

*Old Greenwich,
Connecticut*

**THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH OF GREENWICH**

*United Church
of Christ*

Founded in 1665

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

18 December 2011

10 o'clock in the morning



Advent Wreath Art Credit: Ted Mallory 2009

WELCOME to this Service of Worship at First Congregational Church as the seasonal movement brings us to the fourth and final Sunday of Advent. May the guiding light of all that is Holy draw you closer to the one true light that came into the world in Bethlehem through Jesus Christ our Lord. In the words of a 15th century German carol:

*Little One, and God indeed,
Little and poor, Thou art all we need.
We will follow where Thou dost lead,
And we will heed
Our Brother, born of Mary.*

PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

Please silence all cell phones and other electronic devices.

*All who are able please stand

‡Seating of latecomers

PRELUDE

God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen

The Palmer Handbells

Arr. Michael Bedford

CALL TO COMMUNITY

Please sign and pass the red book.

Rev. Daniel B. England

PRAISING GOD

CALL TO WORSHIP

***‡OPENING HYMN AND PROCESSION**

Joy to the World! The Lord is Come

Pilgrim (red) Hymnal 130

LIGHTING OF THE FOURTH ADVENT CANDLE

*Charles, Sara, Charlie and Addison Stuckey;
and Marc and Eloise Mallett*

MUSIC DURING LIGHTING OF CANDLE

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

The Palmer Handbells

Arr. Leonard Bobrowski

CONFESSING TO GOD

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

O God of the timely and the timeless, we confess
that we are so caught up in the demands of the next
moment that we are unwilling to hear your call to
Bethlehem's stable.

... You have said, "Fear not!" but we are anxious
about the next day.

... You have marked the simplest of things with your
presence, but we insist that truth must be complex.

Forgive us for hearing the message of a new time for
all people, while continuing to live in the worn-out
time of repetition. For we would be open in this

Advent season to time's transformation, where angels
dare to sing their timeless songs and wise-men reclaim
a timely star-consciousness.

In Christ's spirit we now 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

Charlotte Lorthioir

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. If the Assyrians come into our land and tread upon our soil, we will raise against them seven shepherds and eight installed as rulers.

SCRIPTURE ANTHEM

Sir Christémas

The Chancel Choir
William Mathias

SECOND LESSON

Anne Wachsmann

Luke 1:26-45

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, favored 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 favor 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 forever, 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.

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.”

*‡ HYMN

What Child Is This, Who, Laid to Rest Pilgrim (red) Hymnal 140

(During the hymn, 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: “*Bearing A Blessedness*”

Dr. David D. Young

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 gloried 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 birth the angels sang,

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 confess our everlasting need of God,
The need of forgiveness for our greed and selfishness,
The need of life for empty souls,
The need of love for hearts grown cold.
I acknowledge in Christ a faith in life redeemed,
that looks beyond the present evil;
and I pray that this redemption may begin in us! Amen!

***Advent Response** New Century (black) Hymnal 122 (*verse 3*)
Born all people to deliver,
born a child, you came to reign!
Born to rule on earth forever,
come, be known to us again.

CALL TO PASTORAL PRAYER

Rev. Avery C. Manchester

PASTORAL PRAYER AND QUIET MEDITATION

CALL TO OFFERING

OFFERTORY ANTHEM

The Snow Lay on the Ground

The Chancel Choir
Leo Sowerby

***Offertory Response** New Century (black) Hymnal 159 (*verse 3*)
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

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing New Century (black) Hymnal 144

*CLOSING SENTENCES

*Leader: This world is wild as an old wive's tale
And strange the plain things are.*

*People: The earth is enough and the air is enough,
For our wonder and our war;*

*Leader: But our rest is as far as the fire Drake swings
And our peace is put in impossible things.*

*People: Where clashed and thundered unthinkable wings
Round an incredible star.*

G. K. Chesterton

*BENEDICTION

*BENEDICTION RESPONSE

POSTLUDE

Fugue and Plein Jeu

Henry Kihlken



Music Notes:

The scripture anthem is by Welsh composer William Mathias (1934-1992), who rose to fame as the composer for the Royal Wedding anthem, *Let the People Praise Thee, O God*, in 1981 for Prince Charles and the late Princess Diana. *Sir Christémas* is taken from a larger work entitled *Ave Rex* written in 1970. The piece combines English and Latin texts and speaks of the birth of the baby and welcoming everyone to greet the newborn child.

The Chancel Committee would like to acknowledge and thank Pam Grunow and Loretta Stagen for their help in decorating the sanctuary for Christmas.

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.

Christmas Memory/Honor Flowers and Decorations

The decorations in the Meetinghouse this morning are given in joyful and loving memory of:

Rusty Lewis and Jim Perry by Dick and Linda Lewis

Joan and Jim Kreuter by their children and grandchildren

Departed family and friends by the Lorthioir family

Our parents, Feliciano and Purisima Teria, and Richard and Louise Haviland by the Haviland family

Charles J. Veith IV by his sister, Linda Veith Glover

Donald F. French by Joyce French and family

William J. Provoost by his wife Suzanne, daughter Patti and son Jack

My parents, Dorothy and John Green, in-laws, Willa and Bill

Provoost Sr. and grandson, John Provoost, by Suzanne Provoost

Richard L. Geismar by his family

Efraim and Victoria Olson, Ryan and Margaret Rosendale, and Erna Olson by Ken and Erna Olson

Robert Benoit by his wife, Jennifer Benoit

Members of the Hoffman/Kneen clan by their family

Our parents, grandparents and Aunt Mary by Harry, Dianne and Alison Culpen

Mary Ellen Mendelsohn by the Mendelsohn family

John L. Putnam by Wendy Putnam and Jennifer Maloney

Harrison and Louise Reed and Carleton and Margaret Gisborne by Gifford and Ruth Reed and family

Karen and Marios Scrivanos by Karen, Gary, Alexandra and Harrison Oztemel

Carol C. Sweger by her loving family

Marian and Fred Hout by Sue Hout Baker and Sara, Charles and Lizzie

John Provoost by Jack, Judy, Michael, Jennifer and David Provoost

Our son, Kim Reynolds, by Harlan and Wendy Reynolds

Richard Vogt, anonymously

Anne, Bill and Sue Denne by their family

My family by Thelma Colegrove

Melita and John Magness and Dana L. Andersen by their family

Our parents and grandparents by Don and Frosty Friedman and family

Ruth, Lloyd L. and Lloyd Oberlin Shawber by Anne Stolley

Virginia W. Keller by Ed, Sara, Chris, Caroline, Eliza Keller

The Hathaway and Ramsdell families by Barbara and Lawrence Hathaway

Margaret, Marian and Margaret by the Brashes

The decorations in the Meetinghouse this morning are given in honor of:

Our dear grandchildren, Finn and June Breismeister by Sue and Stu McCalley and Ginny and Don Briesmeister

Family past and present by Bobby Littlefield

Carolyn Paulus and The Youth Choir

The decorations in the Meetinghouse this morning are given in celebration of:

Our community by the Sykes family

Giving Opportunities for the Season

Mitten Tree

The Mitten Tree is still available in the Auditorium to accept gifts of mittens, hats, gloves and socks to 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 10:00 am and 4:00 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

Today is our last regular Church School class until January 8! Most of our classes will learn about the Angel's visit to Joseph in a dream. The 3rd Grade will talk about the symbols of Christmas and their meaning. The 6th Grade will learn about the journey to Bethlehem. Our 5th graders and some of their parents will visit Pilgrim Towers right after Church School where they will have lunch, sing Christmas carols and bring our gifts for the residents.

Youth and Cherub Choir Rehearsals

Youth Choir will rehearse today from 11:15 am to 12:15 pm in the Choir Room. Cherub Choir will rehearse from 11:15 to 11:45 am in Room 104.

Church Committee Task Forces

Kickoff meetings for each of the three Task Force groups formed by the Church Committee (Pastor Compensation and Housing, Governance, and Welcoming) will be held *today* following the 10:00 am worship service. The Pastor Compensation and Housing group will meet in the Daniel Center, the Governance group will meet in Room 103 (The Youth Room), and the Welcoming group will meet in the Lounge. Please join us in starting this important project.

linc

We will get to hear the voices of Angels ... today we are going to forego our regular linc service and, instead, gather at 4:00 pm in the Meetinghouse. Then, let the Angelic voices commence as we share together in Handel's *Messiah*! See below for more info.

Last *Messiah* Performance!

Please join us for the final performance of *Messiah* today at 4:00 pm in the Meetinghouse. This year the soloists are: Bonnie Pepper, soprano; Christopher Pfund, tenor; Wanda Brister, mezzo soprano; and Mark Kaczmarczyk, bass. Admission is free but we encourage a \$20/person donation to help underwrite the costs associated with this lovely afternoon of a timeless masterpiece. This is a great chance to bring your neighbors and colleagues to show off your church family and the wonderful programs we share with the community.

Y! - Youth Ministry

The JPF Christmas party is *tonight at 6:00 pm* in the Youth Room. Bring a gift for our White Elephant gift exchange!

THIS WEEK

Youth Progressive Dinner

High school and college students, it's time again for our annual SPF/CPF Progressive Dinner this *Wednesday, December 21*. We will meet at 7:00 pm in the Youth Room and will then travel to two different houses for appetizers and dinner! We will finally end up back at the church for dessert and a White Elephant gift exchange! Bring one wrapped gift that costs no more than \$10 (the cheesier the better!). Wanna come? Just send Debbie Bocchino or Mark Montgomery a note on Facebook or text Mark at 203-856-9320. See you on Wednesday!

Youth Choir

There will be a Youth Choir rehearsal (with alums) on *Thursday, December 22* from 5:30 to 7:00 pm. Pizza will be served following the rehearsal. Looking ahead, there will be a warm-up rehearsal at 7:00 pm on Christmas Eve prior to the 8:00 pm service, and there will be no rehearsal on Sunday, December 25.

Rehearsals for Christmas Eve Pageants

There will be a rehearsal of the Nativity Pageant for the 4:00 pm Christmas Eve Service on *Friday, December 23 at 2:30 pm* in the Meetinghouse. The rehearsal for the 10:00 am pageant is at 9:00 am on *Saturday, December 24* before the Cherub Choir warm-up.

NEWS AND NOTICES

Church Office Calendar Correction

Note: The Church Office will be **open** on *Friday, December 30, 2011* and **closed** on *Monday, January 2, 2012*. This is a change from what had previously been published.

Tai Chi Fitness with Luis Duarte

Improve your balance, health and well-being. Come and experience the many wonderful benefits of Tai Chi and Qi Gong exercises. Classes are held on **Wednesdays** at 8:00 am and **Thursdays** at 9:00 am. Only \$7 per class if paid by the month, and \$8 per class for “drop ins.” Join us! You’ll love it! **All are welcome!**

News from The Rummage Room

The Rummage Room is closed for the Holidays and will reopen on *Monday, January 2* at 10:00 am.

Reminder: Please do not leave donations either at the front or back doors while The Rummage Room is closed. They will not survive the weather and will be disposed of at The Rummage Room’s expense. Thank you.

If you have not seen the award-winning windows designed by manager, Maria Drieghe, and assistant, Nancy Hamilton, come see them during the Holidays. The two awards earned this year were from The Garden Club of Old Greenwich for “The Best Reflections of a Christmas Past,” and from The Greenwich Chamber of Commerce for “Best Classic Holiday Store Front.” One window is a display of beautiful antique nutcrackers and the other features a train under the Christmas tree.

The Women’s Fellowship, The Rummage Room Committee, Staff and Volunteers, and The Allocations Committee wish you many joys throughout the Christmas season, and may you have a bright and joyful 2012. We thank you for your help in our continued commitment to our Mission Projects.

Food Collection

Don’t forget to add a few items in the collection barrel at the back of the Meetinghouse for Neighbor to Neighbor.



Next Week at First Congregational Church

Christmas Day Service

Worship at 10:00 am at First Presbyterian Church, Greenwich

Combined choirs of First Presbyterian, First Baptist and First Congregational Churches in *Gloria* by Antonio Vivaldi
(with chamber orchestra)

5:00 pm linc worship service at FCCOG

An Evening of Angel Stories

On Christmas evening we will gather for Angel stories from different parts of the Bible. We will also enjoy carol singing, soloists and times for prayer and reflection. At the end of a busy Christmas season, may this be a time of restoration!

Celebrate Christmas and the New Year at FCCOG

Part I of Handel's Messiah and Hallelujah Chorus

Our last candlelight performance of this masterpiece this year will be held in the Meetinghouse *today, December 18 at 4:00 pm.*

This year the soloists are: Bonnie Pepper, soprano; Christopher Pfund, tenor; Wanda Brister, mezzo soprano; and Mark Kaczmarczyk, bass.

Christmas Eve Services

10:00 am – Children's Service

4:00 pm - Family Service:

Once in Royal David's City

5:00 pm – Community Carol Sing

8:00 pm - Carols and Communion

11:00 pm - Candlelight Service

Christmas Day Services

10:00 am – Worship at First Presbyterian for FCCOG and First Baptist Churches

5:00 pm – “linc” Service

New Year's Day Services

10:00 am – Worship at FCCOG with First Presbyterian and First Baptist Churches

5:00 pm – “linc” Service

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

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