



First Congregational Church of Lebanon

United Church of Christ – Open and Affirming

The Second Sunday of Advent

December 6, 2020

“Into this world, this demented inn
in which there is absolutely no room for him at all,
Christ comes uninvited.”

–Thomas Merton

All hymns are included after the order of worship, on pages 6-8.

Prelude Andante and Presto, *Sonata in D*, BWV 41:D3 G. P. Telemann

Call to Worship (*Unison*; Psalm 85:8-13)

Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts. Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky. The LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase. Righteousness will go before him, and will make a path for his steps.

Hymn 478 (p. 6) *Hark! A Thrilling Voice Is Sounding* Merton

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

The Callahan Family

An Advent Reading

Isaiah 11:1-10. A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. ²The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. ³His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; ⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. ⁵Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

⁶The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. ⁷The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. ⁹They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

¹⁰On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

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 (vv. 1-2) 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@fcclb.org), and he'll get you set up and ready to go.

Children's Moment

Who likes to wake up early? Think about your answer. If you have to go to school or do an unpleasant job, you probably don't want to get up. But what if you need to leave to go on a special trip? Then things are different. This week, we're called to get ready by John, and to do so now. It may feel like he's rousting us to do that un-fun work, but we're actually getting ready for Jesus to come to us, and that means God's love and grace are coming to us. So, let's get up!

Scripture Lessons

Isaiah 40:1-11. Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. ²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

³A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. ⁴Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. ⁵Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

⁶A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. ⁷The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. ⁸The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever. ⁹Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" ¹⁰See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. ¹¹He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

Mark 1:1-8. The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

²As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way;

³the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'"

⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Sermon

"Good News" (See separate document)

Stephen R. Silver

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.

Finally, today we offer the following prayer:

Holy, forgiving Lord: we come to you this Advent season repenting of our sins. Whether we have transgressed in ways large or small, against you or your people, we know that we are in need of your pardon. Let us always remember that in Jesus, you have forgiven all your beloved children, including us. As we accept your gift of grace, let us forgive others, and by pursuing reconciliation and healing as your Son did, let us help with the building, the advent, of your kingdom here on earth.

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 Con Tenerezza, *Sonata in D*, TWV 41:D3 G. P. Telemann

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)

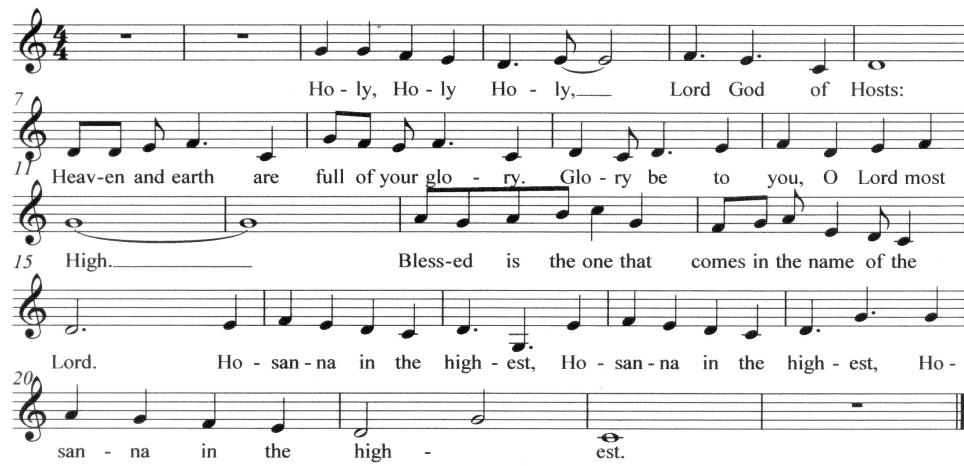
Ancient of Days, Author of Life, Eternal God: you have fashioned time, granting each of us a portion, trusting each of us to use this blessing faithfully. In gratitude for this precious gift and with renewed commitment to use it wisely on behalf of your Gospel, we present this morning's offering, praying in Jesus' name, Amen.

The Sacrament of Holy Communion

For communion, you are invited to have some bread and juice on hand. We will share in the bread and cup at the appointed time. If you would like to receive a blessing, please let the officiant know.

Invitation and Communion Prayer

Sanctus



Sharing of the Bread and Cup

Communion Prayer of Thanksgiving (*Unison*)

Because the broken bread has meant our healing, because the outpoured cup has meant our life, because our common sharing has meant the communion of our souls, and because we have here been graced by your presence, God, we give you thanks and pray that our lives may be renewed in the life and the love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hymn 104 (p. 8) *Comfort, Comfort Ye My People*

Psalm 42

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

Allegro, Sonata in D, TWV 41:D3

G. P. Telemann

Leading Worship This Week

The Rev. Stephen R. Silver, Pastor

Ernie Drown, Organist • Leslie Stroud, Traverso • Brian Clancy, Tenor

Linda Jacobs, 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@fcclb.org, or contact the church office or the Rev. Steve Silver directly.

Hark! A Thrilling Voice Is Sounding

1 Hark! A thrilling voice is sounding! "Christ is near," we
 2 Startled at the sol-emn warn-ing, from the dark-ness
 3 See, the Lamb so long ex-pect-ed comes with par-don
 4 so when next he comes in glo-ry and the world is
 5 Hon-or, glo-ry, might, do-min-ion to the Fa-ther

hear it say. "Cast a-way the works of dark-ness,
 we a-rise; Christ, our sun, all ill dis-pel-ling,
 down from heaven. Let us haste, with tears of sor-row,
 wrapped in fear, he will shield us with his mer-cy
 and the Son, with the ev-er-liv-ing Spir-it

all you chil-dren of the day!"
 shines up-on the morn-ing skies.
 one and all, to be for-given;
 and with words of love draw near.
 while e-ter-nal a-ges run.

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.

Comfort, Comfort Ye My People

Based on Isaiah 40:1-8

Johann Olearius, 1611-1684

Tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827-1878, all.

PSALM 42 8.7.8.7.7.8.8.

"Genevan Psalter," 1551

1 Com - fort, com - fort ye my peo - ple, Speak ye peace, thus saith our God;
 2 Hark, the voice of one that cri - eth In the des - ert far and near,
 3 Make ye straight what long was crook - ed, Make the rough - er pla - ces plain;

Com - fort those who sit in dark - ness Mourn - ing 'neath their sor - rows' load.
 Bid - ding all men to re - pent - ance Since the king - dom now is here.
 Let your hearts be true and hum - ble, As be - fits his ho - ly reign.

Speak ye to Je - ru - sa - lem Of the peace that waits for them;
 Oh, that warn - ing cry o - bey! Now pre - pare for God a way;
 For the glo - ry of the Lord Now o'er earth is shed a - broad;

Tell her that her sins I cov - er, And her war - fare now is o - ver.
 Let the val - leys rise to meet him And the hills bow down to greet him.
 And all flesh shall see the to - ken That his word is nev - er bro - ken. A - men



“Poinsettia Fund” for Advent and Christmas **TO BENEFIT THE OPEN DOOR MINISTRY**

Each year during Advent, our congregation offers poinsettias for the Sanctuary in honor or memory of their loved ones, a tradition that our current closure prevents. **While we will not be purchasing any actual plants this year, we still invite your dedications—along with a modest contribution to our Open Door Ministry for community assistance.**

If you would like to offer a dedication in honor or memory of someone, please complete this form and mail it to the church office, with a contribution (\$5 minimum, payable FCC, memo “Open Door Poinsettia Fund”). Dedications received by Thursday, December 17, will be listed in worship bulletins on Sunday, December 20, and Christmas Eve.

Given by _____ Contribution _____

In honor of _____

In memory of _____

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!

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.



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