

First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
3 Gray Road, North Yarmouth, Maine 04097
Organized in 1806



First Sunday of Advent
November 28, 2021 ~ 9:30 a.m.

**Service Prayers for the First Sunday of Advent
November 28, 2021**

**Prelude
Partita on “Savior of the Nations, Come” by J. Weber**

Greetings and Announcements

We Open the Door

**Sung: *God welcomes all! Strangers and friends!
God’s love is strong! And it never ends!***

Words: John L. Bell, Music: South African traditional,
transcribed by John L. Bell at the Sunrise Hospice, Themba
Text: © 2008, GIA/Iona Community / WGRG

Welcome and Announcements

**We Open the Door
*When God is a Child***

Words: Brian Wren (1936-)

Music: John Carter (1930-)

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Leader: The pandemic has laid bare, and widened, economic disparity locally and globally. As we enter the Advent season, how can our church become a house where the Holy will be born anew—offering respite, sustenance and care, opening the doors ever wider to those seeking shelter from the onslaught of life? No one church can do it all, but each can do something. As we study the biblical prophets that call us to care for our neighbors and “make room in the inn,” the lonely and frightened spaces within us are filled with the light of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

**When God is a Child there’s [hope] in our song.
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,
And none shall be afraid.**

**Hope is a star that shines in the night,
Leading us on till the morning is bright.
When God is a Child there’s [hope] in our song.
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,**

And none shall be afraid.

Reader(s):

Today we offer the Light of Hope to illumine the Door of Welcome.
May this light shine in our hearts, in our lives, and in our church.
May Hope awaken us to possibilities and lead us to greater hospitality.
There *IS* room in this Inn, a House for the Holy.

**When God is a Child there's [hope] in our song.
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,
And none shall be afraid.
Hope is a star that shines in the night,
Leading us on till the morning is bright.
When God is a Child there's [hope] in our song.
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,
And none shall be afraid.**

The Peace

The Hope of Christ be with you!
And also with you!

As we rise in body or spirit for our opening hymn, I invite you to pass a "wave" of peace to the people around you (and the people worshipping at home)!

Opening Hymn/Song

"Hail to the Lord's Anointed"

Chalice 140

**Hail to the Lord's anointed, great David's greater Son!
Hail in the time appointed, his reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression, to set the captives free,
To take away transgressions, and rule in equity.**

**He comes with justice speedy to those who suffer wrong,
to help the poor and needy, and bid the weak be strong,
to give them songs for sighing, their darkness turn to light,
whose souls, condemned and dying, are precious in his sight.**

**He shall come down like showers upon the fruitful earth.
Love, joy, and hope, like flowers, spring in his path to birth.
Before him, on the mountains, shall peace, the herald, go,
and righteousness, in fountains, from hill to valley flow.**

**To him shall prayer unceasing and daily vows ascend,
his kingdom still increasing, a kingdom without end.
The tide of time shall never his covenant remove.
His name shall stand forever; that name to us is Love.**

Time for All Ages

First Reading

Jeremiah 33: 14-16 (CEB)

The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill my gracious promise with the people of Israel and Judah. In those days and at that time, I will raise up a righteous branch from David's line, who will do what is just and right in the land. In those days, Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is what he will be called: The Lord Is Our Righteousness.

Choral Anthem

["The Yearning"](#)

Second Reading

Psalms 25: 4-5 (CEB)

*Make your ways known to me, Lord;
teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth—teach it to me—
because you are the God who saves me.
I put my hope in you all day long.*

Sermon

Prayers of the People

"Lord, you left your throne"

Thou didst leave thy throne and thy kingly crown, alt
Author: E.S. Elliot (1864)
Tune: Margaret (Matthews)

In this moment we open the doors of our hearts to honesty before God about what we've done and left undone that created less hope in a hurting world.

Let us breathe out this regret... *[pause to breathe out]*
and breathe in the life-giving, for-giving Spirit of God... *[pause to breath in]*
and out again with the Peace of Christ... *[another breath out]*.

**Lord, you left your throne and your kingly crown,
When you came to earth for me;
But in Bethlehem's home was there found no room
For your holy nativity.
O come to my heart, Lord Jesus,
Make hope in my heart for you.**

In this moment we open the doors of our lives to the call of the Spirit, inviting us to become more than we can ask or imagine.

Let us breathe out our fear... *[pause to breathe out]*
and breathe in the courage of the Spirit of God... *[pause to breath in]*
and out again, with the Peace of Christ... *[another breath out]*.

**Make a place in our church, Lord Jesus,
Bring hope to our world in You.**

In this moment we open the doors of this church, filling it with the compassion of Christ for all those who are struggling.

We remember and pray for...

.....

... those who are suffering economic hardship, and insecurity in basic needs;
may abundance be shared.

... those who are suffering mentally, finding it difficult to cope;
may paths open and hope return.

... those who are suffering illness or injury;
may healing abound.

.... those who are suffering loneliness and isolation;
may companionship and solace arrive.

... those who are suffering discrimination, fear and violence;
may they know respect, respite, and safety.

May the Advent of Compassion be born in us,
reside within us,
move outward from us,
to meet the needs of the world,
making a house for the Holy that is each and every child of God.

We pray this in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray:

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.

A Story of Innkeeping: Offering

Leader: The Bible doesn't actually mention an Innkeeper in the story of Jesus' birth. But this popular notion is alive in our imaginations. Sometimes the Innkeeper gets a bad rap, as if providing substandard accommodations for a family about to go through the birthing process. But what if we saw the innkeeper as someone who, with a full house, thought literally "outside the box" to solve a problem? What if we endeavored to do the same to provide ministry, to "house the Holy" in ways we have not yet imagined? This Advent season we will offer some stories to stir our imagination and stoke the possibilities for our own hospitality.

***Doxology**

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God for all that love has done;
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One. Amen.**

***DEDICATION**

Thank you, O God, for the gifts of your people.
Help us that we rely not on our own understanding in the use of these gifts,
but to seek your wisdom.
Knowing that as we do,
your will be revealed and your people near and far will be blessed. **Amen.**

Closing Carol

Leader: Each week of this series we will close out with a Christmas Carol. Yes, Advent is not yet the birth of Christ. However, as we prepare our homes and this house for the Holy, we live in the “already and not yet.” We already know “the rest of the story” AND YET we have not seen the fulfillment of a time when suffering ends. Today we sing “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” a carol written by Phillips Brooks in 1865 after a horseback ride between Jerusalem and Bethlehem on Christmas.

An original verse not included in our hymnals is especially poignant for our theme:

“Where children pure and happy
Pray to the blessed Child,
Where misery cries out to thee,
Son of the Mother mild;
Where charity stands watching
And faith holds wide the door,
The dark night wakes, the glory breaks,
And Christmas comes once more.”

Let us remember that it was in a little and unassuming town where the Holy was housed. We too can offer light and hope and a place where “faith holds wide the door,” even and especially in our little town.

*“O Little Town of Bethlehem”
Chalice 144*

**O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shin-eth the ever-lasting Light;
the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.**

**For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above
while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth.
Your voices raise to God in praise; and peace to all on earth.**

**How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the joys of highest heaven.
No ear may hear Christ coming, but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him still, the dear Christ enters in.**

**O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin, and enter in; be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, our God, Emmanuel.**

Benediction

May God's Door of Welcome
swing open in your heart and in your life.

May Christ's humble first dwelling
remind you of the plenty you already know.

And may the Spirit lead you into
more possibility and hospitality than you can imagine,
making room in The Inn for all.

May it be so for you.
May it be so for us.
May it be so for this church.
Amen.

Postlude

Voluntary by S. Wesley

Staff

Pastor: Rev. Nancy J. White
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Organist: Linda Lambrides
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YouTube: [youtube.com/c/nyccucc](https://www.youtube.com/c/nyccucc)

Due to the Corona Virus-Covid-19, this service was held in-person and live streamed on YouTube with all CDC protocols in place.

If you are not receiving church emails and would like to, please send an email to nyarmouthccucc@gmail.com asking to be added to the list. Like the NYCC FB page and you will be notified of what is happening there, too!

Offering can also be made online through Tithely at <https://tithe.ly/give?c=1301940>



stable

Love the Lord
your God

with all your heart &
with all your soul &
with all your mind &
with all your strength

Love your neighbor
as yourself.

There is no commandment
greater than these.

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