

*Old Greenwich,
Connecticut*

THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH OF GREENWICH

*United Church
of Christ*

Founded in 1665

Third Sunday of Advent



12 December 2010
10 o'clock in the morning

Welcome to First Congregational Church on this third Sunday of Advent as we join together for worship. So much is happening in our lives and in the world and this hour is a precious time to be in God's presence and to know Christ's healing love. May these words of an early Saint of the Church, Origen of Alexandria, strengthen our connection to the gift:

*“Stronger than all the evils
in the soul is the Word,
and the healing power
that dwells in him.”*

PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

Please silence all cell phones and other electronic devices.

*All who are able please stand

‡Seating of latecomers

PRELUDE

Two Winter Pieces

Dr. Craig Scott Symons, piano

Arr. James M. Stevens

CALL TO COMMUNITY

Please sign and pass the red book.

Rev. Mark D. Montgomery

PRAISING GOD

CALL TO WORSHIP

***‡OPENING HYMN AND PROCESSION**

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

Pilgrim (red) Hymnal 103

LIGHTING OF THE THIRD ADVENT CANDLE

Richard, Pamela and Kristen Riggs

Opening Sentences

Scripture: Isaiah 40:3-5

Prayer:

O God of the hopeful journey, renew in us today the gifts of hope and healing. As we look back in time to your active work in Jesus, the baby of Bethlehem, center our thoughts upon the future. And, as we bring sight and thought together may we continually sense the hope-filled presence of Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Lighting of the Third Advent Candle:

We light the third Advent Candle of hope and healing. Let us remember the words of Paul, a follower of Jesus, that hope is the anchor of our inner spirit as we seek to follow His Way for our journey in life. (*Hebrews 6:19*) And that we find our wholeness in him.

CONFESSING TO GOD

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (*In Unison*)

God of hopefulness,
we confess our discouragement
and sullenness
preferring to embrace
an inner darkness
instead of the light
which you bring.
God of helpfulness,
we confess our passion
for self-sufficiency,
choosing as our path
the way we have crafted
in neglect of Christ's Way
which leads to truth
and life.
God of healing,
we confess our determination
to live with our pain and hurts

ignoring the energy
you bring
for personal renewal.

Forgive us
in this time of honesty
for living in ways which
isolate the soul
for we would
be energized this day
by the presence of Christ
whose way of healing
helps us to hope,
and live from out of
the strength you bring.
In Christ's spirit we pray
the prayer he taught us,

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.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

‡Congregational Response

(Tune: Sussex Carol)

New Century (black) Hymnal 143

*Then why should we on earth be sad,
since our Redeemer made us glad;
Then why should we on earth be sad,
since our Redeemer made us glad,
When from our sin Christ set us free,
all for to gain our liberty.*

HEARING GOD'S WORD

FIRST LESSON

Isaiah 35:1-10

Olga Hartwell

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you."

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes. A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

SCRIPTURE ANTHEM

The Youth Choir, Carolyn Paulus, Dir.

The Voice of God Goes Out

Michael McCabe

*The voice of God goes out to all the world:
his glory speaks across the universe.*

*The Great King's herald cries from star to star:
with power, with justice, he will walk his way.*

*The Lord has said: "Receive my messenger, my promise
to the world, my pledge made flesh, a lamp to every nation,
light from light", with power, with justice, he will walk his way.*

*The broken reed he will not trample down,
nor set his heel upon the dying flame.
He binds the wound and health is in his hands;
with power, with justice, he will walk his way.*

*Anointed with the spirit and with power he comes to crown
with comfort all the weak, to show the face of justice to the poor: with
power, with justice, he will walk his way.*

*His touch will bless the eyes that darkness held,
the lame shall run, the halting tongues shall sing,
and prisoners laugh in light and liberty:
with power, with justice, he will walk his way.*

SECOND LESSON

Olga Hartwell

Matthew 11:2-11

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

*‡HYMN

Now Bless the God of Israel *New Century (black) Hymnal 110*

As the song begins, the Church School children and teachers will leave for their classrooms. Children in second grade and older will leave independently. Children in kindergarten and first grade will meet their teachers at the back of the Meetinghouse (narthex) and will go to their classrooms as a group.

SERMON

Merry Miracles

Dr. David D. Young

(Third in an Advent Sermon Series: "Celebrate the Gift")

RESPONDING TO GOD

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

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 begin in us! Amen.

***Advent Gloria**

(refrain from Angels We Have Heard on High)

New Century (black) Hymnal 125

Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo.

CALL TO PASTORAL PRAYER

Rev. Susan Murtha

PASTORAL PRAYER AND QUIET MEDITATION

CALL TO OFFERING

OFFERTORY ANTHEM

Behold, a Star from Jacob Shining

The Chancel Choir

Felix Mendelssohn

***Advent Response**

(verse 3 of As With Gladness Men of Old)

Pilgrim (red) Hymnal 119

*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**

It Came upon the Midnight Clear

New Century (black) Hymnal 131

***CLOSING SENTENCES**

Leader: Yet he shall be forsaken and yielded up to die;

*People: The sky shall groan and darken, and every stone
shall cry.*

*Leader: And every stone shall cry,
for stony hearts of all;*

*People: God's blood upon the spearhead, God's love
refused again.*

Richard Wilbur, "A Christmas Hymn"

***BENEDICTION**

***CLOSING CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE**

Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne *Pilgrim (red) Hymnal 326*

*Thou didst leave thy throne and thy kingly crown
When thou camest to earth for me,
But in Bethlehem's home there was found no room
For Thy Holy nativity.
O come to my heart, Lord Jesus;
There is room in my heart for Thee!*

POSTLUDE

Choral Improvisation

Sigfrid Karg-Elert

The flowers in the Meetinghouse this morning have been given with grateful memories of their parents by Barbara and John Norrgard.

The 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.

We have **child care for babies and toddlers** every Sunday. Your children are always welcome for the entire service or for a respite time if needed. Please see an usher if you need directions.

The 10:00 am Service is broadcast live each week on WGCH 1490 AM Radio. In addition, the service is available through the church's website, www.fccog.org. A bulletin can be found there as well as a link to the live broadcast. Previous sermons may also be found there.

Giving Opportunities for the Season

Sharing Christmas Blessings – Giving Tree

Today is the deadline for wrapping and delivering your gift(s) back to the church for delivery to Pilgrim Towers in Stamford and H.O.M.E. in Maine.

Christmas Tree Sale

Trees will continue to be on sale this weekend until they are sold out. Help increase the amount we are able to share through the Outreach Budget of FCCOG by buying trees from us! Hurry before they are gone!

Mitten Tree

Throughout Advent the Mitten Tree is available in the Auditorium to accept gifts of mittens, hats, gloves and socks that will be delivered

to St. Luke's Lifeworks to help warm the hands and hearts of those St. Luke's serves.

White Gifts

White Gifts are offerings of new clothing, toys, books or other useful items wrapped in white paper that are offered during our 10 am and 4 pm services on Christmas Eve. The white paper gives the illusion of snow under the trees in the Meetinghouse. The gifts will be sent to Covenant to Care for Children, which provides advocacy, mentoring, and direct assistance to children and youth who are neglected, abused or at risk. Warm clothes, coats, educational toys, family board games, and gift cards (for Target or Walmart for teens) are particularly appreciated.

Ribbon and bows are not necessary but **please attach a tag listing the contents including age, gender & size.** (Hint: If you find yourself without white paper, some patterned papers reverse to white, or use white tissue paper.)

Calendar

TODAY

Church School

In Church School today, we will continue our Advent waiting as we learn about Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth who was also going to have a baby, John. Our lesson is taken from the gospel of Luke 2: 39-46. Also today the 5th Graders will visit Pilgrim Towers and deliver the bounty of gifts from our congregation. Thank You for your generosity! Next Sunday is our last Church School day until the New Year.

If you will be here for the 4 pm Christmas Eve service and your child(ren) would like to participate in the nativity pageant, please call Rosemary Lamie or email her at RosemaryL@fccog.org and we will accommodate as many children as realistically possible.

Youth Ministry

There are no regularly scheduled Y! programs today. Instead, please come to the Christmas Dinner and Carol Sing.

Youth Choir

Youth Choir will rehearse today from 11:15 am – 12:15 pm in the Choir Room.

Women's Fellowship Bulb Sale Continues

Amaryllis and Paper Whites make wonderful winter time blooms and children love to see them grow. We also have Tulips and Daffodils for you or to be donated to beautify our church grounds. Come see us at coffee hour!

Christmas Dinner and Carol Sing

Join us tonight at 6:00 pm in the auditorium for an evening of food, fellowship and a rousing Christmas Carol sing-along. Suggested donation for the meal is \$10 with a \$40 maximum per family. Sign up during Coffee Hour.

NEXT WEEK

“Messiah” is coming!

Performances of “Messiah” will be Saturday and Sunday, December 18 and 19 at 4 pm. Invite your family, friends, and neighbors to join us in this exciting choral opportunity!

NEWS AND NOTICES

Tai Chi Classes with Luis Duarte

All are welcome! Improve your balance, health and well-being. Come and experience the many wonderful benefits of Tai Chi and Qi Gong. Classes are held on Wednesdays at 8 am and Thursdays at 9 am. Only \$7/class if paid by the month and \$8/class for “drop ins.” Join us! You'll love it!

Book Discussion Group

Hats Off!, the popular women's book discussion group, will be reading *The Autobiography of Eleanor Roosevelt* starting after Christmas. The group meets every Thursday from 9:45 to 11:30 am in the church lounge. All are welcome. For details, call Marcia Livingston at 203-625-0772.

Rummage Room News

- **Christmas Open House:** You are invited to the Rummage Room's annual Christmas Open House Party to be held on December 17 from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. Cookies and lemonade will be served for your enjoyment and as a "Thank You!" for your support during 2010.
- **Closing for the Holidays:** The Rummage Room will close for the Holidays on Saturday, December 18, 2010 at 1:00 pm and reopen on Monday, January 3, 2011 at 10:00 am.
- **Donations:** The Rummage Room is now closed for donations until Monday, January 3, 2011. Regular donation hours are 9:30 am to 5:00 pm Monday through Thursday, and 9:30 am to 1:00 pm Friday and Saturday. PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE DONATIONS IN THE BACK OR THE FRONT OF THE SHOP WHILE THE RUMMAGE ROOM IS CLOSED FOR THE HOLIDAYS! THANK YOU!
- All proceeds from The Rummage Room go to help Women's and Children's organizations locally, nationally and internationally. Your support throughout the year makes it possible to bring a bit of Christmas cheer into the lives of many. We thank all of you who shop, donate and volunteer for you are the life and the light of The Rummage Room. Kathryn Graham once said,
*To love what you do and feel that it matters –
how could anything be more fun?*
- Happy Holidays from Judy Miller and Judy Chapman, co-chairs of The Rummage Room, The Rummage Room committee, Maria Drieghe, manager, the assistant managers, and The Rummage Room volunteers. You make our efforts meaningful, fruitful and FUN!

Food Collection

A reminder that the Food Collection Barrel will remain in the back of the Meetinghouse, so please contribute food each week. Adding a few items to your weekly grocery store visit will make a significant difference at Neighbor to Neighbor. Items currently in need at Neighbor to Neighbor:

Cereal
Oatmeal
Pasta Sauce
Dried Beans (Kidney and Black)
100% Juice
Canned Tomatoes
Peanut Butter (No larger than 28 oz., please)
Jelly





Christmas Memorial/Honor Flowers and Decorations

The Chancel Committee invites contributions for decorations for the Meetinghouse this Christmas. Any amount is welcome. Please deliver the completed form with your check to the Church Office (payable to the First Congregational Church Flower Fund) by **today, Sunday, December 12**. Thank you.

In Memory/Honor of

By

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$_____

Please print names legibly to minimize spelling errors.



Celebrate Advent and Christmas at FCCOG

The Services of Advent

Sunday Worship at 10:00 am

November 28,

December 5, 12 and 19

Christmas Eve Services

10:00 am – Lessons and Carols

4:00 pm - Family Service:

Once in Royal David's City

5:00 pm – Carol Sing

Around the Tree

8:00 pm - Carols and

Communion

11:00 pm - Candlelight Service

Part I of Handel's Messiah and Hallelujah Chorus

Our annual candlelight performances of this masterpiece will be held in the Meetinghouse **December 18 and 19 at 4:00 pm.**

This year we will have two FCCOG family members as soloists: Carolyn Paulus and her brother-in-law, Tom Woodman.

Two new faces will grace the stage this year: mezzo soprano Erika Hennings and tenor Neal Harrelson-Keyes.

Christmas Dinner and Carol Sing

Join us tonight for a night of food, fellowship and a rousing Christmas Carol sing-along.

Sunday, December 12 at 6:00



The First Congregational Church of Greenwich

108 Sound Beach Avenue, Old Greenwich, Connecticut, 06870

203-637-1791

www.fccog.org

Ministers: The Members of The First Congregational Church of Greenwich

Senior Pastor: Rev. Dr. David D. Young

Associate Pastor for Youth Ministry: Rev. Mark D. Montgomery

Associate Pastor for Christian Education: Rev. Susan Murtha

Minister of Communication and Adult Education: Rev. Daniel B. England

Minister of Pastoral Care: Rev. Avery C. Manchester

Director of Music: Dr. Craig Scott Symons

Director of Church School: Rosemary Lamie

Director of Membership: Ginny Breismeister

Director of Publications: Barbara Wilkov

Parish Nurse: Susan Asselin, RN

Pastors Emeriti: Rev. Dr. Thomas L. Stiers and Rev. Sally Colegrove

Director of Music Emeritus: Dr. John Stansell