

Welcome to First Congregational Church United Church of Christ
Christmas Sunday
December 29, 2024

*** Some rise to their feet, some rise in their hearts—please rise as you are able.*

GATHERING BELL

At the sound of the bell, please silence yourselves and prepare for worship.

PRELUDE *Fantasy on “Carol of the Bells”, arr. Sandra Wilkinson* Shannon Jones, Martha Jones

ANNOUNCEMENTS Rev. Paul Ashby

INVITATION TO WORSHIP **Whoever you are...and wherever you are on life’s journey...
you are welcome here!**

CALL TO WORSHIP: The Beatitudes Joanne Drake

Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

“Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons and daughters of God.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

GATHERING HYMNS OF THE SEASON All

Joy to the World

Joy to the world! the Lord is come; let earth 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 sound joy.

The First Nowell

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

They looked above, 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.
Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell, born is the King of Israel.

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

Hark the Herald Angels Sing

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the Christ-child bring;
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinner reconciled!"
Joyful, all you saints arise, join the triumph of the skies,
With the angel host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the Christ-child bring!"

Hail the Bearer of God's peace! Hail the Sun of righteousness,
Light and life our Savior brings, risen with radiant, healing wings.
Mildly lay his glory by, born that we no more may die,
Born to raise us all from earth, born to give us second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the Christ-child bring."

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Respond to each shared prayer request with "Peace, Shalom, Salaam."

PASTORAL PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

Our Creator, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your 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 yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

INVITATION TO OFFERING

Joanne

OFFERTORY

Rainy Stokley-Graves

Christmas Lullaby (from "Songs for a New World"), Jason Robert Brown

**DOXOLOGY (tune: *Lasst Uns Erfreuen*)

**Thou beasts both tame and wild; draw near!
Thou saints and sinners, raise your cheer: Alleluia! Alleluia
Call start to earth! Raise hell to heav'n!
Sing joy! Shout love that has no end!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!**

INVITATION TO OFFERING

**PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Joanne

Lavish God, giver of everything that we treasure, multiply these offerings so that the blessings and favor you have given to us may be shared among our neighbors with trust, hope, and love. Amen.

MORE HYMNS OF THE SEASON

All

Angels, from the Realms of Glory

Angels from the realms of glory, wing your flight o'er all the earth;
As you sang creation's story, now proclaim Messiah's birth.
Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, give thanks and sing.

Saints before the altar bending, watching long in hope and fear,
Suddenly, your prayers attending, Christ beside you shall appear.
Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, give thanks and sing.

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice

Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
now give heed to what we say: Jesus Christ is born today;
Ox and ass before him bow, asleep within the manger now,
Christ is born today, Christ is born today!

Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
now you know of endless bliss; Jesus Christ was born for this!
God has opened heaven's door, and you are blessed forevermore.
Christ was born for this, Christ was born for this!

Angels We Have Heard on High

Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply, echo back their joyous strains.

Refrain: Gloria, in excelsis Deo [repeat]

Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
Say what may the tidings be, which inspire your heavenly song. *refrain*

See the babe in manger laid whom the choirs of angels praise;
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid, while our hearts in love we raise. *refrain*

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 1:26-31, Mark 12:28-34

Bishop Alan Morris

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

So God created man in [her] own image,
in the image of God [she] created him;
male and female [she] created them.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. And God saw everything that [she] had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." [Jesus said, "On these two

commandments, all of the law and the prophets depend”] And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions.

MESSAGE

“Jesus 101”

Alan

CLOSING SONG

Go Tell It On the Mountain

Refrain

Go tell it on the mountain, over the hill and everywhere.

Go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born!

While shepherds kept their watching o’er silent flocks by night,
behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. *refrain*

The shepherds feared and trembled when lo! above the earth
rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior’s birth. *refrain*

Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born,
and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. *refrain*

**BENEDICTION

Alan

GREETING ONE ANOTHER IN THE SPIRIT OF LOVE

RECESSIONAL

Hallelujah Joy!, Mark Hayes

Martha

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Today’s Worship Leaders

“guest” preacher

Bishop Alan Morris

liturgist

Joanne Drake

musicians

Shannon Jones, Martha Jones