



First Congregational Church of Lebanon

United Church of Christ – Open and Affirming

The Third Sunday of Advent

December 13, 2020

“To ask is to believe that somewhere there is an answer....
We ask not because we doubt but because we believe.”

—Jonathan Sacks

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

Prelude

Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme, BWV 645

J. S. Bach

Call to Worship (Unison; Psalm 126)

When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, “The LORD has done great things for them.” The LORD has done great things for us, and we rejoiced. Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like the watercourses in the Negeb. May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy. Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.

Hymn 115 (p. 6)

On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry

Winchester New

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

Juliet Steele, Stacey Steele, and Dominic Watson

An Advent Reading

Isaiah 35:1-10. The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus ²it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.

³Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. ⁴Say to those who are of a fearful heart, “Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.”

⁵Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; ⁶then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; ⁷the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

⁸A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God’s people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. ⁹No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. ¹⁰And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

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. 1-3) 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@fccleeb.org), and he’ll get you set up and ready to go.

Anthem

“Comfort Ye My People” and

“Every Valley Shall Be Exalted” (from *Messiah*)

G. F. Handel

Children’s Moment

Today you may have noticed that we lit a pink rather than a purple candle during our Advent Liturgy. That’s because today is Gaudete or Joy Sunday. During this time of preparation we take a break today to rejoice, to remember all we have to be happy for.

I hope you'll take a few minutes, before the day is over, to think about and give thanks for the things that make you glad. You'll be doing holy work, and I hope you'll feel some special joy.

Scripture Lessons

Isaiah 61:1-4,8-11. The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; ²to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; ³to provide for those who mourn in Zion— to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. ⁴They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. [...] ⁸For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. ⁹Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed. ¹⁰I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. ¹¹For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

John 1:6-8,19-28. ⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. [...]

¹⁹This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." ²¹And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." ²²Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" ²³He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said. ²⁴Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" ²⁶John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, ²⁷the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." ²⁸This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

Sermon “A Manifesto for Living” (See separate document) Stephen R. Silver

Hymn 103 (p. 8) Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus Stuttgart

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.

And on this day we also pray to you, God, asking for the faith and the strength to heed Paul’s words to the Thessalonians—to rejoice, to pray ceaselessly, to give thanks in all circumstances, to hold fast to what is good, and to turn away from every evil. Let us do this secure in the knowledge of the steadfastness of your Son, our Savior.

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 In Dulci Jubilo, BWV 741 J. S. Bach

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*)

Holy God, in gratitude for the community into which you have gathered us, with thanks for the grace you have shown us, and in response to the love with which you have embraced us, we present these gifts. Amen.

Hymn 106 (p. 9) *Prepare the Way, O Zion* Bereden väg för Herran

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 *A la Venue de Noël* C. Balbastre

* * *

Leading Worship This Week

The Rev. Stephen R. Silver, Pastor
Ernie Drown, Organist • Brian Clancy, Tenor
Walter Scott, 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.

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.

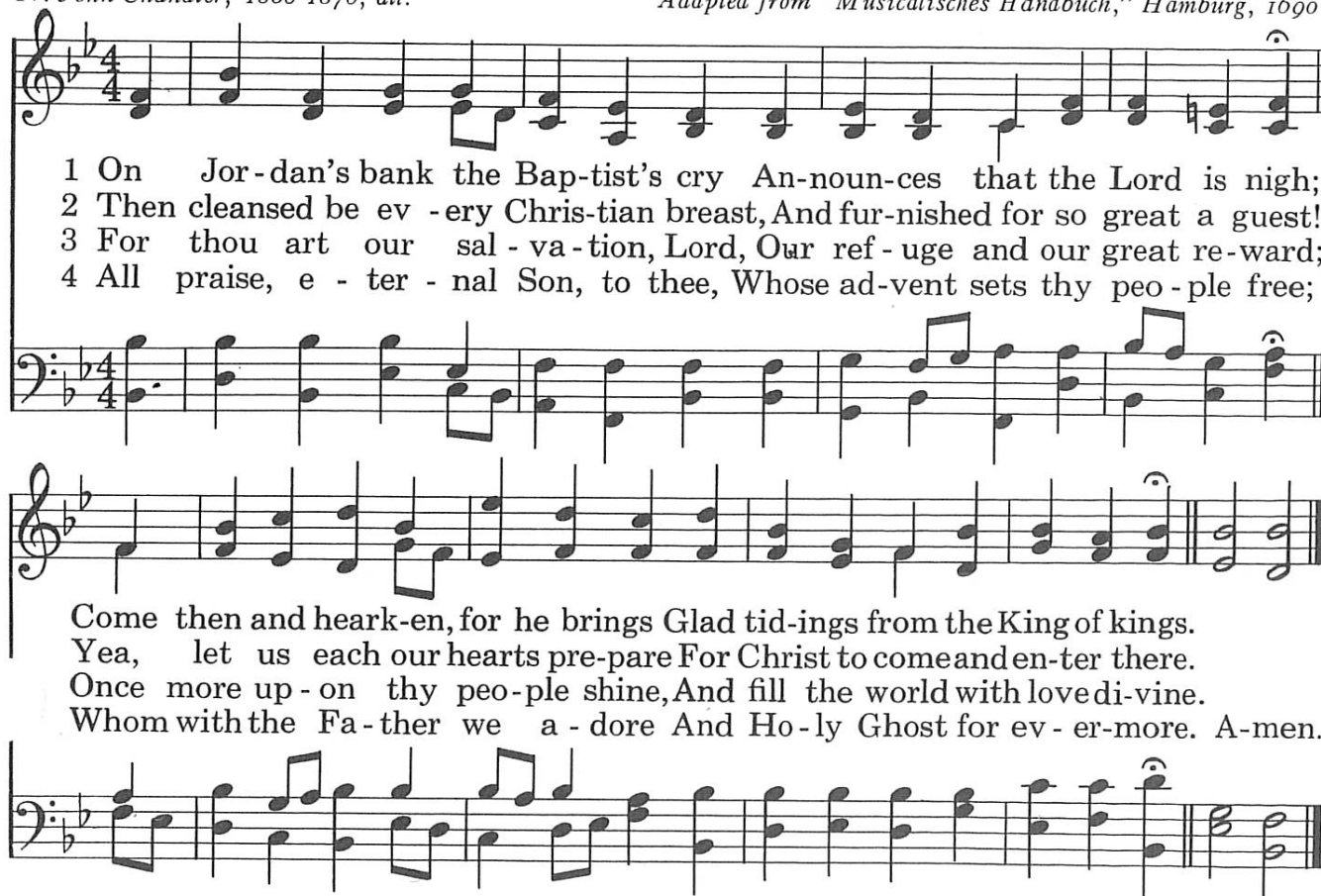
Please contribute as you're able to this vital denominational offering, either by check to FCC (memo "Christmas Fund") or online at www.pbucc.org/index.php/christmas-fund-home. Thanks!

On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry

115

Latin: Charles Coffin, 1676-1749
 Arr. John Chandler, 1806-1876, alt.

WINCHESTER NEW L.M.
 Adapted from "Musicalisches Handbuch," Hamburg, 1690



1 On Jor-dan's bank the Bap-tist's cry An-noun-ces that the Lord is nigh;
 2 Then cleansed be ev - ery Chris-tian breast, And fur-nished for so great a guest!
 3 For thou art our sal - va - tion, Lord, Our ref - uge and our great re - ward;
 4 All praise, e - ter - nal Son, to thee, Whose ad-vent sets thy peo - ple free;

Come then and heark-en, for he brings Glad tid-ings from the King of kings.
 Yea, let us each our hearts pre-pare For Christ to come and en-ter there.
 Once more up - on thy peo - ple shine, And fill the world with loved i - vine.
 Whom with the Fa - ther we a - dore And Ho - ly Ghost for ev - er - more. 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 _____

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

110

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.

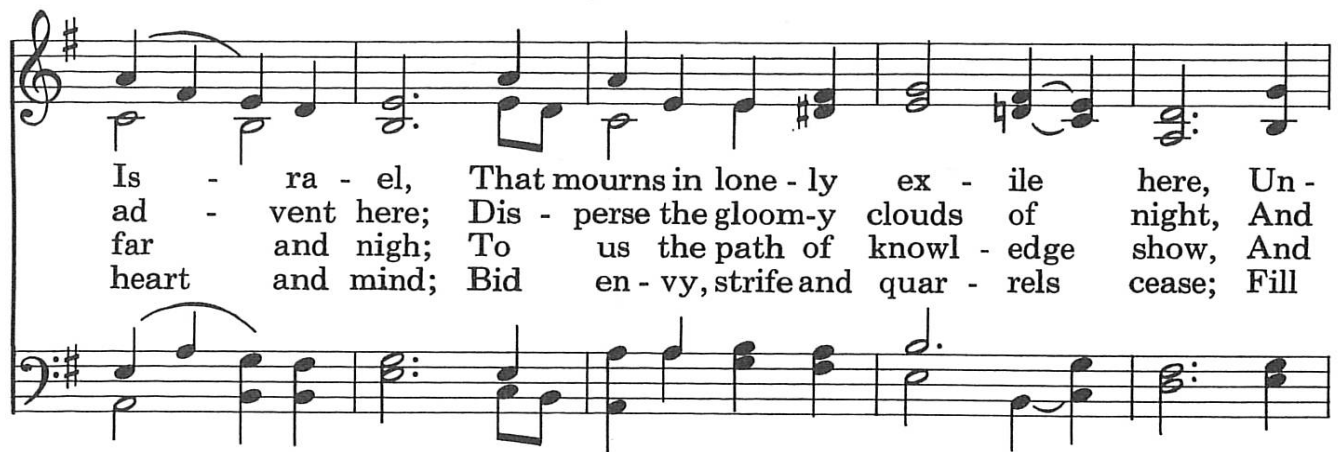
Adapted from Plainsong

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

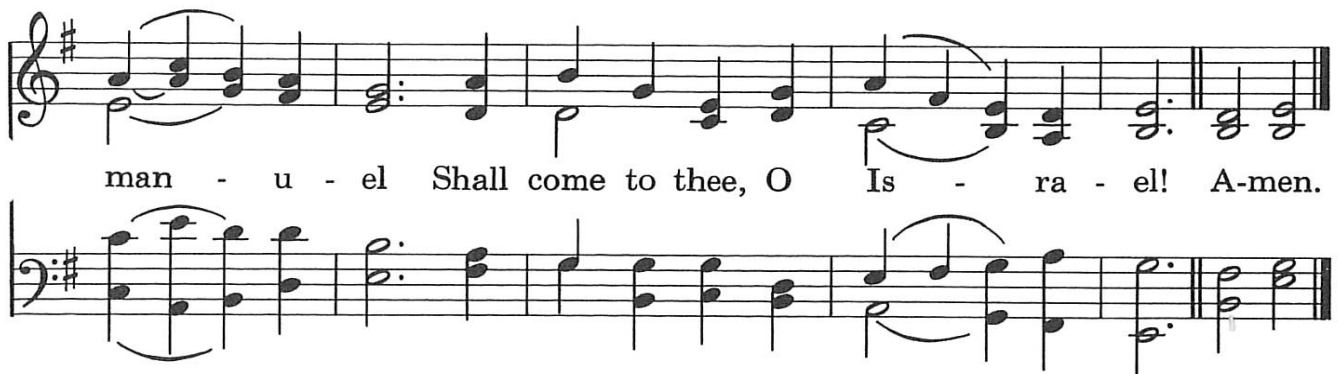


Is - ra - el, That mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here, Un -
 ad - vent here; Dis - perse the gloom-y clouds of night, And
 far and nigh; To us the path of knowl - edge show, And
 heart and mind; Bid en - vy, strife and quar - rels cease; Fill

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.

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

103

Charles Wesley, 1707-1788, *all.*

STUTTGART 8.7.8.7.
Melody attr. to Christian F. Witt, 1660-1716
"Psalmodia Sacra," Goltha, 1715

1 Come, thou long - ex - pect - ed Je - sus, Born to set thy peo - ple free;
2 Is - rael's strength and con - so - la - tion, Hope of all the earth thou art;
3 Born thy peo - ple to de - liv - er, Born a child, and yet a king,
4 By thine own e - ter - nal Spir - it Rule in all our hearts a - lone;

From our fears and sins re-lease us; Let us find our rest in thee.
Dear de-sire of ev-ery na-tion, Joy of ev-ery long-ing heart.
Born to reign in us for-ev-er, Now thy gra-cious king-dom bring.
By thine all-suf-fi-cient mer-it Raise us to thy glo-rious throne. A-men.

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)

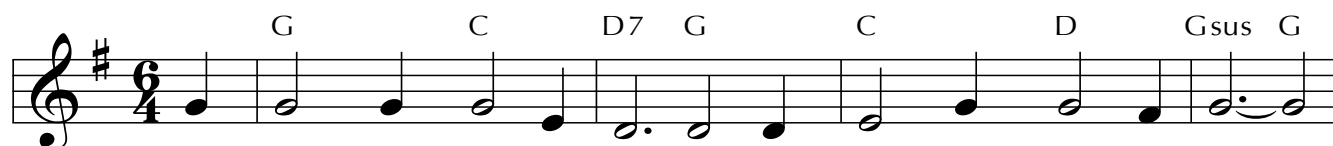
While today we do not believe that wealth is a sign of divine favor, each of us has been blessed with unmerited gifts that we may use in life. One way to describe this is *grace*—we haven't done anything to earn these blessings; God has given them to us. How we use them is our choice, and with it comes 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. Many, many thanks for the 30 pledges we have already received for 2021!

We will gratefully accept new pledges anytime in the coming weeks.

If you would like to use offering envelopes for 2021, you may pick up your boxed set (#1-25) at the church office during the week. Please call ahead to let us know you're coming.

Prepare the Way, O Zion 106



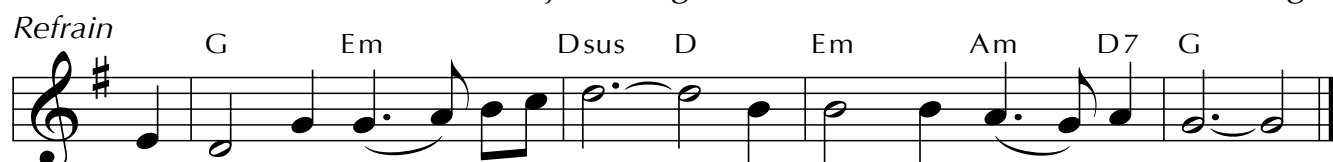
1 Pre - pare the way, O Zi - on, your Christ is draw-ing near!
 2 He brings God's rule, O Zi - on; he comes from heaven a - bove.
 3 Fling wide your gates, O Zi - on; your Sav - ior's rule em - brace,



Let ev - ery hill and val - ley a lev - el way ap - pear.
 His rule is peace and free - dom, and jus - tice, truth, and love.
 and ti - dings of sal - va - tion pro-claim in ev - ery place.



Greet One who comes in glo - ry, fore-told in sa - cred sto - ry.
 Lift high your praise re-sound-ing, for grace and joy a - bound-ing.
 All lands will bow re - joic - ing, their ad - o - ra - tion voic - ing.



O blest is Christ who came in God's most ho - ly name.

Guitar chords do not correspond with keyboard harmony.

This engaging Advent text based on Isaiah 40:3–5 and Psalm 24:7–10 has been in use in the Church of Sweden for almost two hundred years. It is set to a version of an even older Swedish tune, which in turn seems to be derived from a German folktune that spread to Scandinavia.

TEXT: Frans Mikael Franzen, 1812, rev. 1819; trans. Augustus Nelson, 1958;
 adapt. Charles P. Price, 1980, alt.
 MUSIC: *Then Svenska Psalmboken*, 1697; arr. *American Lutheran Hymnal*, 1930
 Text © 1982 Hope Publishing Company

BEREDEN VÄG FÖR HERRAN
 7.6.7.6.7.7 with refrain

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Please Note: CONTENT FOR THE 2020 ANNUAL REPORT DUE FRIDAY, JANUARY 8

Materials for FCC's 2020 Annual Report must be submitted to the Church Administrator by January 8, in order to ensure timely distribution of the report prior to our Annual Meeting.

If you're unsure whether you're responsible for a report, please contact the church office.

The 2021 Annual Meeting will be Sunday, February 14, 2021



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