



First Congregational Church of Lebanon

United Church of Christ – Open and Affirming

The First Sunday of Advent

November 29, 2020

“God travels wonderful ways with human beings, but he does not comply with the views and opinions of people. God does not go the way that people want to prescribe for him; rather, his way is beyond all comprehension, free and self-determined beyond all proof.”

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer

All hymns are included after the order of worship, on pages 6-9.

Prelude

Savior of the Nations, Come, BWV 659

J. S. Bach

Bach’s dark, brooding setting of Martin Luther’s Advent hymn reflects this morning’s apocalyptic scripture readings. In the cultural context of Bach’s church, Advent was a penitential season.

Call to Worship (Unison; adapted from Psalm 80)

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh. Stir up your might, and come to save us! Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved. But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand, the one whom you made strong for yourself. Then we will never turn back from you; give us life, and we will call on your name. Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

Hymn 348 (p. 6)

Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending

Helmsley

Prayer of Invocation

God, though we worship in places near and far today, we welcome your Spirit as it joins us together as one people. Lift up our worship, inspire our prayers, infuse them with your grace, your love, your power. We pray these things in your Son’s name. Amen.

Gloria (Unison)

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.

A Liturgy for Advent

An Advent Reading

Isaiah 2:1-5. The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. ²In days to come the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established

as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. ³Many peoples shall come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. ⁴He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. ⁵O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!

The Lighting of the Advent Candle

An Advent Prayer (*Unison*)

Holy God, in this season of anticipation, help us to be patient.

Loving God, in this time of watching, help us to see clearly.

Healing God, in these weeks of preparation, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart and mind and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. Open our hearts to you, that we may receive your forgiveness, be redeemed by your reconciling love, and make ready our hearts for the arrival of the Light of the World.

Responsive Hymn (p. 7) O Come, O Come, *Emmanuel* (v. 1 only) Veni Emmanuel

Words of Welcome; Our Ministry and Mission

While we are not meeting in person, all are encouraged to stay in touch with one another by phone, email, or written cards. If you wish to organize a Zoom conference or phone meeting, please contact the Rev. Steve Silver (603-448-4281/silver@fccleb.org), and he'll get you set up and ready to go.

Anthem “O Rest in the Lord” (*Elijah*) F. Mendelssohn

Children’s Moment

Happy Advent! Over the next 26 days, we’ll be getting ready for Christmas. Then, before we know it, Christmas Eve will be here! As we prepare for Jesus, we should do what we do whenever we await a special guest: clean up, make sure that everything is ready, and look forward to his big arrival. It may take a little time and effort, but it will be worth it. So let’s live into this Advent season, and get ready for Jesus.

Scripture Lessons

Isaiah 64:1-9. O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence—²as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil—to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! ³When you did awesome deeds that we did

not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. ⁴From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. ⁵You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed. ⁶We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. ⁷There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. ⁸Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. ⁹Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

Mark 13:24-37. ²⁴[Jesus continued,] “But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, ²⁵and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

²⁶“Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. ²⁷Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

²⁸“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³²“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch.

³⁵Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, ³⁶or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

Sermon “Welcome to Advent!” (*See separate document*) Stephen R. Silver

Hymn 107 (p. 8) *Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence* Picardy

Sharing of Joys and Concerns; Pastoral Prayer

As we hold our community members in prayer, please help us maintain our weekly prayer list by contacting Rev. Silver or the church office to confirm names on the list or remove them.

On this day we offer our ongoing prayers for Pete, Lloyd, Arlene, Ruth, Evelyn, Jim, Barbara, Greg, Jon, Larry, Edith, and Jan.

We pray for all those fighting the coronavirus or other illnesses, whether of mind, body, or spirit.

We pray for all those struggling with financial challenges, reduced hours and unemployment, and fears about the future.

We pray for the healthcare workers and first responders who are on the front line dealing with this pandemic.

We pray for reconciliation and healing in this time of racial tension.

We pray for wisdom and humility from all our leaders.

Today we offer the following prayer:

Holy, mysterious God: we begin our Advent journey in a spirit of anticipation and repentance, asking you to help ready us for the arrival of the Christ child. Enlarge our spirits, warm our hearts, fire our imaginations so that we might receive your gift of Light and Love, Salvation and New Beginnings.

We pray this, and all the joys and concerns we hold in our hearts, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer (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.

Offering of Gifts

Remembering those who are without, who are in need, who are often ignored, we invite your support of our ongoing ministry in and for the community. Please mail in your offering as you are able.

Offertory "But the Lord is Mindful of His Own" (St. Paul) F. Mendelssohn

Doxology (Unison)

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him, all creatures here below,
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer of Dedication (Unison)

Abundantly generous God, we thank you for the many gifts in our lives, both those material and those spiritual. Help us to recognize what you have done and are doing for us, and let us respond with our whole hearts and minds, by offering our praise and our service. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Hymn 362 (p. 9) *Rejoice! Rejoice, Believers*

Llangloffan

Benediction

My friends, life is short. We do not have too much time to gladden the hearts of those who travel the way with us. So, be swift to love, and make haste to be kind.

Now go forth with the love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, this day and forevermore. Amen.

Postlude

Noël Suisse

L.-C. d'Aquin

Leading Worship This Week

The Rev. Stephen R. Silver, Pastor

Ernie Drown, Organist • Laurel Stavis, Alto • Brian Clancy, Tenor

Phil Hammond, Liturgist

Joys, Concerns, and Prayer Requests

If you wish to have a **joy, concern, or prayer request** lifted up in the service, or if you know of anyone who may need special prayers, a card or phone call, or some other form of pastoral care, please email prayer@fccleb.org, or contact the church office or the Rev. Steve Silver directly.

By the Grace of God *Stewardship 2021*

“Do not say to yourself, ‘My power and the might of my own hand have gained me this wealth.’ But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your ancestors, as he is doing today.” (Deuteronomy 8:17-18)

While today we do not believe that wealth is a sign of divine favor, each of us has been blessed with unmerited gifts that we may use in life. One way to describe this is *grace*—we haven’t done anything to earn these blessings; God has given them to us. How we use them is our choice, and with it comes the question: Will we share what we have to advance God’s Kingdom?

All are invited to prayerfully consider their commitment to FCC’s mission and ministry in the coming year. We will gratefully accept 2021 pledges anytime in the coming weeks.

Please return your pledge forms to the church office by mail (or submit your information by email if you’d rather). If you’d like to use offering envelopes for 2021, you may pick up your boxed set (#1-25) at the church office during the week.

THE CHRISTMAS FUND

We are grateful to accept donations to the UCC’s Christmas Fund, also known as the Fund for the Veterans of the Cross or Emergency Fund. This program offers compassionate, grateful support for retired clergy and their families with pension, healthcare, and emergency assistance.

Please contribute as you’re able to this vital denominational offering, either by check to FCC (memo “Christmas Fund”) or online at www.pbucc.org/index.php/christmas-fund-home. Thanks!

348 Lo, He Comes with Clouds
Descending

1 Lo, he comes with clouds descend - ing,
2 Now re - demp - tion, long ex - pect - ed,
3 Yea, a - men, let all adore thee,

once for our sal - va - tion slain; thou - sand,
comes in sol - emn splen - dor near, all the
high on thine e - ter - nal throne; Sav - ior,

thou - sand saints at - tend - ing join to the
saints world re - ject - ed thrill the
take the power and glo - ry; claim the

sing the glad re - frain: Al - le -
trum - pet sound to hear: Al - le -
king - dom as thine own. Come, Lord

lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le -
lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le -
Je - sus; come, Lord Je - sus; come, Lord

lu - ial Christ the Lord re - turns to reign.
lu - ial See the day of God ap - pear!
Je - sus. Thou shalt reign, and thou a - lone!

Despite unclear musical origins, the result here is a characteristic early Methodist hymn tune, notable for its breadth and range. It effectively sets a text of similarly mixed sources, one that Charles Wesley regarded as related to "Thy kingdom come" in the Lord's Prayer.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

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Latin: c.9th century

Tr. John M. Neale, 1818-1866, *Sts. 1, 2, alt.*

Tr. Henry S. Coffin, 1877-1954, *Sts. 3, 4*

VENI EMMANUEL 8.8.8.8.8.8.

Adapted from Plainsong

Thomas Helmore, 1811-1890

In unison

1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, And ran-som cap-tive
 2 O come, thou Day-spring, come and cheer Our spir-its by thine
 3 O come, thou Wis-dom from on high, And or-der all things,
 4 O come, De-sire of na-tions, bind All peo-ples in one

Is - ra - el, That mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here, Un -
 ad - vent here; Dis - perse the gloom-y clouds of night, And
 far and nigh; To us the path of knowl - edge show, And
 heart and mind; Bid en - vy, strife and quar - rels cease; Fill

REFRAIN

til the Son of God ap - pear.
 death's dark shad-ows put to flight.
 cause us in her ways to go. Re - joice! Re - joice! Em -
 the whole world with heav - en's peace.

man - u - el Shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el! A-men.

Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

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Liturgy of St. James
Tr. Gerard Moultrie, 1829-1885

PICARDY 8.7.8.7.8.7.
Traditional French Carol

1 Let all mor-tal flesh keep si-lence, And with fear and trem-bling stand;
2 King of kings, yet born of Mar-y, As of old on earth he stood,
3 Rank on rank the host of heav-en Spreads its van-guard on the way,
4 At his feet the six-winged ser-aph; Cher-u-bim, with sleep-less eye,

Pon-der noth-ing earth-ly - mind-ed, For with bless-ing in his hand,
Lord of lords, in hu-man ves-ture, In the bod-y and the blood,
As the Light of light de-scend-eth From the realms of end-less day,
Veil their fa-ces to the pres-ence, As with cease-less voice they cry,

Christ our God to earth de-scend-eth, Our full hom-age to de-mand.
He will give to all the faith-ful His ownself for heaven-ly food.
That the powers of hell may van-ish As the dark-ness clears a-way.
Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia, Lord Most High! A-men.

362 Rejoice! Rejoice, Believers

1 Re - joice! Re - joice, be - liev - ers, and let your lights ap - pear;
 2 See that your lamps are burn - ing; re - plen-ish them with oil;
 3 Our hope and ex - pec - ta - tion, O Je - sus, now ap - pear;

the eve - ning is ad - vanc - ing and dark - er night is near.
 look now for your sal - va - tion, the end of sin and toil.
 a - rise, thou Sun so longed for, a - bove this shad - owed sphere!

The Bride-groom is a - ris - ing and soon he will draw nigh.
 The mar - riage feast is wait - ing; the gates wide o - pen stand;
 With hearts and hands up - lift - ed, we plead, O Lord, to see

Up, watch with ex - pec - ta - tion; at mid - night comes the cry.
 a - rise, O heirs of glo - ry; the Bride-groom is at hand!
 the day of earth's re - demp - tion, and ev - er be with thee!

The Latin original of this text based on the parable of the wise and foolish maidens (Matthew 25:1-13) consisted of ten stanzas, but this briefer version is more appropriate for its message of urgency. It is set to a spirited minor Welsh tune named for a Pembrokeshire village.



First Congregational Church of Lebanon

PO Box 230
10 South Park St
Lebanon NH 03766

Weekly Worship Resources Enclosed!

DATED MATERIAL—Please Deliver Promptly

Do you use email? Contact church@fccleb.org to receive this and other communication by email.

Welcome!

We are a Christ-centered community that celebrates the love of God. Although we are of varied minds, with varying measures of belief and unbelief, we are one body, bound together in Christ. We recognize the uniqueness of every individual as God's beloved child. We seek to respond faithfully to God's call for justice for all creation. We strive in word and deed to be faithful to Jesus' model of loving acceptance. We seek to create a sanctuary where all will know they are welcome and included.

No matter your age, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, race or ethnicity, physical or mental ability, or economic circumstance, you are invited into the full life and ministry of First Congregational Church of Lebanon, including its worship, sacraments, and rites.

Join us as we grow together in God's love.

First Congregational Church of Lebanon

The Rev. Stephen R. Silver, Pastor

Ernie Drown, Organist and Choir Director • Nancy Parsons, Church School Superintendent
Barbara Teeter, Chair of Deacons • Linda Jacobs, Chair of Church Council • Barbara Jones, Moderator
Brian Clancy, Church Administrator

Church Office Hours: Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, 9:00-12:00 (or by appointment as needed)
603-448-4281 • church@fccleb.org • prayer@fccleb.org • music@fccleb.org • www.fccleb.org