

The First Congregational Church in Worcester

United Church of Christ

Christmas Eve Festival of Lessons and Carols

December 24, 2022

7:00 P.M.

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*Loving God, Help us remember the birth of Jesus that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds and worship of the wise men.*

*Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world. Let kindness come with every gift and good desires with every greeting. Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ brings and teach us to be merry with clear hearts.*

*May Christmas morning make us happy to be your children and Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus' sake. Amen.*

*Robert Louis Stevenson*

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The Prelude

Pastoral Symphony from *Messiah* ~ Handel
In the Bleak Midwinter ~ Young
The Christmas Rose ~ Martin
Still, Still, Still ~ Manz

The Lighting of the Christ Candle

Leader We gather to celebrate the birth of the one who is the light of the world.
People **We are here to worship God - and God's Son Jesus - born this night in Bethlehem of Judea.**
Leader We light the candle of hope to remind us of the promises made by all the prophets that God would raise up a savior for the people of Israel.
People **Christ is our hope and our salvation. He calls us to share our hope in him with each other.**

Lighting the Candle of Hope

Leader We light the candle of peace to remind us that it is only with God that true peace can be found.
People **Christ brings the peace of God to us. Jesus calls us to share the peace he gives with each other.**

Lighting the Candle of Peace

Leader We light the candle of joy to remind us that God gives joy to every heart that abides in him.

People **As Mary rejoiced in the birth of Jesus - so his birth in us brings us joy. God calls us to share the joy he gives with each other.**

Lighting the Candle of Joy

Leader We light the candle of love to remind us that Jesus is God's gift of love to us - and that in him, the light of love triumphs over darkness.

People **Love never fails - it transforms all those who give it and receive it. God calls us to share his love with each other.**

Lighting the Candle of Love

Leader We light the Christ candle to remind us that the light of the world was born this night.

People **The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness - on them a light has shined.**

Leader You, O Lord, have multiplied the nation. You have increased its joy.

People **For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder.**

Leader His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

People **He is also called Emmanuel, for in him God is with us.**

Lighting of the Christ Candle

**The Processional Carol*

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King,
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"

Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King!"

Christ, by highest heaven adored; Christ, the everlasting Lord;
Late in time behold him come, offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail the 'incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King!"

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,
Born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King!"

The Bidding Prayer

Rev. Josh Fitterling

The First Lesson

*God announces in the Garden of Eden that the seed of a woman
shall bruise the serpent's head.*

Genesis III

*Carol ~ O Come, O Come Emmanuel

O come! O come! Emmanuel! And ransom captive Israel;
that mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

O come! Thou Day-Spring! come and cheer our spirits by Thine Advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high, and order all things far and nigh;
to us the path of knowledge show, and cause us in her ways to go
Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, Desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind;
bid envy, strife and quarrels cease; fill all the world with heaven's peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

The Second Lesson

*God promises to faithful Abraham that in his seed
shall the nations of the earth be blessed.*

Genesis XXII

Christ has Come for All ~ Lippencott

The Third Lesson

Isaiah foretells Christ's birth and kingdom.

Isaiah IX

*Carol ~ Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

Come, Thou long expected Jesus born to set Thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in Thee.
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a King,
Born to reign in us forever, now Thy gracious kingdom bring.
By Thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone;
By Thine all sufficient merit, raise us to Thy glorious throne.

The Fourth Lesson

The peace that Christ will bring is foreshown.

Isaiah XI

***Carol ~ It Came Upon the Midnight Clear**

It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, good will to men, from heaven's all-gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come with peaceful wings unfurled,
and still their heavenly music floats o'er all the weary world;
above its sad and lowly plains, they bend on hovering wing,
and ever o'er its Babel sounds the blessed angels sing.

And ye, beneath life's crushing load, whose forms are bending low,
who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow,
look now! for glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing.
O rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing!

For lo! the days are hastening on, by prophet seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold
when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,
and the whole world send back the song which now the angels sing.

The Fifth Lesson

The angel Gabriel salutes the Blessed Virgin Mary.

St. Luke I

Basque Carol ~ arr. Pettman

The Sixth Lesson

St. Matthew and St. Luke tell of the birth of Jesus.

St. Matthew I
& St. Luke I

Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella ~ arr. Young

The Seventh Lesson

The shepherds go to the manger.

St. Luke II

***Carol ~ O Come, All Ye Faithful**

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem.
Come and behold Him, born the King of angels;
O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation;
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest;
O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to Thee be all glory given;
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing.
O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

The Eighth Lesson

The star leads the wise men to Jesus.

St. Matthew II

**Carol ~ The First Noel*

The first Noel the angel did say was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
in fields where they lay keeping their sheep, on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Refrain: Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, born is the King of Israel.

They looked up and saw a star shining in the east, beyond them far;
and to the earth it gave great light, and so it continued both day and night. **[Refrain]**

And by the light of that same star three Wise Men came from country far;
to seek for a king was their intent, and to follow the star wherever it went. **[Refrain]**

This star drew nigh to the northwest, o'er Bethlehem it took its rest;
and there it did both stop and stay, right over the place where Jesus lay. **[Refrain]**

Then entered in those Wise Men three, full reverently upon the knee,
and offered there, in his presence, their gold and myrrh and frankincense. **[Refrain]**

The Ninth Lesson

St. John unfolds the great mystery of the Incarnation.

St. John I

O Holy Night ~ Adam

The Lighting of the Candles

Carol ~ Silent 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.

Silent night, holy night wondrous star, lend thy light;
with the angels let us sing, alleluia to our King;
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!

**The Collect and Blessing*

Rev. Josh Fitterling

**The Organ Postlude*

Sing We Now of Christmas ~ Young



A Christmas Prayer

by Rev. F. Schaefer

Gracious LORD, be the God of our Christmas celebration. We rejoice with the shepherds over the good news of Jesus' birth. We join in the praises of the angelic choir, saying: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom God favors!"

Almighty God, you have favored us with the greatest gift ever given--your only begotten Son, light of true light, God of true God. May we never take this your gift for granted; may our songs of praise never fade, and may we treasure it in our hearts always and forever. Bless all of us here gathered in worship as well as our loved ones at home. May peace and joy ring in our hearts and reverberate through our communities tonight in the name of Jesus the new-born King. Amen.

The First Congregational Church in Worcester
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Participants
Rev. Josh Fitterling, Minister
Scott Yonker, Minister of Music
William Condon, Soloist



Lessons and Carols had its origin at Truro Cathedral (England) on Christmas Eve 1880, when a service of scripture and supporting carols was developed by the Bishop of Truro, F. W. Benson. Some 38 years later in 1918, this format was adapted for Christmas Eve at King's College Chapel, Cambridge, England. The BBC broadcast from King's College helped to popularize the Service of Lessons and Carols, and it was quickly duplicated by cathedrals and smaller churches throughout the world. The heart of the service continues to this day – that is, the retelling of the Christian story of faith from the fall of Adam to the coming of the Word Incarnate.

Christmas Poinsettias ~ 2022

*Dawn and Matthew Ahaesy
family*

In Memory of The Ahaesy and The Gibbs

Norman & Susan Anderson

*In Memory of loved ones who have gone before
me,
In Honor of all the good in the world, and In
Celebration of the Season!*

The Bagdasarian Family

*In Memory of H. Rose Bagdasarian
In Honor of Sadie Bedrosian*

Beverly Bean

In Honor of My FCC Family

Ellen Dalbeck

*In Memory of Wilson Winston
In Honor of Jennifer & Christina*

Josh Fitterling

In Honor of our First Church Staff!

John Hakkila

In Memory of Mr. & Mrs. Levi Hakkila

*Shelly Hoyle
Mansfield*

In Memory of Joe Hoyle Jr & Thomas

*In Honor of my church family, Ciara, Joey,
IvyRose, Jennifer & Ryleigh*

Leanne and Jim Jezerski

*In Memory of Pauline & William Greene,
Clifford & Marjorie Greene, Andrew &
Catherine Campsie and Edward & Evelyn
Jezerski*

Connie & Mac MacInnes

*In Memory of Linwood, Alice & Lenny
Hodgkins
In Memory of Daniel, Katherine & Allen*

Natalie Maynard

In Memory of Herb Maynard and Jeri Blome

Ruth Nickerson

In Celebration of the Season!

Ann Scherdell

In memory of my dear loved ones

Donna Spaulding

In Memory of Agnes, Roy, Cathy & Dillon

In Celebration of the Season!

Thank you to those who gave poinsettias for our families and friends who are unable to attend the services. The plants are enjoyed and truly appreciated by them!