

Third Sunday of Advent
17 December 2006
9 o'clock in the morning



Welcome to this Service of Worship at First Congregational Church as we celebrate love's "Reaching 'Round the Earth." May the words and music of this hour of worship stir within your heart and soul the deep sense of joy and anticipation of this Advent Season. In the words of C.S. Lewis in his children's classic, The Last Battle,

"Yes,' said Queen Lucy,
'In our world too a stable
once had something inside
it that was bigger than
our whole world."

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

Mark Swicegood

Symphony II: Salve Regina *Charles-Marie Widor*

CALL TO COMMUNITY

Rev. Susan M. Craig

Please sign and pass the red book.

PRAISING GOD

CALL TO WORSHIP

Third Graders

***OPENING HYMN AND PROCESSION**

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Pilgrim Hymnal 120

to the tune MENDELSSOHN

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

Sixth Graders

Opening Sentences

Scripture: Luke 2: 8-14

Prayer: O God who gave us the miracle of song, open our ears to hear that sound in the air and our mouths to rejoice and sing. Help us to bring our lives in tune with your will so well that true harmony can reign on earth. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Lighting of the Third Advent Candle:

We light the Third Advent Candle recalling the song of the angels of old. May our voices unite with theirs as we continue to sing your praise this day.

During the lighting of the third candle on the Advent Wreath, The Palmer Handbells will play an arrangement by Hal Hopson of the famous "Canon" by Johann Pachelbel.

CONFESSING TO GOD

CALL TO CONFESSION

Rev. Susan M Craig

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (in unison)

We are a people
Of the road, O God,
busy with the business of movement
to important destinations, vaguely conceived.

We are a people
of personal privacy, O God,
guarding our spaces from intrusion
by this tangled world, vividly pressing.

We are a people
of inner hesitance, O God,
Fearful of going too deeply
into the life of discipleship, demandingly present.

Forgive us, O Lord
of the lowly Advent,
for our rushing, our hiding, our foreboding,
for we would be open to that moment of wonder once again
where both the simple and the proud draw near to Bethlehem.
Amen.

‡ **CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE**

Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

HEARING GOD'S WORD

FIRST LESSON

Rev. Ronald E. Halvorsen

Isaiah 52: 7-10

How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of the messenger who announces peace,
who brings good news,
who announces salvation,
who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.'
Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices,
together they sing for joy;
for in plain sight they see
the return of the LORD to Zion.
Break forth together into singing,
you ruins of Jerusalem;
for the LORD has comforted his people,
he has redeemed Jerusalem.
The LORD has bared his holy arm
before the eyes of all the nations;
and all the ends of the earth shall see
the salvation of our God.

SCRIPTURE ANTHEM

Children's Choir

How Beautiful Are the Feet (Messiah) *George Frideric Handel*

SECOND LESSON

Rosemary Lamie

Luke 1: 46-55

And Mary said,
'My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.'

PASTORS' CLASS PLAY "Where's The Christmas Tree?"

‡*HYMN

What Child Is This, Who, Laid to Rest *Pilgrim Hymnal 140*
to the tune GREENSLEEVES

SERMON

"A Song of Salvation"

Dr. David D. Young

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (in unison)

I believe in Jesus Christ and in the beauty of the gospel that
began in Bethlehem. I believe in Him whose spirit glorified
a little town of whose coming only shepherds saw the sign
and for whom the crowded inn could find no room. I believe
in Him who proclaimed the love of God to be invincible,

whose cradle was a mother's arms, whose home in Nazareth had love
for its only wealth, who looked at people and made them see
what his love saw in them, who by his love brought sinners
back to purity and lifted human weakness up to meet the
strength of God. I acknowledge in Christ a faith in life
redeemed, that looks beyond the present; and I pray that this
redemption may.

***Advent Gloria** *refrain from "Angels We Have Heard on High"*

Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo.

RESPONDING TO GOD

CALL TO PRAYER

Rev. Susan M. Craig

ADVENT PRAYER AND QUIET MEDITATION

Fourth Graders

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

OFFERTORY ANTHEM *Chancel Choir, Carolyn Paulus, soprano*

Magnificat in G *Charles Villiers Stanford*

***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**

Anna L. Paskausky

GOING FORTH TO SERVE GOD

***CLOSING HYMN AND PROCESSION**

The First Nowell

Pilgrim Hymnal 141

to the tune THE FIRST NOWELL

***CLOSING SENTENCES**

*Leader: The earth has grown old
with its burden of care.*

People: But at Christmas
it always is young.

*Leader: The heart of the jewel
burns lustrous and fair,
And its soul full of music
bursts forth on the air.*

All: When the song
Of the angels is sung.
Phillips Brooks – “Christmas Carol”

***BENEDICTION**

***BENEDICTION RESPONSE**

POSTLUDE

Magnificat *Marcel Dupré*

Mark Swicegood

Ushers and Greeters

Fifth Graders

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

Calendar

TODAY

Please join us for the Dedication of the Crèche immediately after Worship. Cocoa will be served.

MESSIAH THIS AFTERNOON AT 4:00 – Don't miss this 40th annual performance. It's magic! Soloists Victoria Baker, Holly Sorensen, Terry Beaurline and Edward Pleasant join the large community chorus and professional orchestra under the direction of John Stansell. No tickets are required. Arrive early for best seating. A \$ 20.00 per person contribution is requested. Shuttle bus service is provided from the Civic Center parking lot on Harding Road.

Sue Asselin, RN is available today in Room 203, after the Worship Service. Stop in to have your blood pressure checked or discuss any health concerns.

Junior Pilgrim Fellowship (JPF - Middle School); 5 - 6 PM
Room 103 – Christmas Party!

Senior Pilgrim Fellowship (SPF - High School) 6:30 - 8 PM
Room 103 Last SPF! until the New Year.

THIS WEEK

Hats Off is on vacation until January 11.

Chancel Choir rehearsal Thurs Dec 21 8:00 - 9:30 PM

Rehearsals for Christmas Eve Services

Friday, Dec. 22, 3:30 PM for 10 AM Service

Saturday, Dec 23, 9:30 AM for 4:00 PM Service

Saturday, Dec. 23, 11:00 AM for Youth Choir

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31

Regular Worship with Communion. Childcare will be available. David Young is preaching, "Bethlehem and Back."

SUNDAY, JANUARY 7

Regular Worship with Communion. Susan Craig preaching, "What About Life?" Church School will resume. Childcare available.

NEWS AND NOTICES

CHURCH SCHOOL – CHRISTIAN OUTREACH

CHRISTMAS DELIVERY!! MANY THANKS ARE DUE TO Barbara Van Buren and Barry Richmond for playing Santa Claus and delivering our Christmas gifts to the H.O.M.E. Community in Orland, Maine last weekend. They saw a winter wonderland of snow – and were warmly welcomed as they made their delivery on our behalf. Talk to them at Coffee Hour or when you see them to hear more!

WHITE GIFTS

Regardless of all other reports, White Gifts will be received during the 4PM Christmas Eve service at our time of offering. These gifts of toys or clothing wrapped in white should be labeled with the gender and age for which they are intended. Should you be unable to be with us for the 4PM service, gifts can be delivered to the Church Office at your convenience. White Gifts are delivered locally to those in need across the winter months. Toys are delivered to children in need.



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

11pm Candlelight Service

A festival candlelight service of lessons and carols.

Pre-service music begins at 10:30

