

FIRST CHURCH WEST HARTFORD

DECEMBER 24, 2024 – 9:00 P.M.

PRELUDE *The Shepherds at the Manger* Franz Liszt
Away in a Manger AWAY IN A MANGER
Gesu Bambino Pietro Yon
The First Church Brass Quintet

WELCOME

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING The Ward Family

One: Throughout the season of Advent, we have watched and waited for Christ’s coming, remembering that God has promised salvation to all who follow the path of faith.

All: Our prayers and spiritual preparation have brought us to this time and place. Now our redemption draws even nearer!

[The congregation will pause to allow time for candle lighting.]

UNISON PRAYER

For a child has been born for us, a son is given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Creator, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. Amen!

RESPONSE (HYMN 128, v. 5) *One Candle Is Lit* CRADLE SONG
Come, listen, the sounds of God with us ring clear,
and signs of a cross in the distance appear.
The Word once made flesh, yet the Word ever near.
One candle is lit for the Christ birthday here.
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†CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Let the heavens be glad and earth rejoice.

All: Let us declare God’s glory here!

One: May all creation, with one voice,

All: Affirm salvation near!

One: O sing to God a song made new by God’s creative power,

All: That lifts us to a higher view, to worship in this hour!

†HYMN 148 *O Come, All Ye Faithful* ADESTE FIDELES

†OPENING PRAYER

Come, Holy One, to reign among us. From the busyness of life, we are drawn to the peace you alone can provide. We are attracted to the joy that you offer – joy that we cannot experience apart from you. Lead us in the ways of justice and righteousness that you intend. Establish your marvelous works among us so that we might make them more visible and tangible to a waiting world. Amen.

PASTORAL PREAMBLE Rev. Fredd

THE STORY OF CHRISTMAS IN SCRIPTURE AND SONG

To the City of David Called Bethlehem
Scripture Luke 2:1-5
Song 153 *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear* CAROL

Wrapped Him in Bands of Cloth
Scripture Luke 2:6-7
O Little Town of Bethlehem Walford Davies
The First Church Choir

An Angel of the Lord Stood Before Them
Scripture Luke 2:8-14
Song 150 *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* MENDELSSOHN

All Who Heard It Were Amazed
Scripture Luke 2:15-20
My Lord Has Come Will Todd
The First Church Choir

Wise Ones from the East Came to Jerusalem
Scripture Matthew 2:1-11
Song 173 *As with Gladness* DIX

PASTORAL PRAYER

CALL TO OFFERING

OFFERTORY *O Holy Night* Adolphe Adams
The First Church Choir, Elizabeth Oman-Wilfrid, soloist

†RESPONSE (HYMN 134) *Emmanuel, Emmanuel* MCGEE
Emmanuel, Emmanuel, his name is called Emmanuel. God with us, revealed in us, his name is called Emmanuel. Used with permission from CCLI, License 4720828

†PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Thank you, God, for coming to us in a humble, human life so expressive of love that two thousand years have not diminished the light. May that love burn so brightly in our lives that the warmth will radiate outward. Use our offerings to ignite in the world such compassionate care that all the earth may know peace, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

WELCOMING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

RESPONSIVE LITANY

One: We light the Christ candle! We rejoice as God's people! The light has come into the world!

[The congregation will pause for candle lighting and circulation.

When everyone has received the light, the litany continues.]

All: O God, with the company of heaven and with sounds of great joy, you come to us. This is an evening of love and light.

One: John declared that this great light is Christ -- the Word made flesh.

All: This great light lives among us. By this light we behold God's glory full of grace and truth. At the birth of Jesus, we now rejoice. Creator God, thank you for coming to us this day. Thank you for touching all heaven and earth with goodness. In every corner of the world -- in every corner of our being -- shine with your hope, peace, joy, and love. Amen!

HYMN 145

Silent Night, Holy Night

STILLE NACHT

†SENDING SENTENCES

One: In the beginning, the Word; the Word was present with God, and the Word was God. Through the Word all things came into being. In the Word was life, and that life was humanity's light -- a light that shines eternally.

All: We go forth now to witness to the Light, to the Word, to the Glory of God dwelling in us. We go forth to live in grace and truth!

†HYMN 143

Joy to the World

ANTIOCH

POSTLUDE

In Dulci Jubilo, BWV 729

J. S. Bach

Tonight, the First Church Brass Quintet consists of:
Eric Tunkel, first trumpet; Mason Layda, second trumpet; Alicia Rainwater, horn;
Chris Schrock, trombone; David Winer, tuba

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† *Please stand in body or spirit as you are able.*