

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2023
CHRISTMAS EVE
SIX O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING



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.



ORDER OF WORSHIP

PRELUDE

Christmas Fantasy
Arr. Joel Raney (b. 1956)
Brass, Timpani, Organ
Dr. Craig Scott Symons, director

CHRISTMAS GREETING

Reverend Patrick Collins

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Like the shepherds, we come to the stable, uncertain of what we have heard and seen,
All: **longing to hear a word of peace and joy.**
One: Like the wise ones, we have journeys to make, gifts to offer, and hope in our hearts,
All: **that this world can change for the better.**
One: Here, in the stillness of a winter's night, we gather to share the light of Christ, a light that shines in the nightfall.
All: **We gather in the wonder of this night to share our joy and thanks for new life.**

†CAROL

O Come, All Ye Faithful
Arr. David Willcocks (1919-2015)

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant, O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him, born the King of angels;

Refrain:
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation, Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest! (Refrain)

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning, Jesus, to thee be glory giv'n.
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing: (Refrain)

† Please rise in body or in spirit

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

The Young 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 five candles to bring the fire of the stars down from heaven to earth, to nestle among the greens.

All: We name the four candles Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love, and at the center of them all we light the Christ Candle.

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 faith burns low and its promises seem too good to be true, we set our face steadily towards the light

One: Let us pray:

All: Lord Jesus, as we search for signs of Christ's presence this week, help us to become the signs of Christ's presence 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 on earth. Help us to shine like stars in the world. Amen.

ANTHEM

Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day
John Gardner (1917-2011)
The Chancel Choir

LESSON

Isaiah 9:2-7
New International Version

The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.

You have enlarged the nation
and increased their joy;
they rejoice before you
as people rejoice at the harvest,
as warriors rejoice
when dividing the plunder.

For as in the day of Midian's defeat,
you have shattered
the yoke that burdens them,
the bar across their shoulders,

the rod of their oppressor.
Every warrior's boot used in battle
and every garment rolled in blood
will be destined for burning,
will be fuel for the fire.
For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

†CAROL

God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen
Arr. Willcocks

God rest you merry, gentlemen, let nothing you dismay,
remember Christ our Savior was born on Christmas day,
to save us all from Satan's pow'r when we were gone astray;

Refrain:

O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy, O tidings of comfort and joy.

From God our heav'nly Father, a blessed angel came;
and unto certain shepherds brought tidings of the same:
how that in Bethlehem was born the son of God by name, (Refrain)

"Fear not, then," said the angel, "let nothing you affright;
this day is born a Savior of a pure virgin bright,
to free all those who trust in him from Satan's pow'r and might." (Refrain)

Now to the Lord sing praises, all you within this place,
and with true love and charity each other now embrace;
This holy tide of Christmas all others shall replace. (Refrain)

† Please rise in body or in spirit

LESSON

First Coming
Madeleine L'Engle

God did not wait till the world was ready, till...the nations were at peace.
God came when the heavens were unsteady, and prisoners cried out for release.

God did not wait for the perfect time. God came when the need was deep and great.
God dined with sinners in all their grime, turned water into wine. God did not wait

Till hearts were pure. In joy God came to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.
To a world like ours of anguished shame God came, and god's light would not go out.

God came to a world which did not mesh, to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.
In the mystery of Word made Flesh the Maker of the stars was born.

We cannot wait til the world is sane to raise our songs with joyful voice,
for to share our grief, to touch our pain, God came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!

ANTHEM

What Is This Lovely Fragrance?
Healey Willan (1880-1968)

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 2:1-14
New International Version

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

The first Nowell the angel did say was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay,
in fields where they lay keeping their sheep, on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Refrain:

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, born is the King of Israel.

They looked up and saw a star shining in the east beyond them far;
and to the earth it gave great light, and so it continued both day and night. (Refrain)

And by the light of that same star three wise men came from country far;
to seek for a king was their intent, and to follow the star wherever it went. (Refrain)

This star drew nigh to the northwest; o'er Bethlehem it took its rest,
and there it did both stop and stay, right over the place where Jesus lay. (Refrain)

Then entered in those wise men three, full reverently upon their knee,
and offered there in his presence their gold, and myrrh, and frankincense. (Refrain)

Then let us all with one accord sing praises to our heavenly Lord,
that hath made heaven and earth of nought, and with his blood our life hath bought. (Refrain)

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Reverend Patrick Collins

Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord,
late in time behold him come, offspring of the Virgin's womb:
veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail th'incarnate Deity,
pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

Hail the heaven-born Prince of peace! Hail the Sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings,
Mild he lays his glory by, born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

CALL TO OFFERING

Reverend Cydney Van Dyke

OFFERING OUR GIFTS

During our offering time, the ushers will receive your offerings while you remain seated. If you brought a "white gift" to the service today and have not placed it under the Christmas tree at the back of the church, please do so as you depart. The gifts will be donated to local non-profits for children and youth.

ANTHEM

Masters In This Hall
William R. Price (b. 1955)

THE CHRISTMAS PRAYER

Reverend Cydney Van Dyke

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.

SHARING THE CHRIST LIGHT

Please note that the sanctuary will darken at the beginning of the sharing of the Christ light. For your safety, we ask that you remain seated.

PASSING OF THE LIGHT

Candlelight will be shared with those at the end of the rows, who are invited to pass it along. Please light your candle by tipping it over a lit one.

†CAROL

Silent Night

Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright
'round yon virgin mother and child! Holy infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight;
glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing "Alleluia:
Christ the Savior is born; Christ the Savior is born!"

Silent night, holy night! Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from thy holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

Silent night, holy night! Wondrous star, lend thy light;
with the angels let us sing Alleluia to our King:
Christ the Savior is born; Christ the Savior is born.

BENEDICTION

Reverend Patrick Collins

*Please extinguish your candle after the benediction
and return it to the baskets in the back of the Meetinghouse.*

POSTLUDE

Flourish On Joy To The World
Robert Hobby

† Please rise in body or in spirit

Special thanks to our instrumentalists this evening:

Trumpets: Mike Carolan, Joe Spitzer

French Horn: Debbie Schmidt

Trombone: Steve Shulman

Tuba: Joe Stanko

Percussion: Barbara Freedman

Organ: William Roslak

OUR FINAL CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

9 p.m. Candlelight Service with Communion

Music by The Genesis/Alumni Choir and harp

*The Church Offices will be closed
Monday, December 25, Tuesday, December 26, 2023
& Monday, January 1, 2024 for the holidays.*

YEAR-END PLEDGE REMINDER



We are grateful for your presence at this Christmas Eve service. As the year-end quickly approaches, please consider your 2023 pledge fulfillment during this busy season. The church offices are closed for the staff holiday on Tuesday, Dec 26, but will be open December 27-29 from 9-4 pm if you wish to drop off your pledge. Or you can complete it online by clicking on the “My First Church” secure link on the upper right corner of the church website. Thank you for supporting the important work at First Congregational Church of Greenwich.

Happy Advent & Merry Christmas



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

FCCOG CHRISTMAS TREE

Collection

ONLY
\$35

**BOOK
NOW**



**SIGN UP
LINK IN
EBLAST**

STAY AT HOME!

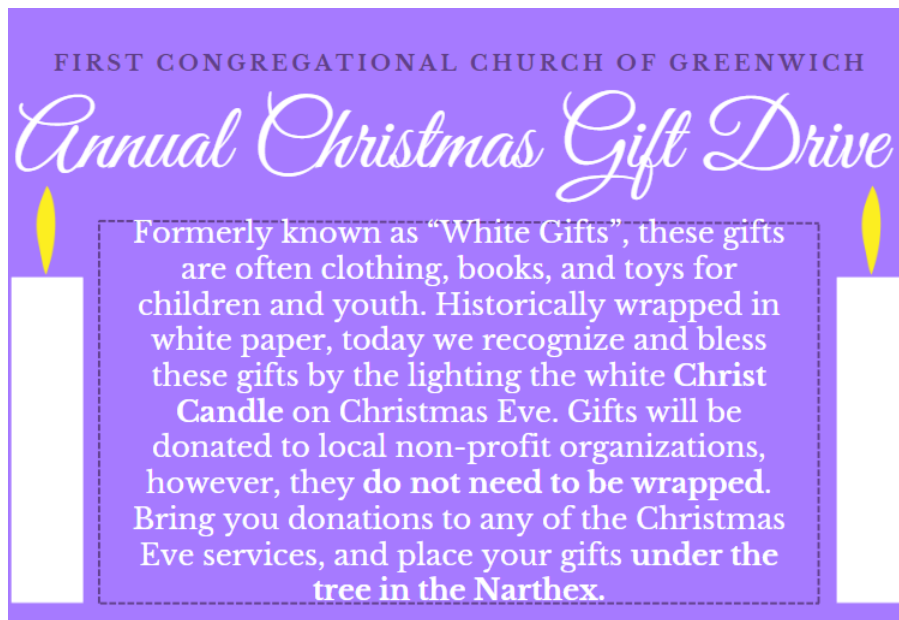
JUST LEAVE THE TREE OUTSIDE- WE RECYCLE FOR YOU!

SATURDAYS: DEC 30 & JAN 6, 10AM-3PM

SUNDAYS: DEC 31 & JAN 7, 12-4PM

**A REGIONAL YOUTH MINISTRY
FUNDRAISER!**

Use this link to sign up: <https://shorturl.at/ftL47>



CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS & BRASS

The decorations and brass are given in joyful and loving memory of:

Diane, Erling, and Dana Andersen	Their Family
Lydia Tyner Anderson, James Anderson III,	Cyndy & Ty Anderson
John and Betty Briggs	Eric & Pam Kreuter – Chase & Nina Kreuter
Anne, Bill, and Sue Denne	Their Family
Joan Denne	Her Family
Richmond B. Hopkins	His Family
Marian and Fred Hout	Susie Hout Baker – Sara, Charlie, Lizzy
Joan and Jim Kreuter	Betsy Kreuter, and Eric Kreuter & Family
Melita and John Magness	Their Family
Scott P. Marks, Jr.	Diane & Paul Kretschmann
Kimberly Pacent, our beautiful daughter and loving sister	Paul & Karen Pacent & Nicole Pacent-Lindquist
John L. Putnam	Wendy Putnam & Jen Maloney
Barbara Tufts, and Donald Winston Tufts	Cyndy & Ty Anderson
Charles J. Veith IV	His Sister, Linda Veith Glover
Arthur C. and Catherine G. Weigner	Sons Stephen & Ronald
Rick Woodman, Harry Woodman, Robert Osler	Edmund Hawxhurst & Lynn Woodman Hawxhurst

The decorations and brass are given in honor of:

Emily and Julie Hasler	Ken and Erna Olsen
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Decorations and brass donations:

Michael and Christina Russell
David and Ardith Williams

THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF GREENWICH

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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
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Director of First Church Preschool
Assistant Director of First Church Preschool
Preschool Administrative Assistant
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OF CHRIST
a just world for all