

*First Congregational Church*  
*Our Church in Worship*

December 19, 2021 10:00 AM

Fourth Sunday in Advent

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PRELUDE *Wake, Awake For Night is Flying* – J. S. Bach Adam Peithmann

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS Rev. Barbara Papagian

LIGHTING THE FOURTH ADVENT CANDLE *The Candle of Mystery* Lisa Allen

Reader: As we come to the last Sunday of Advent, we recall the many times we have been here before, reopening our hearts to the mystery of God's coming in ways that continue to surprise us.

**People: In a world where even evergreens turn dry and brittle, God's promises are a reality on which we can rely.**

Reader: It is a mystery that God always chooses the smallest, the youngest, the weak and the unknown. God chose an unknown unmarried young woman, who said yes to bearing God into this world. God chose her cousin who waited a long time for the fulfillment of promises to bring forth blessings.

**People: It is a mystery that God chooses us - the nobodies, the powerless, the weak of the world - to bring good news for the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, and proclaim that Christ is here, among us, now, and still we wait for the reign of Christ to break forth anew in our world and in our lives.**

Reader: Through acts as simple and common as the birth of a baby, God transforms the world. It is that promise that brings light to our deepest night. We light the fourth candle in eager anticipation of God's greatest promise fulfilled as we are surrounded by the awesome mystery of God.  
(the candle is lit)

**ALL: It is a mystery, O God, whenever something new breaks forth within us! As the time of the Messiah's birth approaches, we pray that your Holy Spirit will come upon us. Even as Jesus was born into the world, be born again in us, that we might help give flesh to that realm of justice and compassion that will have no end. Come, Lord Jesus, Come! Amen.**

ADVENT WREATH SONG *He Came Down*

He came down that we may have light; hallelujah forevermore.  
(the soloist sings first and then the congregation repeats)

CALL TO WORSHIP (Responsive)

Rev. Barbara Papagian

Leader: We come to glorify God and to rejoice in the One who comes to us.

**People: God comes, so we might believe, so we might be blessed and be a blessing to others.**

Leader: Our hearts leap for joy! For God is coming to us in a child and we shall live secure in God's care.

**People: Holy is the One who comes in God's name, who fulfills every promise of God.**

OPENING PRAYER (Unison)

**O God of majesty and joy, with our hearts rejoicing in your presence, we give you thanks and praise, for you are the fulfillment of our searching. Since the time when you created all things, you have had a plan, hidden in mystery through the ages, to draw all the world into one body, and to share with all peoples your promise of glory. For this light shining in our lives, for this mystery made known, with our hearts lifted high we come into your presence and wait to meet the Messiah once again. Amen.**

\*OPENING HYMN NO. 144

*O Little Town of Bethlehem*

MESSAGE FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART

*Who Done It?*

Rev. Carolyn Keilig

PASTORAL PRAYER

OUR PRAYER CONCERNS

SILENT MEDITATION

OUR 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.**

MUSICAL OFFERING *Jesus, the Light of the World* – G. D. Elderkin/C. Wesley Bridget Thornton, soloist

Hark! The herald angels sing. Jesus, the light of the world. Glory to the newborn King, Jesus the light of the world.

Refrain: We'll walk in the light, beautiful light. Come where the dewdrops of mercy shine bright. O, shine all around us by day and by night. Jesus, the light of the world.

Joyful all you nations rise...Join the triumph of the skies...(Refrain)

Christ by highest heaven adored...Christ, the everlasting Lord;...(Refrain)

Hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace!...Hail, the Sun of righteousness!...(Refrain)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Ellie Stetson

Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:39-45

SERMON

*Promise Fulfilled*

Rev. Carolyn Keilig

\*CLOSING HYMN NO. 143

*Joy to the World*

BENEDICTION (Responsive)

Leader: Go now, with your hope in God's mercy for all God has promised you will be fulfilled.

**People: We leave to go out into the world, trusting in God's strength for our security and willing to walk the ways of peace.**

Leader: And may God our Savior look with favor upon you; May Christ Jesus use his wonderful power for you; and may the Holy Spirit leap joyously with you and pour forth from you in songs of praise.

**People: We go in peace to love and serve the Lord, Amen.**

POSTLUDE

*Praeludium in C – Dieterich Buxtehude*

\*You are invited to stand if you wish.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

**Micah 5:2-5a**

But 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. Therefore 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. And 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; and he shall be the one of peace.

**Luke 1:39-45**

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

**First Congregational Church**

United Church of Christ

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