

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.

An Advent Litany

One: Let all Creation rejoice!

All: Our God is coming!

One: The prophet tells those who fear: Be not afraid!

All: Our God is coming to save us!

One: Our Lord has shown us the way.

All: He will not let any of us go astray.

One: Those who are lost will be found. Those who mourn will be comforted.

All: Let us ready ourselves to see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God!

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

Musical Offering "Mein Freund ist mein," Cantata BWV 140 (*Wachet auf...*) J. S. Bach

This duet imagines a dialogue between the Soul and Jesus: "[S:] My friend is mine, [J:] And I am yours. [Both:] Nothing shall divide our love. [S:] I want to graze on Heaven's roses with you. [J:] You shall graze on Heaven's roses with me. [Both:] There shall be fullness of joy, there shall be delight."

Children's Moment

If you notice details, you might be asking, "What's going on with the pink candle today?" Today, we light a pink candle, and we do so for a reason. Today is *Gaudete Sunday*. *Gaudete* is the Latin word for "rejoice." Advent is a season of anticipation and preparation, a time of seriousness, which was especially true in the early Church. Today is a break of sorts, a chance to rejoice, to be happy, to cut loose—and why not? We are getting ready for the arrival of the Baby Jesus, and that is ultimately a reason for us to rejoice.

Scripture Lessons

Zephaniah 3:14-20. ¹⁴Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! ¹⁵The Lord has taken away the judgments against you, he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. ¹⁶On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. ¹⁷The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing ¹⁸as on a day of festival. I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. ¹⁹I will deal with all your oppressors at that time. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. ²⁰At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the Lord.

Luke 3:7-20. ⁷John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ⁹Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

¹⁰And the crowds asked him, “What then should we do?” ¹¹In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.” ¹²Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?” ¹³He said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” ¹⁴Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what should we do?” He said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.”

¹⁵As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

¹⁸So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people. ¹⁹But Herod the ruler, who had been rebuked by him because of Herodias, his brother’s wife, and because of all the evil things that Herod had done, ²⁰added to them all by shutting up John in prison.

Sermon

“Let’s Get Happy”

Stephen R. Silver

Hymn 112 (p. 7)

Ah! Think Not the Lord Delayeth

Alles is an Gottes Segen

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 our ongoing prayers for Pete, Marcia, Arlene, Evelyn, Greg, Jan, Edith, Eileen, Waneta, Terry, Juanita, Dan, Travis, Garrett, Sue, Rick, Edward, Priscilla, Ron, Lauren, Brian, Micah, Al, Steve, Denzil, Jacobe, Reg, Chris, and Deserai.

O Holy God, we wait. We anticipate. We fret. And, we seek... you. We seek joy. Fulfillment. Reconciliation. Things unavailable in an ad, things that are not marketed to us. Oh yes, we see the temptation, we respond to it. But we know, in this season of Advent, that we will receive in Jesus all that we truly need.

Help us to stay on your path, to follow the way of Jesus, who still reaches out to us, just as he sought out the people of 2,000 years ago. Prepare us for the birth of the Christ child, the one who came to us, is coming, and—we profess—will come again.

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

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 Rose and the Lily* Alec Rowley

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, 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. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Hymn 163 (p. 8) *Wild and Lone the Prophet's Voice* Aberystwyth

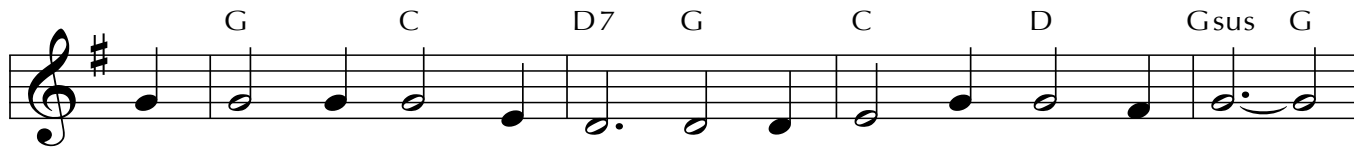
Benediction

Postlude *Noël Étranger* Louis-Claude d'Aquin

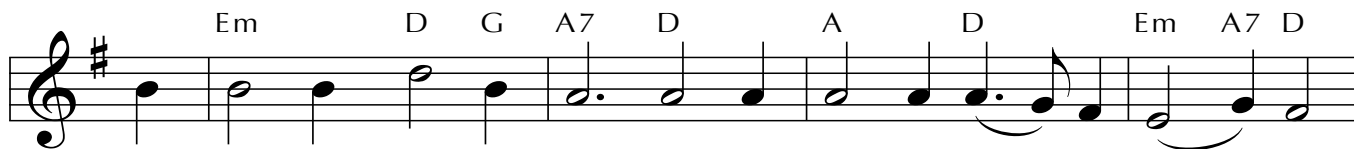
Prepare the Way, O Zion 106



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

* * *

Leading Worship This Week

The Rev. Stephen R. Silver, Pastor

Ernie Drown, Organ/Piano • The FCC Choir • Brian Clancy, Liturgist
 Carol and Chuck Stone, Ushers • Barb Jones, Zoom Greeter

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@fccleb.org or speak with Rev. Silver directly.

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.

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. Re - joice! Re - joice! Em -
cause us in her ways to go.
the whole world with heav - en's peace.

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

Ah! Think Not the Lord Delayeth

112

Percy Dearmer, 1867-1936

ALLES IST AN GOTTES SEGEN 8.8.7.D.

Attr. to J.B. König, 1691-1758

“Harmonischer Lieder-Schatz,” 1738

1 Ah! think not the Lord de - lay - eth; “I am with you,” still he say - eth,
2 For e’en now the reign of heav - en Spreads through-out the world like leav - en,
3 Not for us to find the rea - sons, Or to know the times and sea - sons,

“Do you yet not un - der - stand?” Look not back, the past re - gret - ting;
Un - ob - served, and ver - y near, Like the seed when no man know - eth,
Comes the Lord when strikes the hour; Ours to bear the faith - ful wit - ness

On the dawn your hearts be set - ting; Rise, and join the Lord’s com - mand.
Like the shel - tering tree that grow - eth, Comes the life e - ter - nal here.
Which can shape the world to fit - ness, Thine, O God, to give the power. A - men.

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It consists of three systems, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment line (bass clef). The lyrics are placed between the vocal and piano lines.



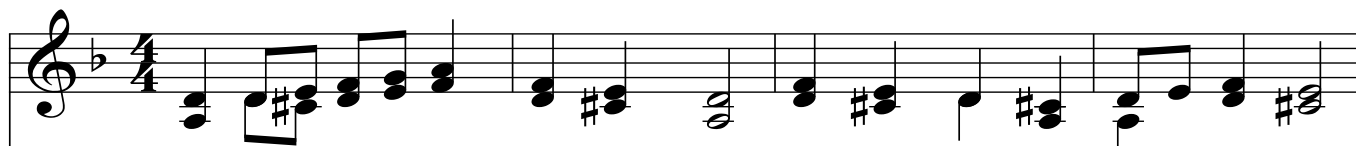
CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES AT FCC

In the Sanctuary and on Zoom

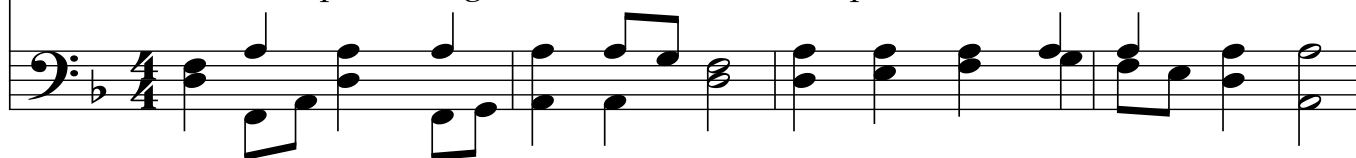
Family Service with Pageant, 5:00 PM—Our beloved service for families and the young-at-heart, with a nativity pageant and living creche! All are welcome to attend; if you or your children are interested in participating, please contact Rachel Silver at rachelsilver@live.com.

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.

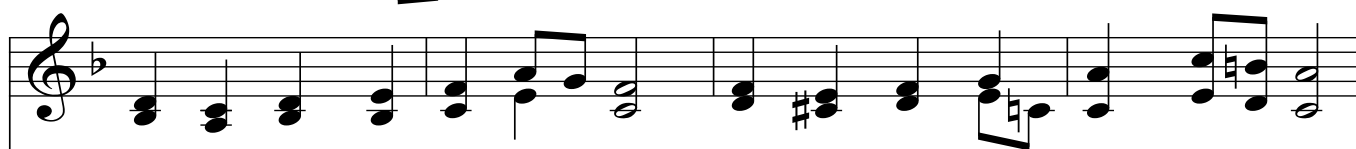
163 Wild and Lone the Prophet's Voice



1 Wild and lone the proph-et's voice ech-oes through the des - ert still,
2 "Bear the fruit re - pen-tance sows: lives of jus - tice, truth, and love.
3 With such preach-ing, stark and bold, John pro-claimed sal - va - tion near,



call - ing us to make a choice, bid - ding us to do God's will:
Trust no oth - er claim than those; set your heart on things a - bove.
and his time-less warn-ings hold words of hope to all who hear.



"Turn from sin and be bap-tized; cleanse your heart and mind and soul.
Soon the Lord will come in power, burn-ing clean the thresh-ing floor:
So we dare to jour - ney on, led by faith through ways un - trod,



Quit-ting all the sins you prized, yield your life to God's con - trol.
then will flames the chaff de - vour; wheat a - lone shall fill God's store."
till we come at last like John to be - hold the Lamb of God.



While all four gospels identify John the Baptist with the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3, this text (well set to a vigorous Welsh tune) draws on the report of his preaching in Matthew 3:1–12. The final lines recall that he was the first to name Jesus "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29, 36).

The Longest Night—Ecumenical Blue Christmas Service at LUMC

This Friday, December 20, at 5:00 pm, Lebanon United Methodist Church

Candlelight Vigil and Memorial for the Homeless—Friday at 5:30, WRJ

All are invited to gather this Friday in the LISTEN parking lot in White River Junction to remember all those in our community whose lives have been cut short by homelessness in the past year.



Music
at the
Meetinghouse

UPCOMING CONCERTS

All in the FCC Sanctuary

Bel Canto Chamber Singers: In Dulci Jubilo—Sat., Dec. 14, 7:30 pm / Sun., Dec. 15, 4:00 pm

Bel Canto celebrates the winter season with music for choir, strings, and piano—Antonio Vivaldi's *Magnificat*, pieces by Ola Gjeilo and Eric Whitacre, and settings of traditional English, Spanish, German, and Nigerian carols. Admission by donation (\$15 suggested); more at belcantosingers.org.

Upper Valley Music Center Messiah Sing!—Sunday, December 22, at 3:00 pm

Organized by UVMC's voice faculty and directed by Mark Nelson, this annual performance of G. F. Handel's beloved oratorio features student soloists and chamber orchestra. All are welcome to join the chorus (scores are available!) or just listen. Free-will donation (\$20 suggested); more at uvmusic.org.

The Anonymous Coffeehouse—Fridays, Jan. 3, 17, and 31 (etc.), all at 7:30 pm

Our comfy community venue for live folk music continues its fifth season! Come and go as you please; food and drink available. Free admission. For performers and more, 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!

Doing What Is Right and Just *Many Thanks for Your 2025 Stewardship Pledges*

"To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice." —Proverbs 21:3

All are invited to prayerfully consider their commitment to FCC's mission and ministry in the coming year. We'll gratefully accept your 2025 pledges anytime in the coming weeks. Thank you!

Please either place your pledge form in the offering plate or return it to the church office by mail.

Box sets (#1-20) of offering envelopes for 2025 are available in the Parish Hall.



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@fcclieb.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@fcclieb.org • prayer@fcclieb.org • music@fcclieb.org • www.fcclieb.org