



# THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

December 3, 2023 ~ 10:00 a.m.

First Sunday of Advent

In Person & Live Streamed



*May the God of **hope** fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in **hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit. ~Roman 15:13*

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~ ORDER OF WORSHIP ~

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*\*Please stand if able. **Bold** denotes unison response.*

**CHIMES**

Karen Needham

**WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*Brief announcements are welcome, please be in the front pews at the start of the announcements.  
Offerings and prayer request on the yellow prayer cards found in the pews may be placed in the offering plate at the time of the offering or in the designated boxes on the back table.*

**PRELUDE**

*Beautiful December*

Amy F. Bernon

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

What will set us journeying in search of the Christ this Advent?

How will we prepare ourselves for this journey?

**Let us begin by not burdening ourselves with others' expectations and be overwhelmed by too many responsibilities and tasks.**

What will guide our steps in the weeks that follow?

**Like Mary, may we be surprised and overjoyed by our calling. Like the sleepy Shepherds on a hillside, may our eyes be opened. Like Joseph may we listen to our dreams; for this may be Jesus' voice speaking.**

Sisters and brothers in Christ, Advent awaits us.

Let us place our feet on the road and begin the journey.

**Gathered here we declare our intention to live in the realization the greatest gift in the world is once again before us, placed into our hearts, knowing the Giver understands our deepest needs and hears our heartfelt prayers. Let us join together in song, praise, and worship. O come Lord Jesus, come!**

**\*HYMN**

*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

Pilgrim (red) 110

**LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE ~HOPE**

Jack and Jeff Goodwin

**PRESENTATION OF CRÉCHE**

*Children are excused for Church School*

## **\*GATHERING PRAYER & \*THE LORD'S PRAYER**

Dear Lord, in a world that often seems filled with darkness and uncertainty, we yearn for hope, a beacon of light that can illuminate our path with a belief that tomorrow will bring new beginnings and brighter possibilities. In this sacred space, we ask You to quiet our restless hearts and minds. Remind us of Your promise to never abandon us, even in the midst of our darkest moments. Lord, strengthen the bonds that unite us. Together, let us lift our voices in praise and thanksgiving, expressing our gratitude for the gift of hope that sustains us. May our worship be a testament to Your enduring love and a beacon of hope for all who seek it.

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.

### **\*Gloria Patri**

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost,  
as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,  
world without end, Amen, Amen.*

## **OFFERING**

In a world that often seems to focus on what we lack, let us take this time to celebrate the abundance that surrounds us. May our offerings, Lord Jesus, be a reflection of our love and commitment to You. Let us now receive our Sunday morning offering.

## **OFFERTORY**

*Hark the Glad Sound! The Savior Comes*      Mary Lynn Lightfoot  
Senior Choir

## **\*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.*

## **\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

As we bring our offerings before You today, we ask that You continue to bless

us with Your generosity and grace. May these gifts be used to serve others, to make the world a better place, and to spread Your love and compassion to all. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, we pray. Amen

### READINGS FROM SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 40:25-31    Pew Bible page 582  
Hebrews 6:13-20    Pew Bible page 973

### SERMON

*Anchored in Hope*

### PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

*Joys & Concerns*  
*Moment of Silence*  
*Pastoral Prayer*

### \*HYMN

*Break Thou the Bread of Life*                      Pilgrim (red) 254

### THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation  
Prayer over the Elements  
Serving of the Elements

### Prayer of Thanksgiving

Gracious God, our hearts overflow with gratitude for the gift of communion. We thank You for the spiritual nourishment and strength You have given us. We thank You for the hope and joy You have instilled in our hearts. May we live out our lives in a way that reflects Your love, compassion, and grace. With grateful hearts, we offer this prayer to You, O divine Creator.

### \*HYMN

*God, Dismiss Us with Your Blessing*                      Chalice (Blue) 439

### \*BENEDICTION

\*BENEDICTION RESPONSE    *O God Our Help in Ages Past*    vs. 1  
Senior Choir

### \*POSTLUDE

*Prepare the Way of the Lord*                      W. A. Mozart arr. Hal Hopson