Christmas,

The courage of those who dare to resist all passion, war,
and hate.

We believe that only by love expressed
shall the earth at length be purified,

And we acknowledge in Christ

A faith that sees beyond the partial face,

A trust in life redeemed that looks beyond our present evil;

And we pray that this redemption may begin in us who make
this declaration of faith at Christmas. Amen

*Advent Gloria *refrain from "Angels we Have Heard on High"*
Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo.

RESPONDING TO GOD

CALL TO PRAYER

PASTORAL PRAYER AND QUIET MEDITATION

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.

CALL TO OFFERING

Sue McCalley

OFFERTORY ANTHEM

The Chancel Choir
Terry Beaurline, tenor

Springs in the Desert *Arthur B. Jennings*

Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come and save you. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as a rose. For in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams flow in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water. A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the redeemed shall walk there, and the ransomed of the Lord shall return with songs and everlasting joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

*OFFERTORY RESPONSE

As they offered gifts most rare,
at the manger rude and bare,
so may we with holy joy,
pure and free from sin's alloy,
all our costliest treasures bring,
Christ, to thee, our heavenly King.

*Prayer of Dedication

GOING FORTH TO SERVE GOD

*CLOSING HYMN AND PROCESSION

Pilgrim Hymnal 130 to the tune ANTIOCH
Joy to the World! the Lord Is Come

*CLOSING SENTENCES

*Leader: The feet of the humblest
May walk in the field.*

People: Where the feet
Of the holiest trod,

*Leader: This, then, is the marvel
To mortals revealed
When the silvery trumpets
Of Christmas have pealed.*

People: That human beings are eternally the
Children of God.

Phillips Brook "Christmas Carol"

*BENEDICTION

*BENEDICTION RESPONSE

POSTLUDE

John Stansell, organ
Toccata on *VENI EMMANUEL Adolphus Hailstark*

The flowers in the Meetinghouse today are given with grateful memories of their parents by Barbara and John Norrgard.

The live Christmas trees in the Meetinghouse are given by Peter Grunow in loving memory of his parents, Betty and John Grunow.

Ushers: Sue Baker, Paul Pacent, Alex and Jane Owen Brash, Rich and Bobbie Hopkins, David and Ardith Williams

Greeters: Mariann Ekernas, Lisa Hudson

Coffee Hour Hosts: Mariann Ekernas, Lisa Hudson, Chris Thompson

Flower Delivery: Joyce and Curt Carlson

Calendar

TODAY

Blood Pressure Screening A member of the Wellness Committee is available to check blood pressure in Room 203 after the service.

An Advent Service is in the Auditorium for our youngest children, three-year-olds through second graders and their families. The Cherubs will sing. Our older children are continuing their Advent lessons and preparing themselves for worship at the 9 AM service next week when Church School representatives will help lead worship and the Pastors' Class will present a sermon play.

Cherub Choir will not rehearse today.

Youth Choir Rehearsal 11:15

Teachers Meeting in Room 103 at 11:15

Sing for Your Supper Come to a wonderful dinner with fellowship and caroling today at 5 PM in the Auditorium. There will be food for all – adults, children and vegetarians. We will sing and warm our hearts with the spirit of Christmas. Please purchase your tickets (\$5 for adults and \$3 for children and seniors) from the Parish Life Committee during Coffee Hour.

Senior Pilgrim Fellowship (YPF - High School) will not be meeting because they have just had their Christmas Retreat.

THIS WEEK

Children's Choir will not meet this Wednesday.

Faith in the Workplace Dec 14, 7-8 AM Church Lounge

Hats Off Luncheon on Dec 14, 11:30 at Penny Lehman's.

CANCEL Choir rehearsal Thurs Dec 14, LATER than usual 8:00-9:00 PM

Confirmation Class will not meet this week. Instead, flower deliveries and home visits are being made by the class for their Christmas service project. Confirmation classes will resume on January 9.

Church School Rehearsal The children who are reading parts and lighting the advent wreath next Sunday at the 9 AM will rehearse Friday, December 15, at 4 PM in the Meetinghouse.

Mitten Tree Our Mitten Tree in the Auditorium is collecting hats, mittens and scarves to help warm our neighbors who might need them.

NEXT SUNDAY Junior Pilgrim Fellowship (JPF – Middle School) Christmas Party, 5-6 PM in Room 103.

WHITE GIFTS ON DECEMBER 17 Please join in the tradition of the white gift offering at 10 AM service on Christmas Eve.

Toys, clothing and other useful items will be donated to St. Luke's to be given during this season and throughout the year to someone who has a special need. Please wrap your gift in white paper and label it with the appropriate age and gender.

NEWS AND NOTICES

MEDICARE PART D Open enrollment for Medicare prescription drug plans ends December 31. Individual counseling sessions, which include computer assistance, are available here at church. Call Sue Asselin, Parish Nurse, at extension 21 to make an appointment.

GENERAL SYNOD is coming to Hartford in June 2007. Visitor registration is available at <http://www.ucc.org/synod/> effective December 1. We encourage you to register early as thousands will want to attend. Since this is the first time the Synod has ever convened in CT, this is a rare opportunity to experience the whole life of our denomination, especially in this 50th Anniversary year.

And don't forget to volunteer by visiting <http://www.ctucc.org/synod2007/>!

MESSIAH 2006 December 16 & 17, 4 PM in the Meetinghouse. No tickets required. If you have some experience singing, it isn't too late to come and rehearse. Rehearsals: December 12 & 13 at 8 PM.



Christmas Memorial Trees and Decorations

The Chancel Committee invites memorial contributions for decorations for our church this Christmas. Any amount is welcome. Please deliver the completed form with your check to the church office (payable to the First Church Flower Fund) on or before Monday, December 15. Thank you.

In Memory of

By

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$ _____

Please print names legibly to minimize spelling errors.





*Christmas Eve Services 2006
at First Church*

10 am Sunday Morning Worship

4 pm Family Service

5 pm Caroling in Binney Park

8 pm Communion and Carols

11 pm Candlelight Service

A festival candlelight service of lessons and carols.

Pre-service music begins at 10:30

