



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2023
THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT
GAUDETE SUNDAY
TEN O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING



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 welcome you this day and are glad you made the choice to join us for this worship service. May it be a blessing to you.

CHILDREN IN WORSHIP



*God puts the wiggle in children
and calls it good... and so do we!*

At First Church, we believe that the way we welcome children in worship directly affects the way they respond to God, the church, and to one another.

To welcome children as they are in worship, we've created the **PrayGround**, located in the front of the chapel (right side of the Meetinghouse) where children and others can engage in worship through movement and prayerful play.

The **PrayGround** offers space for movement and sensory materials for all ages to worship with and through. The presence of all God's children is a gift to the church, which offers hope for all.



SUPPORTING FIRST CHURCH

Using your smartphone messaging app, text **FCCOG Donate** to **73256** or click [HERE](#) to access the online giving webpage, or scan this QR code to donate.

First Church is a mask-friendly community of faith. Anyone who prefers to wear a mask at church should feel comfortable doing so.

Faith First-Love Always

ORDER OF WORSHIP

PRELUDE

Rejoice, Greatly
G. F. Handel (1685-1759)
Hanna Golodinskii, soprano
Paul Ghaffari, violin
Dr. Craig Scott Symons, organ

*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee.
He is the righteous Savior, and He shall speak peace unto the heathen.*

Zechariah 9:9-10

CHIMING OF THE HOUR

CALL TO COMMUNITY

Reverend Cydney Van Dyke

Please sign and pass the red Fellowship Pad found at the end of your row near the center aisle, then pass it back to the center aisle, noting the names of those worshipping near you so you may greet them at the end of worship.

If you are the person on the center aisle, please remove the completed sheet and place it in the plate during the offering.

HYMN

Creator Of The Stars Of Night (verse 1 only)
84 Glory To God Hymnal (purple)

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

The Stuckey Family

One: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and set lights in the sky — sun and moon and stars.

All: **By these stars, our ancestors charted their journeys. By these stars, they knew God was with them.**

One: Today we light three candles to bring the fire of the stars down from heaven to earth, to nestle among the greens.

All: **We name the first candle Hope, the second candle Peace, and the third candle Joy.**

One: We too are on a journey, and we do not always know the way. But we chart our path by the star of joy.

All: **Even when despair is all around us and apathy seems the order of the day, we set our face steadily towards the light.**

One: Let us pray:

All: **Lord Jesus, as we search for signs of joy this week, help us to become the signs of joy that others are searching for. As these candles are but a glimpse of the light of the heavens, help us to be a glimpse of heaven's joy. Amen.**

Rev. Carol Holbrook Prickett

ANTHEM DURING ADVENT WREATH LIGHTING

Ding, Dong, Merrily On High
Arr. James D. Kimball
The Palmer Handbell Choir

†HYMN

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice
132 Glory To God Hymnal (purple)

†PRAYER FOR WHOLENESS (in unison)

Holy God, we aspire to love and trust you, but so often we get in the way of ourselves. We see only the deep sadness of the world, and do not notice your people at work amid the sorrow. We assume that things will never get better, and do not see all that is good right now. We close our eyes and complain about the darkness, rather than see the light that shines all around us. Help us, Holy One. Help us to grow in love and trust, in compassion and joy, so that as the Christ Child comes to us once again, we will see him, and know him, and rejoice. Amen.

Moment of silence for personal reflection

†ASSURANCE OF GRACE

†PASSING OF THE PEACE

God makes peace within us. Let us claim it. God makes peace between us. Let us share it.

One: God has received us, pardoned us, and loved us; let us forgive each other in love and share the peace of Christ with a hand to hand, eye to eye, and heart to heart greeting.

May the peace of Christ be with all of you.

All: And also with you.

†RESPONSE (remain standing)

He Came Down

He came down that we might have light; he came down that we might
He came down that we might have joy; he came down that we might

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have light; he came down that we might have light; Hal-le - lu - jah for-ev - er - more.
have joy; he came down that we might have joy;

ANTHEM

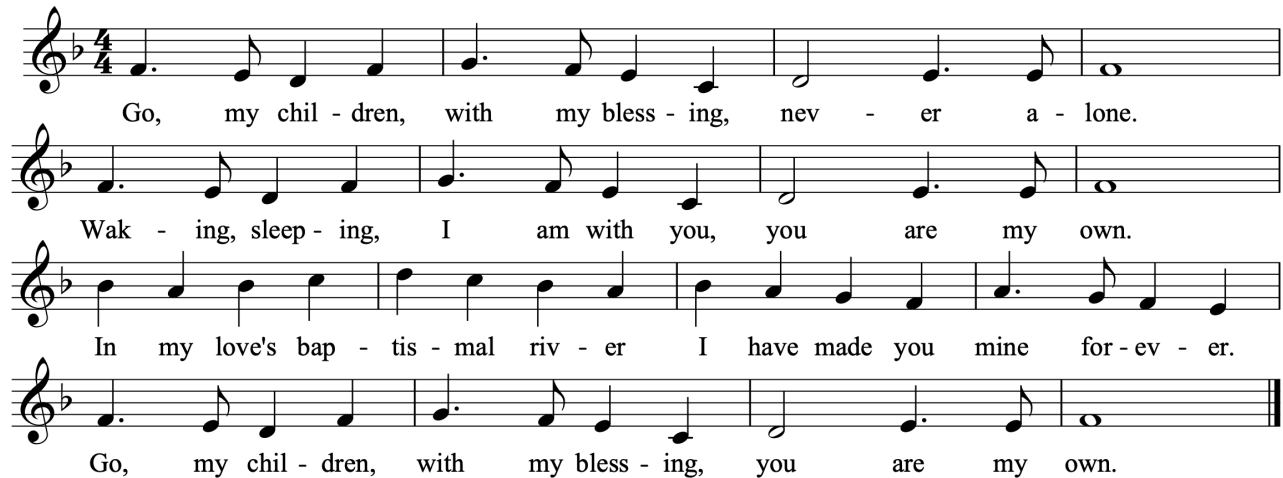
In Dulci Jubilo
arr. Robert Pearsall
The Genesis Choir
Danny Young, director
Matt Stolfi, piano

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

(During the singing of the response, children will depart for Church School or return to their seats.)

RESPONSE

Go, My Children



Go, my chil - dren, with my bless - ing, nev - er a - lone.
Wak - ing, sleep - ing, I am with you, you are my own.
In my love's bap - tis - mal riv - er I have made you mine for - ev - er.
Go, my chil - dren, with my bless - ing, you are my own.

FIRST LESSON

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

New Revised Standard Version

Pat Larrabee

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me
because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives
and release to the prisoners,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,
to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.
They shall build up the ancient ruins;
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.
For I, the Lord, love justice,
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

Their descendants shall be known among the nations
and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.
I will greatly rejoice in the Lord;
my whole being shall exult in my God,
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
For as the earth brings forth its shoots
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.

ANTHEM

Lift Up Your Heads, O Ye Gates
William Mathias (1934-1992)
The Chancel Choir

*Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in.
Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.
Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.*

Psalms 24:7-10

SECOND LESSON

Ezra 1:1-4, 3: 10-13
New Revised Standard Version

In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, to fulfill the word of the Lord from the mouth of Jeremiah, the Lord stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also in writing, saying:

“Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Let any of those among you who are of his people—may their God be with them!—go up to Jerusalem in Judah and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel; he is the God who is in Jerusalem. And let all survivors in whatever place they reside be assisted by the people of their place with silver and gold, with goods, and with livestock, besides freewill offerings for the house of God in Jerusalem.”

When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments were stationed to praise the Lord with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, according to the directions of King David of Israel; and they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord,

“For he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel.”

And all the people responded with a great shout when they praised the Lord because the foundation of the house of the Lord had been laid.

But many of the priests and Levites and heads of families, old people who had seen the first house on its foundations, wept with a loud voice when they saw this house, though many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people’s weeping, for the people shouted so loudly that the sound was heard far away.

MESSAGE

Starting Over
Reverend Patrick Collins

†HYMN

That Boy-Child Of Mary
139 Glory To God Hymnal (purple)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

THE LORD’S PRAYER (in unison)

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

Lynn Hawxhurst

OFFERTORY ANTHEM

Mary Had A Baby
Arr. William Dawson (1899-1990)
The Chancel Choir
Linnea Conley, mezzo soprano

*Mary had a baby, my Lord. What did she name him, my Lord?
Where was he born, born in a manger, my Lord. What did they call him? King Jesus.
Mary had a baby, he was called King Jesus. Oh yes.
He is called King Jesus, Mighty Counselor, King Emmanuel,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Mary had a baby, my Lord.*

†DOXOLOGY

Praise God, From Whom All Blessings Flow
606 Glory to God Hymnal (purple)

†PRAYER OF DEDICATION

† Please rise in body or in spirit

†HYMN

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
119 Glory To God Hymnal (purple)

BENEDICTION

CHORAL RESPONSE

POSTLUDE

Bourrée On "On Christmas Night"
Alec Rowley (1892-1958)

† Please rise in body or in spirit

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COMMUNITY HOUR

Join us for Community Hour in the Auditorium following worship this morning where you can greet one another, have a cup of coffee, and a light snack. Hosts for December are members of the Church Council.

CHURCH SCHOOL SCHEDULE

Dec 17: Classes as normal

Dec 24: 10 a.m. Christmas Eve service with "walk-in pageant"

Dec 31: One-Room Schoolhouse Jan 7: All-ages worship

Pre-K & K: Blue Door 1 & 2: Purple Door

3 & 4: Silver Door 5 & 6: Rick's Room

(Subject to change depending on teacher availability and attendance)



ANNUAL GIVING UPDATE

A big thank you to those who pledged this past week. As we close in on \$530,000 we are still \$130,000 away from our goal of \$660,000 with a number of pledges outstanding. We have many pledges which have yet to be submitted. Please contact Greg in the church office if you have any questions about prior year pledges.

First Church provides so many services to the various organizations in our community, and around the country. Organizations like Abilis, Kids in Crisis, HOME in Maine, Al-Anon, and many more benefit from the support we can provide. In the Bible, we read about the parable of the Good Samaritan. This story was in response when Jesus was asked "And who is my neighbor?" Samaritans and Jews were not known to be friendly toward each other. But the Samaritan stopped to help the Jew who was beaten and laid along the side of the road. We are the Samaritan. The people who need help are our neighbors. Our Annual Giving presents us with an opportunity to spread the gift of God's love to the members of First Church and the wider community through the giving of our time, our talent, and our treasures.

CHOIR REHEARSALS TODAY Cherub Choir, Celebration Singers, Genesis Choir.

THE RUMMAGE ROOM

Shopping hours are Monday through Thursday from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m., with the same hours for donation drop off. The Rummage Room is closed for the holiday season and will reopen on Tuesday January 2, 2024.



CHRISTMAS EVE GIFTS FOR COVENANT TO CARE FOR CHILDREN OF CT

(formerly known as White Gifts)

White Gifts are clothing, toys, books, or other useful items that, for many years, have been offered on Christmas Eve. Typically wrapped in white paper, they would give the illusion of snow under the trees in the Meetinghouse.



This year we will be collecting the gifts, however, they do not need to be wrapped. All gifts will be donated to Covenant To Care for Children in Hartford, CT, who distributes them throughout the year to children who are in the statewide foster care system. Bring them to any of the Christmas Eve services and place them under the tree in the narthex before entering the sanctuary.



CHRISTMAS EVE AT FIRST CHURCH SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24

10 a.m. Children's Service

especially designed for younger children and families
Music by The Cherub Choir.

3 p.m. Family Service

"Once in Royal David's City" pageant
Music by The Celebration Singers and
Helena Brown, soprano from The Metropolitan Opera

5 p.m. Community Candlelight Carol Sing
on the front lawn of the church.

6 p.m. Festival Candlelight Carol Service
Music by a brass quintet, timpani,
and The Chancel Choir.

9 p.m. Candlelight Service with Communion
Music by The Genesis/Alumni Choir, and harp.



CUT HERE

Christmas Meetinghouse Decorations & Brass

The Deacons invite contributions for decorations and brass music for the Meetinghouse this Christmas.
Any amount is welcome. Please deliver the completed form with your check to the church office
on or before Monday, December 18, 2023. Thank you!

Please check one of these choices:

☐ Flowers

☐ Brass

☐ In Memory of

☐ In Honor of

Name: _____

By: _____

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____ made out to **First Congregational Church of Greenwich**
("Flowers" in the memo) Please print legibly to minimize spelling errors.

A TREE OF REMEMBRANCE



This year, First Church is introducing a new Christmas tradition. At the back of the Meetinghouse is a Christmas tree, and this will be, through the month of December, our Tree of Remembrance. Please take a label and write the name of your loved one, with or without the dates of birth and death, before hanging it on the tree.

Write as many as you'd like. This will be a beautiful way to remember those we have lost and miss, particularly over this holiday period.
For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. Romans 14:8

Happy Advent & Merry Christmas



WISHING MANY BLESSINGS TO YOU AND YOURS,
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF GREENWICH STAFF

THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF GREENWICH

108 Sound Beach Avenue Old Greenwich CT 06870
203-637-1791 • www.fccog.org

Ministers - All Members Of The First Congregational Church Of Greenwich

Senior Pastor

Associate Pastor

Minister of Music

Director of FCCOG Church School/Regional Youth Ministry

Parish Nurse

Church Office Coordinator

Financial Administrator

Administrative and Communications Colleague

Livestream Director

Audio Technician

Database Administrative Assistant

Facility Manager

Sexton

Director of First Church Preschool

Assistant Director of First Church Preschool

Preschool Assistant

Pastor Emerita

Reverend Patrick Collins

Reverend Cydney Van Dyke

Dr. Craig Scott Symons

Khaleigh Laicher

Susan Asselin, RN

Wendy Spezzano

Greg Girolamo

Carolyn Samuel

Daniel Lepoutre

Bob Small

Sue Wilder

Julio Yika

Curtis Gay

Beth Genovese

Kayla Vozzella

Karina Germosen

Reverend Sally Colegrove



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST
a just world for all