

*First Congregational Church
Our Church in Worship
Blue Christmas Service*

December 13, 2021 7:00 PM

PRELUDE *Away in a Manger* – arr. Joel Raney Adam Peithmann

WORDS OF WELCOME Rev. Barbara Papagian

CALL TO WORSHIP (RESPONSIVE)

Leader: All around us, lights are lit, and carols play. The season heaps joy upon us.

People: Yet we who come here, we carry more than joy; we carry loss, worry, grief and pain.

Leader: We come weary, seeking rest from expectations. We seek a holy presence to be with us.

All: We come to this place, by the resilient grace of God; love that never let's go.

OPENING HYMN # 165 *Once in Royal David's City*

OPENING PRAYER (UNISON) Rev. Carolyn Keilig

**We gather this night, to remember...those who have touched our lives, glad memories and happy stories and love that we hold dear.
We gather in the name of Jesus, vulnerable as an infant, joyful and happy as a youth, wise and caring as an adult.
We gather in the presence of God, who brings life and light to all.
All life is precious in God's sight. No one is ever alone or forgotten.
Come, let us gather in the Spirit of hope and peace.
We worship, in the name of joy and love. Amen.**

SCRIPTURE READINGS OF COMFORT:

Thoughts on love, comfort, and joy, based on Isaiah 40:27-31 Lucia Carlisle

John 14:26-27

Becki Krueger

“But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”

MEDITATION

CEREMONY OF COMMEMORATION

Rev. B: We light a candle in memory of those who gave us birth, who nurtured us, offered love and cherished us.

Rev. C: *We remember mothers and fathers, guardians, and grandparents, and all our family through the ages.*

Rev. B: We light a candle in memory of those who have been joined to us in the great circle of family.

Rev. C: *We remember sisters and brothers, aunts, uncles, and cousins, those near to us and far away.*

Rev. B: We light a candle in memory of those who have left us before we expected, those we hold dear, and with whom we still walk in our dreams.

Rev. C: *We remember children and grandchildren, those who leaped within the womb and who danced upon the earth.*

Rev. B: We light a candle in memory of those whom we came to know through the eyes of love. We hold sacred the faces and memories of years past, of those who brightened our days and lit up our lives.

Rev. C: *We remember husbands and wives, dearest loves, and closest friends, who changed our lives forever.*

Rev. B: We light a candle in memory of those who shared in our lives in many ways, who worked with us and made our lives more enjoyable.

Rev. C: *We remember friends and neighbors.*

Rev. B: We light a candle for those we do not know, O God, who, like us, have suffered loss, who live with grief, who long for peace and justice, who long for friendship and healing.

Rev. C: *We remember your people, of every time and place.*

Rev. B: Finally, we leave one candle unlit, mindful of the great truth of this life, that in the fullness of time we, too, will join our loved ones in a realm without sorrow and pain, in the company of Unending Love.

Rev. C: *For these and all your children we give thanks for life, hope and courage. Amen.*

PRAYER (UNISON)

**God of hope and joy, you prepare our hearts for renewal.
You till the soil of our lives and nurture small shoots of possibility.
Even when we are unsure, you repeat your promise:
I will never leave you.
Open us, Holy one, to your promise.
Hold us in your care.
Strengthen us for your future.
Guide us in anticipation and faith. Amen.**

HYMN # 636

Abide with Me

CLOSING WORDS

BENEDICTION

May the power and the mystery go before us, to show us the way,
Shine above us to lighten our world,
Lie beneath us to bear us up,
Walk with us and give us companionship,
And glow and flow within us to bring us joy.
Go in peace.

First Congregational Church

United Church of Christ

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You are welcome here! • We are an Open & Affirming Congregation