

First Congregational Church
Our Church in Worship

December 24, 2021 7:00 PM

Christmas Eve

PRELUDE *In Dulci Jubilo BWV 729* – J. S. Bach Adam Peithmann

Away in a Manger – arr. Joel Raney

WELCOME Rev. Carolyn Keilig

INTROIT *A Joyful Ring* – Barbara B. Kinyon Sabbath Bells

Still, Still, Still – arr. Kristine Johaneck

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE Peter Perich

Reader: Though the holiday lights are bright, shadows remain in the world around us.

People: Some of us have walked in those shadows. Some walk there even now.

Reader: Though the warm glow of holiday cheer pushes back the long, looming nights,

People: Some among us in this world have lived in a land of darkness, and will live there still when the season has passed – a land of tragedy and grief.

Reader: Tonight we light our few small candles – a paltry glimmer when we think of the world outside. We light them not to banish the shadows, to somehow vanquish the night, but to change the heart of darkness. For God dwells even there, in the darkness of a barn, deep in the shadows of a stall, down in the pitch black of a feeding trough, with only a faint glimmer of starlight outside.

People: In that holy darkness, God comes to us and shares our common lot.

Leader: One fragile, incandescent life, to begin the world anew. “A light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.” Instead, the darkness itself is found to have a holiness all its own.

*OPENING CAROL NO. 148 *O Come, All Ye Faithful*

CALL TO WORSHIP (Responsive) Rev. Barbara Papagian

Leader: On this holiest of nights,

People: we come, joining the shepherds who are stunned by wonder.

Leader: On this most silent night,

People: we come, our hopes and dreams joining those of Mary and Joseph.

Leader: On this night of carols and candlelight,

People: we come, our glad songs joining with the choirs of angels over us.

CHRISTMAS PRAYER (Unison)

In the silence of this moment, we listen for the whisper of your joy which has come into the world this night. In the music and the carols, sing to us of the grace which fills us here in this place and in all the days to come. In the words we hear, speak to us of that Birth which brings new life to each and every one of your children. In the company of friends and families, of strangers and new acquaintances, gather us together so we may be your holy family in this time and place. In the love and hope which is given to us, touch us with your wonder. Amen.

*CAROL NO. 163 *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly*

SCRIPTURE READINGS Peter Perich

Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 2:1-20

MUSICAL OFFERING *Amen! Tell It on the Mountain* – arr. Mary McDonald
(text from hymn# 167)

SERMON *Dwelling in Darkness* Rev. Carolyn Keilig

SHARING THE LIGHT

RECEIVING THE LIGHT

(To avoid dripping of hot wax, please tilt your unlit candle toward the lighted one)

CAROL (*seated*) *Silent Night, Holy Night*

Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright

Round yon virgin mother and child, holy infant so tender and mild,

Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night, shepherds quake at the sight,

Glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing alleluia,

Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born.

Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light

Radiant beams from thy holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace,

Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

WORDS OF CLOSING

*CAROL

Joy to the World!

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King;
let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the world, the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ;
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding
joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness, and wonders of his love, and wonders of his love, and
wonders, wonders of his love.

BENEDICTION

Leader: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in deepest night, are lit up with a brilliant sight.

**People: Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. The spread of his influence and of his
peace will never end.**

Leader: Therefore, go out into the world with great joy, and the grace of Bethlehem's
matchless Child, the love of the God who never ceases to amaze, and the fellowship
of the Spirit who never wearies, will be with you this holy night and evermore.

People: Christ is born! Thanks be to God! Merry Christmas to all!

POSTLUDE

Carillon de Westminster – Louis Vierne

Thank you to our ushers, Dan McKenney, Tom Irving, and Steve and Kathy Payne.

Thank you to the Altar Design Team for our beautiful Christmas altar.

First Congregational Church
 United Church of Christ
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