



First Congregational Church of Lebanon

United Church of Christ – Open and Affirming

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 19, 2021

“...[T]hat is the wonder of all wonders, that God loves the lowly.... God is not ashamed of the lowliness of human beings. God marches right in. He chooses people as his instruments and performs his wonders where one would least expect them. God is near to lowliness; he loves the lost, the neglected, the unseemly, the excluded, the weak and broken.”

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Kindly silence cell phones and other devices during worship. All hymns are included on pages 5-8.

Prelude

Fuga sopra il Magnificat, BWV 733

Johann Sebastian Bach

Call to Worship

Psalm 80:1-7

Leader: Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock!

People: You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh. Stir up your might, and come to save us!

Leader: Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

People: O LORD God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?

Leader: You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in full measure.

People: You make us the scorn of our neighbors; our enemies laugh among themselves. Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

Hymn 105 (p. 5) *Hail to the Lord's Anointed*

Ellacombe

Prayer of Invocation

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

Presentation of the Advent Banner

An Advent Reading

Isaiah 7:10-16. ¹⁰Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. ¹²But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test. ¹³Then Isaiah said: “Hear then, O house of David!

Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? ¹⁴Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. ¹⁵He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

An Advent Litany

Leader: It is time to open our ears and open our eyes:

People: For God is giving us a sign!

Leader: It is time to open our hearts and open our minds:

People: For God is giving us a sign!

Leader: It matters not whether we are rich or poor:

People: God is giving us a sign!

Leader: It matters not whether we are male or female:

People: God is giving us a sign!

All: Let us ready ourselves to see the sign that the Lord has given us!

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, make ready our hearts for the arrival of the Light of the World.

Words of Welcome; Our Ministry and Mission

Anthem

Dixit Maria ad Angelum

Hans Leo Hassler

Mary said to the angel, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done to me according to thy word."

Children's Moment

Do you like to wait? It's not always easy to do, is it? Even when we know something good is about to happen, especially when we know something good is about to happen, we need to wait. Christmas is coming, and that's a good example. Sure, we'd like to get our presents, see loved ones, enjoy a good meal, and be in church, but we need to wait until the evening of the 24th. Christmas will not come early. We can't rush Jesus' arrival. We know it will come in a few days, but we need to wait, to show some patience. That can be hard, but I promise that practice in this area will pay off. And if you want this promise from a better source, I recommend you look to God, for God will deliver, but not until God is ready.

Scripture Lessons

Micah 5:2-5a. ²But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. ³Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. ⁴And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; ⁵and he shall be the one of peace[...].

Luke 1:39-55. ³⁹In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, ⁴⁰where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴²and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? ⁴⁴For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

⁴⁶And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. ⁵⁰His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. ⁵²He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; ⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. ⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Sermon "Promises You Can Count On"

Stephen R. Silver

Hymn 104 (p. 7) *Comfort, Comfort Ye My People*

Psalm 42

Sharing of Joys and Concerns; Pastoral Prayer

As we hold our community members in prayer, please exercise care and discretion when sharing. Help us keep our prayer list current by contacting the church office to add or remove names.

Today we offer our ongoing prayers for Pete, Lloyd, Arlene, Evelyn, Barbara, Greg, Larry, Edith, Jan, Eileen, James, Jimmy, Jean, Michelle, and Stephanie.

O God of the Advent: we await the birth of your Son, giving thanks for the miracle that will occur on Christmas Eve. At the same time, we give thanks for the birth of your Son, something that happened some 2,000 years ago. Bless this time of anticipation and remembrance, this time of being on the cusp, as we make ready for the birth of our Lord, who has lived, died, and risen for us and all the world. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

We pray this, and all the joys and concerns we hold in our hearts, in the name of your Son, our Savior. 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

Offertory

The Song of Mary

Richard Shephard

Doxology (*Unison*)

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

Prayer of Dedication (*Unison*)

Holy God, Lord of Life, you come to us in love, bringing hope, joy, and peace. We, though, are not ready. We are distracted from doing your work, caring for your people, avoiding that which you have called us to. Be with us during these final days of Advent, helping us to be always ready for the arrival of your Son, whose birth was a sign to the world of what you intended and wished. Let us be your agents of grace, with our gifts and our work. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Hymn 103 (p. 8)

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

Stuttgart

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 Étranger

Louis-Claude d'Aquin

* * *

Leading Worship This Week

The Rev. Stephen R. Silver, Pastor • Linda and Ike Jacobs, Liturgists
Ernie Drown, Organ/Piano • The FCC Choir

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If you wish to have a joy, concern, or prayer request lifted up in the service, or if you know of someone who may need special prayers, a card or phone call, or some other form of pastoral care, please email prayer@fccleeb.org or speak with Rev. Silver directly.

Hail to the Lord's Anointed, great David's greater Son!
Hail, in the time appointed, his reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression, to set the captive free,
To take away transgression, and rule in equity.

He comes with succor speedy to those who suffer wrong;
To help the poor and needy, and bid the weak be strong;
To give them songs for sighing, their darkness turn to light,
Whose souls, condemned and dying, were precious in his sight.

He shall come down like showers upon the fruitful earth;
And love, joy, hope, like flowers, spring in his path to birth.
Before him on the mountains shall peace, the herald, go;
And righteousness, in fountains, from hill to valley flow.

O'er every foe victorious, he on his throne shall rest,
From age to age more glorious, all-blessing and all-blest;
The tide of time shall never his covenant remove;
His name shall stand forever: that name to us is Love.



Music
at the
Meetinghouse

Upcoming Concerts

Masks, distanced seating, and proof of vaccination required.

UVMC Messiah Sing (Abridged)—Today, December 19, at 2:00

G. F. Handel's beloved oratorio in a reduced, covid-safe format, thanks to our neighbors at UVMC. Student soloists perform selected arias, and we'll enjoy a community sing of the Hallelujah chorus.

Cameo Baroque Concert for 19 Days of the Valley—Rescheduled for January 2022 (TBD)

As their annual effort in the Upper Valley Haven's "19 Days of the Valley" campaign, Ernie Drown and friends offer a program featuring G. F. Handel, Henry Purcell, G. P. Telemann, William Boyce, and others. *Free-will donation; more at cameoarts.org and uppervalleyhaven.org.*

The Anonymous Coffeehouse—Fridays, January 14 and 28, February 11 and 25, all 7:30

This highly popular venue for established and emerging musicians features several acoustic acts, and patrons may come and go as they please; baked goods and non-alcoholic drinks are available. And it's all free of charge, so please come and enjoy! *For more details, visit anoncoffee.org.*

THE CHRISTMAS FUND

We invite you to consider a donation 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!

My Heart Sings Out with Joyful Praise

106

Ruth Duck, 1985

Luke 1:46-55

A D A/E E7 A

1 My heart sings out with joy - ful praise to God who rais - es me,
 2 The arm of God is strong and just to scat - ter all the proud.
 3 The prom - ise made in a - ges past at last has come to be, -

A D A/E E7 A

Who came to me when I was low and changed my des - ti - ny.
 The ty - rants tum - ble from their thrones and van - ish like a cloud.
 for God has come in power to save, to set all peo - ple free.

E A D E7 A E

The Ho - ly One, the Liv - ing God, is al - ways full of grace
 The hun - gry all are sat - is - fied; the rich are sent a - way.
 Re - mem - bering those who wait to see sal - va - tion's dawn - ing day,

A D A/E E7 A

To those who seek their Mak - er's will in ev - ery time and place.
 The poor of earth who suf - fer long will wel - come God's new day.
 Our Sav - ior comes to all who weep to wipe their tears a - way.

The "Magnificat," a traditional text for evening prayer as well as Advent, is paraphrased here by Ruth Duck. She developed it to make the ancient rite of evening prayer available to her own worshipping communities.

Tune: MARIAS LOVSÅNG C.M.D.

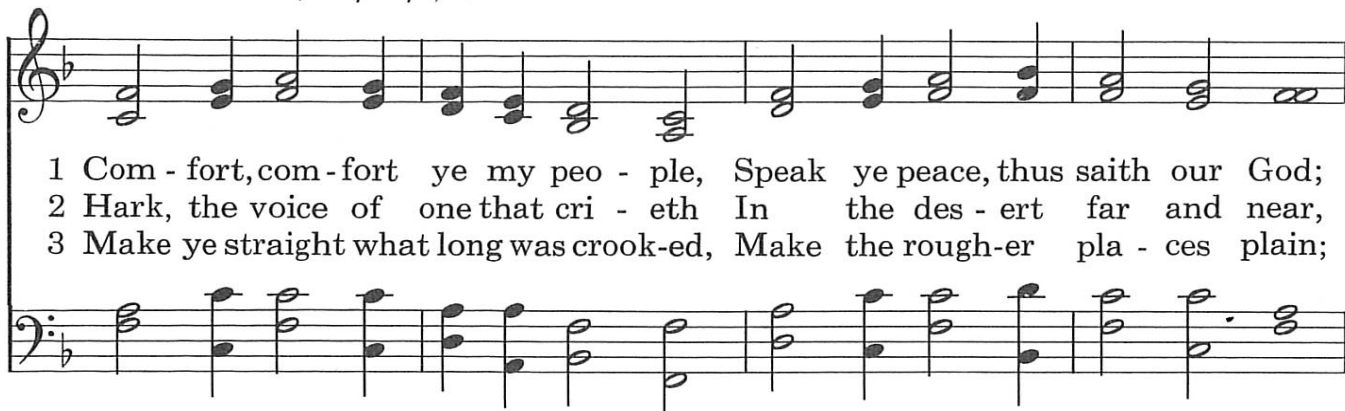
Swedish folk melody

Alternate tunes: ELLACOMBE, TALLIS' THIRD

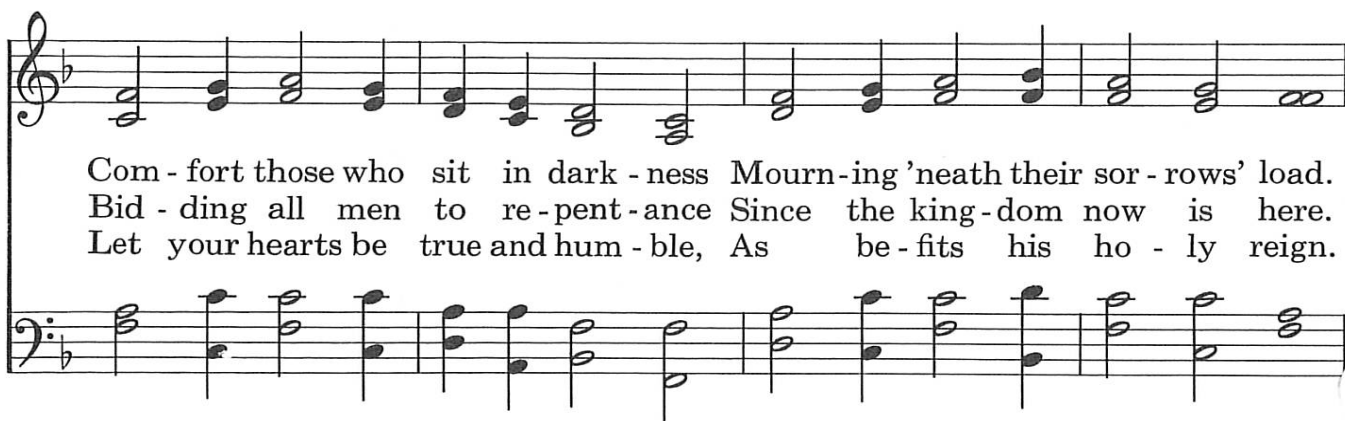
Comfort, Comfort Ye My People

*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


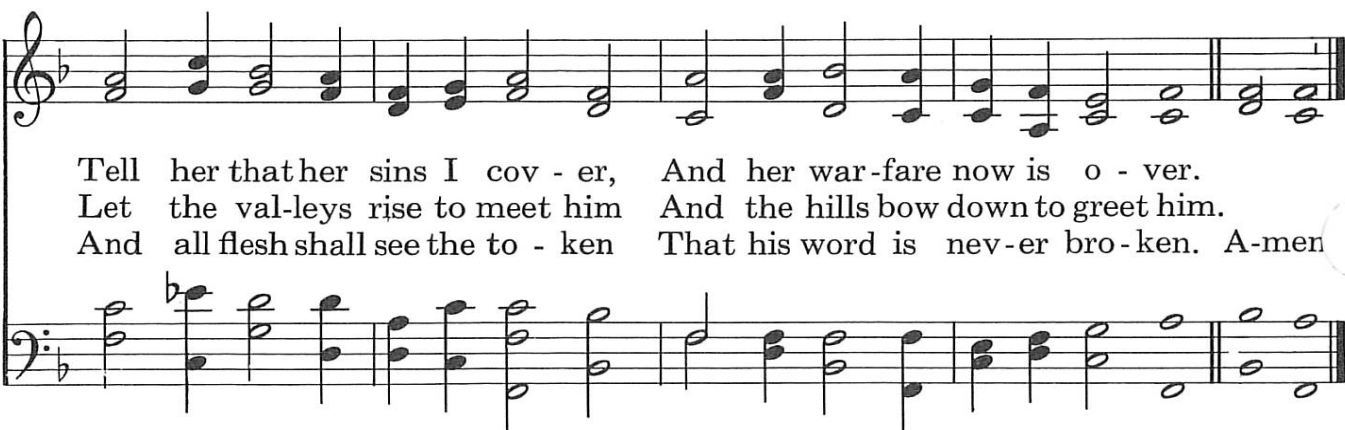
1 Com - fort, com - fort ye my peo - ple, Speak ye peace, thus saith our God;
 2 Hark, the voice of one that cri - eth In the des - ert far and near,
 3 Make ye straight what long was crook-ed, Make the rough-er pla - ces plain;



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

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

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Charles Wesley, 1707-1788, alt.

STUTTGART 8.7.8.7.
Melody attr. to Christian F. Wilt, 1660-1716
"Psalmodia Sacra," Gotha, 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.



CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES AT FCC

In the Sanctuary (masks and distancing required) and on Zoom

Family Service with Pageant, 5:00 PM—Our beloved service for families and the young-at-heart, once again in a live format! All are welcome to attend; if you or your children are interested in participating, please contact Nan Parsons at nlp3721@yahoo.com.

Service of Lessons and Carols, 8:00 PM—The story of Christ's birth in Scripture and traditional carols. Steve Silver will preach and our choir will sing, as we return to the Sanctuary for Christmas.

Giving From the Heart *Stewardship 2022*

"Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on." (Mark 12:43-44)

Many thanks for the 29 pledges we have already received for 2022! As you prayerfully consider a commitment to FCC's mission and ministry in the coming year, we will gratefully continue to accept pledges anytime in the coming weeks. Thank you for your support of our church!

Please either place your pledge form in the offering plate or return it to the church office by mail. If you'd like to use envelopes for 2022, you may pick up your boxed set (#1-25) in the Parish Hall.



Merry Christmas!

Many, many thanks to all those who generously offered contributions to our **OPEN DOOR MINISTRY** for community assistance, in honor or memory of their loved ones listed below.

IN HONOR OF...

Chip, Rachel, and Stephen Silver—*Anonymous*

Our children and grandchildren—*Kathy and Warren Belding*

Carolyn Bassett—*Trish and Todd Heatherton*

Ike's mother, Betty Adams; Ike's aunt, Terri Reese; and our dear friend Terry Grigsby—*Linda and Ike Jacobs*

The caring, kind, compassionate people of this church—*Barb Jones*

Des and Walter, Hannah and James, and our mothers, Phyllis and Kathy—*Deb and Jon Scott*

Our families and loved ones—*The Silver Family*

IN MEMORY OF...

My son Dan—*Ron Bailey*

My parents, Leta and Paul Fortmiller—*Lola Baldwin*

Family and friends who are no longer with us—*Kathy and Warren Belding*

Our parents, Dorothy and Roy Ford and Lula and Royal Bennett—*Virginia and Lloyd Bennett*

Sandy Driscoll—*Brian, DeAnn, Amy, Katie, and Grace*

Our parents—*Marcia Corkins and Pete Mason*

Our parents, Doris and George Danyew and Pat and Jim Ellison—*Alyson and Terry Ellison*

Our parents, Emily and Earle Pike and Ruth and Ralph Hammond—*Gloria and Phil Hammond*

Linda's family: Barbara and Maurice Sumner, Ruby Sumner, Betty Sumner King, Donna Lee King Castle, and Alicia Ann King; and Ike's dad, Raymond Adams—*Linda and Ike Jacobs*

Our fathers, Jim and Ken—*Deb and Jon Scott*

My parents, Florence and Clarence Shelnutt—*Jo Shelnutt*

Ruth Silver—*The Silver Family*

Our parents, Frances C. and Robert P. Richmond and Doris K. and Roscoe E. Stone—*Carol and Chuck Stone*



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, Children's Community Corner
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