

First Congregational Church

Founded in 1680

An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ



Living the Love and Justice of Jesus

CHRISTMAS EVE

Worship with Holy Communion

December 24, 2024 ~ 6:00pm

Gathering Music

Welcome and Announcements

Ringling of the Bell

Prelude

“The Angel Gabriel From Heaven Came”
Alexi Shabalin – Violin,

Robert Neumeyer,

Bringing Forth the Light of Christ

Acolytes

***Call to Worship and Lighting of the Christmas Candle**

(congregation responds with the bold text)

One: In this season of waiting, of longing, of looking for you to come into our world, we are seeking light. [Light candles]

In our own lives, **we are seeking light.**

In our neighborhoods, **we are seeking light.**

In our families, **we are seeking light.**

In our work, **we are seeking light.**

In Grace, **we are seeking light.**

In our nation, **we are seeking light.**

In our world, **we are seeking light**

One: Seek and you shall find.
Knock and the door will be opened.
Ask and it will be given to you.

Many: **Jesus Christ, you are the light of the world. May we have eyes to see you and ears to hear you. Come into our world today. Amen.**

***Hymn**

“O Come, All Ye Faithful”

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!

God of God, Light of Light,
lo, he abhors not the virgin's womb;
very God, begotten not created; [Refrain]

Sing, choirs of angels; sing in exultation;
sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest! [Refrain]

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be all glory giv'n!
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing! [Refrain]

***Prayer of Invocation**

God of birth, God of light, in this time of song and prayer and silence, reawaken in us the awe of Christmas. As we hear again the story of a young woman and a new born child, remind us that we are called to respond to you in unexpected ways. And when we leave this place, may we be willing to sing praises for a young woman who said YES and the birth that we prepare to celebrate. Amen.

Prayer of Transformation

Lord of hope, can we really hope? From out of the darkness, we sense a dim light ahead, the light of your coming into the world. We so long for the time when you are no longer hidden from us, and our deepest desire is to trust in your warm voice we hear behind us, guiding us along a hidden path we do not know. Dry our tears, heal our wounds, and help us to wait for the dawning of the dim light ahead, with a brighter vision of healing and freedom. Amen.

Assurance of God's Love and Forgiveness

The Old Testament Reading

Isaiah 9:2-4,6-7

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian....For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal God, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Reader: For the Word of God in Scripture,
for the Word of God among us,
for the Word of God within us

ALL: THANKS BE TO GOD!

The Gospel Lesson

Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)

The Rev. Dr. Nancy Hamlin Soukup

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Reader: For the Word of God in Scripture,
for the Word of God among us,
for the Word of God within us

ALL: THANKS BE TO GOD!

Hymn

“Away in a Manger”

*Away in a manger no crib for a bed
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where He lay
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.*

*The cattle are lowing the Baby awakes
But little Lord Jesus no crying He makes.
I love You, Lord Jesus look down from the sky
And stay by my side until morning is night.*

*Be near me, Lord Jesus I ask You to stay
Close by me forever and love me I pray.
Bless all the dear children in Your tender care
And fit us for heaven to live with You there.*

The Sermon

“The Yorkshire Christmas Gift ”

The Rev. Dr. Nancy Hamlin Soukup

(The children in the congregation are invited to join Rev. Nancy in the chancel)

Sharing our Joy and Concerns

The Pastoral Prayer

Our 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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

Prayer Response

**Lord, listen to your children praying
Lord, send your Spirit in this place
Lord, listen to your children praying
Send us love, send us power, send us grace**

Offering of our Gifts to God

Offertory Invitation

The Offertory Choir Anthem

"A Weary Couple"

Tony Alonso

Soloist - Jerilyn Turner Cranshaw, Violin - Alexi Shabalin

***The Doxology PH #515**

Old Hundredth

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, ye heavenly host;
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

***Prayer of Dedication**

With these gifts, dear God, accept the praise and thanksgiving of our hearts, which rejoice in your goodness and love. Let our gifts point to your presence in the world and further your dream for the world through Jesus, Emmanuel, God-with-us. Amen.

***Hymn**

"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

*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!"*

Refrain:

*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 the 'incarnate Deity,
Pleased with us in flesh to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel. [Refrain]*

*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 we no more may die,
Born to raise us from the earth,
Born to give us second birth. [Refrain]*

The Sacrament of Holy Communion

All are welcome at this table!

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Words of Institution and Prayer of Consecration

Invitation to the Feast

(At the end of Communion, the acolytes will share the light from the Christmas candle with the congregation.)

Special Music

"Mary Go Tell It"

Mark Hayes

Soloist - Jerilyn Turner Cranshaw
(Lighting of Congregational Candles)

Hymn

"Silent Night, Holy 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!*

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God of shepherds and rulers, you gather us by the light of the star over Bethlehem. Guide us this night, by the light of that same star. Lead us to the mangers of this world, where uncertainty is met with new life, and the transformation of this world is most deeply felt in love, one with another. Be with us on this most wondrous of nights, we ask in Jesus's name. Amen.

*Closing Hymn

"Joy to the World!"

Joy to the world! the Lord is come;

Let earth its receive her King

Let every heart prepare him room,

And heaven and nature sing,

And heaven and nature sing,

And heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the earth! the Savior reigns!

Let all their songs employ;

While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains

Repeat the sounding joy,

Repeat the sounding joy,

Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace,

And makes the nations prove

The glories of his righteousness

And wonders of his love,

And wonders of his love,

And wonders, wonders of his love.

*Benediction

*Benediction Response

"Hallelujah"

NCH #236

Carrying the Light of Christ into the World

Postlude

"I Wander As I Wander"

John Niles

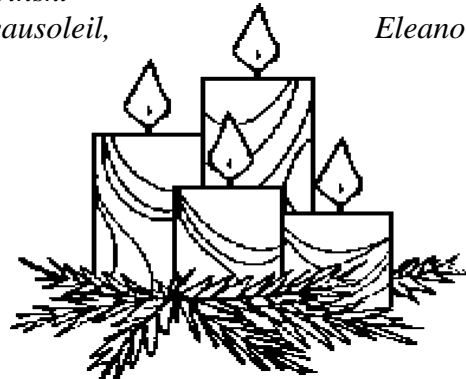
Soloist - Jerilyn Turner Cranshaw

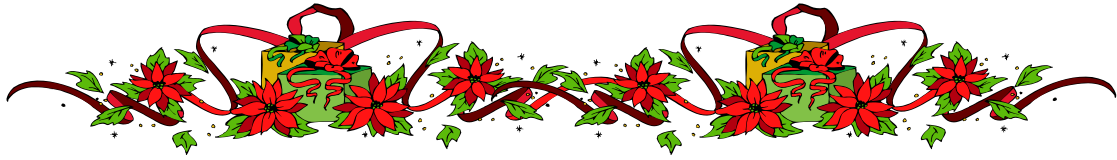
~ Leading Worship today is the Rev. Dr. Nancy Hamlin Soukup ~

~ Our Organist is Nikita Zabinski ~

~ Our greeters today are Janine Beausoleil,

Eleanor Ingraham & Clifford Gustafson





Today's Christmas Flowers are

In Loving Memory of

Debbie Wiacek
Debbie Wiacek
John Satti
Robert & Audrey Jackson
Dr. Augustine, Anne Ramos & Tommy Ramos

Grace E. Wilson
John Evans
Dr. Anne Fiske Lee
Frances & Louis Evans
Elizabeth & Raymond Fiske
Brad & Sally Monahon
The Donovan family
Randy Stone
Al & Dorothy Jane Sapp
Phyllis & Ernest Stone
Our Parents
Marina Schmeckebier
Robert & Wilhemina Fisher
The Rev. Dr. Dcn. Dorothy (Ricky) Brightman

Ralph McLean Angell, Jr.
Roy Soukup, Jr.
Dr. & Mrs. E.S. Braden
Mr. & Mrs. George Temple

In Honor of

Lucille A. Soukup

Given By

Ed Wiasek
Sons Matt, Steve & Family
Karen Satti
Karen Satti

Chuck & Lynne Ramos
Chuck & Lynne Ramos
The Evans Family
The Evans Family
The Evans Family
The Evans Family
The Evans Family
Susan & Glenn Donovan
Meredith Stone
Jim Sapp & Meredith Stone
Meredith Stone
Denise & Bob Arsenault
Ruth Fisher
Ruth Fisher

The Rev. Dr. Nancy H. Soukup
The Rev. Dr. Nancy H. Soukup
The Rev. Dr. Nancy H. Soukup
Dr. & Mrs. Paul Temple
Dr. & Mrs. Paul Temple

Given By

The Rev. Dr. Nancy Hamlin Soukup



Prayer List for Sunday, December 22, 2024

As a congregation, we lift up prayers today and throughout the week for the following people.

For concerns in the world:

For all the citizens of Syria and for all in areas of conflict.

For those in need of healing on our prayer list:

Jim Morgan
Tyler P., who has cancer
Sue Moreira, who is in Hospice Care
Barbara Malony, Barbara Ringland's mother
Mary Costa, who had surgery at Boston Children's Hospital
Mark
Mary Aberg for her Shoulder Surgery
Jeannine Marshall, Charlotte Burnham's cousin,
Jane Texada, a childhood friend of Sug Grant, who is mourning the loss of her husband
Stephen
Jacob Johnson in Seattle and his Girlfriend Emma who is Under the Sea in a submarine.
Kathy, Beverly Larson's cousin, who is recovering after a hospitalization
Charlie
Ken Latham in Leicester, MA, who started chemo last Thursday for Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma
Fred Z. in CT
Those who have lost their way that they may have wisdom, courage, and strength
Harriet
Lola, Carolina Bailey's sister with stage 4 Pancreatic Cancer
Ryan
Mark E., who has an aggressive form of prostate cancer
Fred Davis, who has stomach cancer
Meriel Smith
Charlotte Griffith
Bob and Sally Evans
Barbara and Jack Ringland
Kellie and Juan Morales's daughter
Peter Leiche, a friend of Sue Moreira, who has cancer
Bruce C., who is in rehab, and Pat P., both friends of Ed Wiacek
Caregivers in our congregation



Upcoming Birthdays:

Diane Swire 12/22	Rev. Nancy Soukup 12/27	
Jack Ringland 1/1	Adria Sartrys 1/16	Steve Walsh 1/17
Lisa Andrade 1/18	Karen Griffith-Dieterich 1/21	Ryan Gamon 1/23
Mikey McGowan- Roach 1/23		Anne Archibald 1/27
Mike Oglo 1/28	Jarrold Riccio 1/28	Meredith Stone 1/16
Anthony Morettini 1/29	Sally Evans 1/31	

What's on the calendar

December 25, 2023

December 29, 2024

January 01, 2024

January 02, 2025

January 05, 2025

January 07, 2025

January 08, 2025

January 09, 2025

January 10 & 11

January 12, 2025

January 14, 2025

January 15, 2025

January 19, 2025

January 21, 2025

January 22, 2025

January 25, 2024

January 26, 2025

January 29, 2025

CHRISTMAS DAY

Sunday Worship 10:00am

NEW YEAR'S DAY

THURSDAY ANNUAL REPORTS DUE

Sunday Baptism/Confirmation/Worship

Tuesday Prayer Shawl Circle 6:30pm

Wednesday FCC Choir Rehearsal 7:00pm (Dimond Room)

Thursday Deacons meeting 7:00pm (Guiteras House)

Friday & Saturday Bristol Stone Church Coffee House (DeWolf Room)

Sunday Worship: First Sunday after Epiphany 10:00am

Ground Hog Band Rehearsal after worship (Diamond Room)

Tuesday Facility meeting 7:00pm (DeWolf Room)

Wednesday FCC Choir Rehearsal 7:00pm (Dimond Room)

Sunday Worship: Second Sunday after Epiphany 10:00am

Ground Hog Band Rehearsal after Worship (Dimond Room)

Tuesday Church Council Meeting 7:00pm (DeWolf Room)

Wednesday FCC Choir Rehearsal 7:00pm (Dimond Room)

Saturday Bristol Stone Church Coffee House (DeWolf Room)

Sunday Worship: Third Sunday after Epiphany 10:00am

Congregational Annual meeting following Worship

Ground Hog Band Rehearsal after worship (Dimond Room)

Wednesday FCC Choir Rehearsal 7:00pm (Dimond Room)

Please visit our website for more information about the Church
And Events go to fccbristol.org



The First Congregational Church
Annual Meeting... is fast approaching.

All Committee Chairs

REPORTS DUE JANUARY 2, 2024

The Report will be available to the church membership by January 12th.

Annual Meeting will be Sunday, January 26, 2025, following Worship in the Church Sanctuary.

“Invitation to Share Time, Talent, and Treasure”

When you give to First Congregational Church, you make possible our ministries that serve all God’s people. Your gifts share the love of Jesus all year long. The act of giving is our personal expression of worship and also keeps our church financially healthy. Stewardship is not payment for services rendered. It is an act of faith and devotion to God. You may go to the following link to give now: <https://fccbristol.org/support-us/>.



Church Office Hours are Tuesday – Friday 9:00am – 2:00pm

Office e-mail address: office@FCCBristol.org

Pastoral Office Hours Tuesday – Thursday, 9am – 1pm

You may also schedule an appointment by contacting Rev. Nancy.

Church office line 401/253-7288 or e-mail office@FCCbristol.org

NCH = New Century Hymnal (black hymnal) and PH = Pilgrim Hymnal (red hymnal)

Sources and Credits: Hymn tune names - as well as composers of the music and authors of the text - are listed in the hymnals with each hymn. CCLI License #1958911 and One License.Net #A-728124.

*Sources: Prayers from this service were written by or adapted from the following: Grace Church in Ealing, London, <http://www.freshworship.org/>, re:Worship: Christmas (re-worship.blogspot.com); Rev. Gord, Worship Offerings, <http://worshipofferings.blogspot.ca/>, re:Worship: Christmas (re-worship.blogspot.com); Advent Daily Prayers, http://www.cb-c.org/Advent_office.pdf, re:Worship: Closing Prayer: A Dim Light Ahead (re-worship.blogspot.com); Rev. Anne Fraley, <https://revgalblogpals.org/>, re:Worship: Christmas, re:Worship: Christmas; Rev. Susan A. Blain, *The Light, the Word, the Glory of God, Service Prayers for Christmas Eve or Day - United Church of Christ (ucc.org)*; Rev. Andrew O’Neil, “*This Most Wondrous of Nights A Christmas Eve Communion Service*,” www.united-church.ca/worship-theme/advent-unwrapped.ca © 2018, <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.5/ca.>; Rev. Howard Thurman, “*The Work of Christmas*,” *The Mood of Christmas and Other Celebrations*, used by permission of Friends United Press, <https://bookstore.friendsunitedmeeting.org/collections/howard-thurman/products/mood-of-christmas-and-other-celebrations-the>; and *This Most Wondrous of Nights (united-church.ca)*.*

Note: This version of “Away in the Manger” is from Kidzone at Musixmatch. . Front cover art: Christmas Peace Jesus.

Merry Christmas

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