



First Congregational Church of Lebanon

United Church of Christ – Open and Affirming

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 24, 2023

The nativity mystery, “conceived from the Holy Spirit and born from the Virgin Mary,” means that God became human, truly human, out of his own grace. The miracle of the existence of Jesus, his “climbing down of God,” is: Holy Spirit and Virgin Mary! Here is a human being, the Virgin Mary, and as he comes from God, Jesus comes also from this human being. “Born of the Virgin Mary” means a human origin for God. Jesus Christ is not only truly God, he is human like every one of us. He is human without limitation.

He is not only similar to us, he is like us.

–Karl Barth

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

Prelude Two Settings of *Vom Himmel hoch* Johann Pachelbel, Georg Böhm

Call to Worship Luke 1:46b-55 (The Magnificat)

One: My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

All: For he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

One: Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

All: His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

One: He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

All: He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;

One: He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

All: He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.

Hymn 119 (p. 5) *My Soul Gives Glory to My God*

Morning Song

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

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

All: For God is giving us a sign!

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

All: For God is giving us a sign!

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

All: For God is giving us a sign!

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

All: For God is giving us a sign! 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

The Song of Mary

Richard Shephard

Children's Moment

Today I'd like to talk about the crèche in front of our Sanctuary. You'll notice that there's no baby Jesus here. He'll arrive tonight. The three kings are also missing; they'll show up on Epiphany. So, while the crèche looks crowded, it is not complete, and the story is not finished. Each of us has a part in the unfolding Christian story, by living our lives as followers of Jesus. So, let's get on with writing this story.

Hymn 123 (p. 6)

Mary, Woman of the Promise

Quem Pastores

Scripture Lessons

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16. Now when the king was settled in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ²the king said to the prophet Nathan,

“See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent.” ³Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that you have in mind; for the Lord is with you.”

⁴But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: ⁵Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? ⁶I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. ⁷Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?” ⁸Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; ⁹and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. [...] ¹⁶Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

Luke 1:26-38. ²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” ³⁴Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” ³⁵The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God.” ³⁸Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

Sermon

“Some Thoughts About Mary”

Stephen R. Silver

Hymn 98 (p. 7)

To a Maid Whose Name Was Mary

Annunciation

Sharing of Joys and Concerns; Pastoral Prayer

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

Today we offer ongoing prayers for Pete, Arlene, Evelyn, Barbara, Gordon, Greg, Jan, Edith, Eileen, Waneta, Terry, Juanita, Dan, Travis, Garrett, Sue, Rick, Edward, Duane, Priscilla, Ron, Lauren, Brian, Micah, and Al.

O God of Advent, we have anticipated your arrival these past weeks, and we know that your arrival is imminent. Help us to live these last few hours before the nativity with joy and purpose, not wasting our time but using what you have given us purposefully. Let us, today and every day, be representative of the light you have brought into the world. We pray this, and all the joys and concerns we hold in our hearts, in the name of the Christ-child. 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.

Offertory *The Linden Tree Carol* German, arr. Reginald Jacques

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*)

Wondrous God, on this last Sunday of Advent, on this Christmas Eve, we recognize the gift we have received from you: Jesus. In gratitude, we now offer our gifts to your church, to help your people, to spread your word of love. In the name of the Christ-child we pray. Amen.

Hymn 105 (p. 8) *People, Look East* Besançon

Benediction

Postlude *Noël Étranger* Louis-Claude d'Aquin

* * *

Leading Worship This Week

The Rev. Stephen R. Silver, Pastor
Ernie Drown, Organ/Piano • The FCC Choir • Laurel Stavis, Liturgist
Chris Chase and Bob Ross, Ushers • Amy Driscoll, Zoom Greeter

My Soul Gives Glory to My God

119

Miriam Therese Winter, 1987

Luke 1:46b-55; 1 Sam. 2:1-10

1 My soul gives glo - ry to my God. My heart pours out its praise.
2 My God has done great things for me: yes, ho - ly is God's name.
3 From age to age, to all who fear, such mer - cy love im - parts,
4 Love casts the might-y from their thrones, pro-motes the in - se - cure,
5 Praise God, whose lov - ing cov - e - nant sup-ports those in dis - tress,

God lift - ed up my low - li - ness in man - y mar-vel-ous ways.
All peo - ple will de - clare me blessed, and bless - ings they shall claim.
dis - pens-ing jus-tice far and near, dis - miss - ing self - ish hearts.
leaves hun - gry spir-its sat - is - fied, the rich seem sud-den-ly poor.
re - mem-ber-ing past prom-is - es with pres - ent faith - ful - ness.

This New Testament canticle, with its mosaic of liberation motifs that proclaim the justice of God, is known as the "Magnificat," the opening word of its Latin translation.

Tune: MORNING SONG C.M.
Melody from Kentucky Harmony, 1816
Harm. C. Winfred Douglas, 1940



CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES AT FCC

In the Sanctuary and on Zoom

Family Service with Pageant, 5:00 PM—Our beloved service for families and the young-at-heart, with a nativity pageant and living creche! All are welcome to attend; if you or your children are interested in participating, please contact Rachel Silver at rachelsilver@live.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 gather at the manger together.


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.

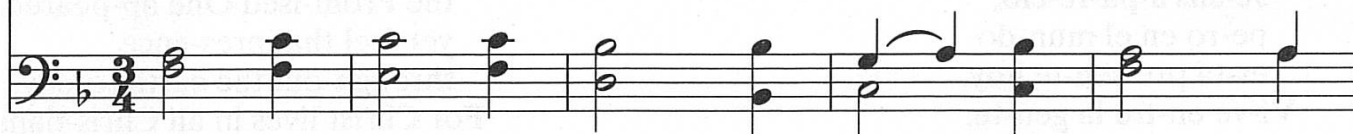
Please contribute as you're able to this vital denominational offering, either by check to FCC (memo "Christmas Fund") or online at www.pbucc.org/index.php/christmas-fund-home. Thanks!

Luke 1:39-55


Mary Frances Fleischaker, 1988



1 Mar - y; wom - an of the prom - ise; ves - sel
 2 Mar - y, song of ho - ly wis - dom sung be -
 3 Mar - y, morn - ing star of jus - tice; mir - ror
 4 Mar - y, mod - el of com - pas - sion; wound - ed
 5 Mar - y, wom - an of the gos - pel; hum - ble




of your peo - ple's dreams: Through your o - pen,
 fore the world be - gan: Faith - ful to the
 of the Ra - diant Light: In the shad - ows
 by your off - spring's pain: When our hearts are
 home for trea - sured seed: Help us to be

will - ing spir - it wa - ters of God's good - ness streamed.
 Word with - in you, as you bore God's won - drous plan.
 of life's jour - ney, be a bea - con for our sight.
 torn by sor - row, teach us how to love a - gain.
 true dis - ci - ples, bear - ing fruit in word and deed.

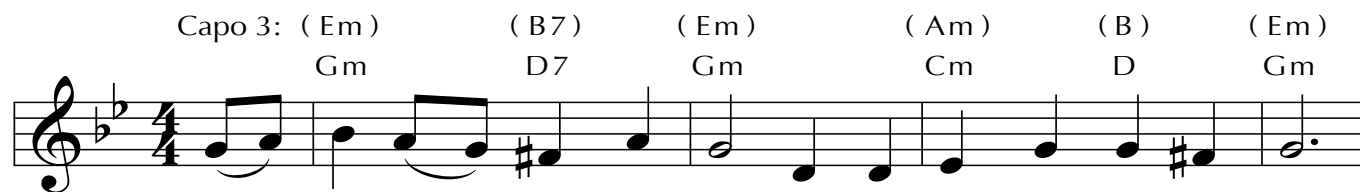


This text, selected as the winner in a regional Hymn Society competition seeking contemporary Marian hymns, portrays Mary's many roles in fulfilling God's promise. The author is an Adrian Dominican sister whose ministry has focused on worship and the arts.

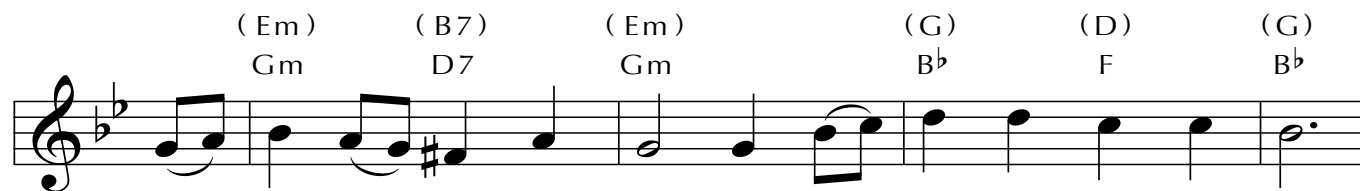
Tune: QUEM PASTORES 8.7.8.7.
 German carol, 14th century
 Harm. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1906

Harmonization Copyright ©, Oxford University Press. From *The English Hymnal* 1906.

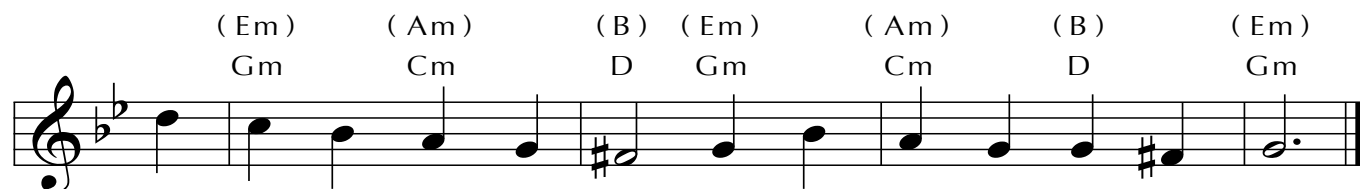
98 To a Maid Whose Name Was Mary



1 To a maid whose name was Mar - y, the an - gel Ga-briel came.
 2 "For you are high - ly fa - vored by God the Lord of all,
 3 But Mar-y was most trou-bled to hear the an-gel's word.
 4 "Fear not, for God is with you, and you shall bear a child.
 5 "How shall this be?" said Mar - y, "I am not yet a wife."
 6 As Mar-y heard the an - gel, she won-dered at his words.



"Fear not," the an - gel told her, "I come to bring good news;
 who e - ven now is with you. You are on earth most blest;
 What was the an - gel say - ing? It trou-bled her to hear,
 His name shall be called Je - sus, God's off-spring from on high.
 The an - gel an-swered quick - ly, "The power of the Most High
 "Be - hold, I am your hand-maid," she said un - to her God.



good news I come to tell you, good news, I say, good news."
 you are most blest, most bless - ed; God chose you, you are blest!"
 to hear the an - gel's mes - sage, it trou-bled her to hear.
 And he shall reign for - ev - er, for - ev - er reign on high."
 will come up - on you short - ly, your child shall be God's child."
 "So be it; I am read - y ac - cord - ing to your word."

This 20th-century ballad-like retelling of the Annunciation (Luke 1:26–38) displays many characteristics of a folksong style, especially repetition in both text and tune and short quotations included in the narrative. Such features help to make a song both memorable and singable.

98

TEXT: Gracia Grindal, 1982, alt.
 MUSIC: Rusty Edwards, 1982
 Text and Music © 1984 Hope Publishing Company

ANNUNCIATION
 7.6.7.6.7.6

This text was written to provide a new Advent text for an existing carol tune, here named for the city in eastern France where it originated. The author has imaginatively expressed the cosmic implications of Christ's coming by addressing each stanza to a part of creation.

105

TEXT: Eleanor Farjeon, 1928, alt.
 MUSIC: French folk melody; harm. Martin Shaw, 1928
 Text © 1960 David Higham Associates, Ltd.
 Music Harm. © 1928 Oxford University Press

BESANÇON
 8.7.9.8.8.7

1 Peo - ple, look east. The time is near of the
 2 Fur - rows, be glad. Though earth is bare, one more
 3 Birds, though you long have ceased to build, guard the
 4 Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim one more
 5 An - gels, an - nounce with shouts of mirth Christ who

crown - ing of the year. Make your house fair as you are
 seed is plant - ed there. Give up your strength the seed to
 nest that must be filled. E - ven the hour when wings are
 light the bowl shall brim, shin - ing be - yond the frost - y
 brings new life to earth. Set ev - ery peak and val - ley

Peo - ple, look

a - ble; trim the hearth and set the ta - ble.
 nour - ish, that in course the flower may flour - ish.
 fro - zen God for fledg - ing time has cho - sen.
 weath - er, bright as sun and moon to - geth - er.
 hum - ming with the word, the Lord is com - ing.

east and sing to - day:

Peo - ple, look east:

Love, the Guest, is on the way.
 Love, the Rose, is on the way.
 Love, the Bird, is on the way.
 Love, the Star, is on the way.
 Love, the Lord, is on the way.

Peo - ple, look east: (Love is on the way.)



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...

DeAnn/Mom/Mema—*Brian, Amy, Katie, and Grace*

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

Des and Walter, Hannah and James, Aunti Em, Grandma Kathy, and Gg—*Deb and Jon Scott*

JoAnn and Alan Smith—*Rachel, Steve, and Chip Silver*

IN MEMORY OF...

My aunt Gloria—*Ron Bailey*

Charles E. Baldwin III—*Lola Baldwin*

Family and friends who have passed on—*Kathy and Warren Belding*

Sandy Driscoll, Bill Driscoll, and Maury Clancy—*Brian, DeAnn, Amy, Katie, and Grace*

Our parents—*Marcia Corkins and Pete Mason*

Jean Gerlach, Elsa and Ben Hopkins, and Izetta and Ted Hopkins—*Linda and Bob Gerlach*

Gloria P. Hammond—*Philip Hammond*

Laura and Gordon "Doc" Place—*Sue and Ken Gould and Family*

Linda's parents, Barbara and Maurice Sumner; Linda's grammy, Ruby Sumner; Linda's aunt, Betty Sumner King; Ike's dad, Raymond Adams; and dear friends, loved and missed: Betty and Ellis Howard, Laura and Doc Place, Helen Smith, and Gracie Morse—*Linda and Ike Jacobs*

Marilyn—*Pete Mason*

My parents, the Rev. A. Bertram Miller and Mary Margaret Miller—*Elizabeth Nestler*

Grandpas Jim, Roger, and Ken—*Deb and Jon Scott*

Ruth and S. F. Silver, and Moms—*Steve, Rachel, and Chip Silver*

Ginger—*Wendell Smith*

Frances and Robert Richmond, Doris and Roscoe Stone, and the Rev. Norman and Doris Dubie—*Carol and Chuck Stone*



First Congregational Church of Lebanon

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Lebanon NH 03766

Weekly Worship Resources Enclosed!

DATED MATERIAL—Please Deliver Promptly

Do you use email? Contact church@fcclleb.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 • Brian Clancy, Church Administrator

Jon Scott, Chair of Church Council • Linda Gerlach, Chair of Deacons • Barbara Jones, Moderator

Church Office Hours: Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, 9:00-12:00 (or by appointment as needed)

603-448-4281 • church@fcclleb.org • prayer@fcclleb.org • music@fcclleb.org • www.fcclleb.org