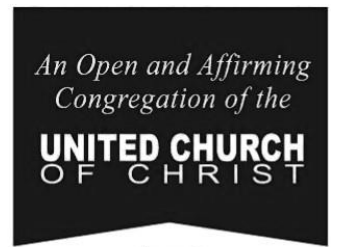




38 South Winooski Avenue
Burlington, Vermont



firstchurchburlington.org

December 20, 2022

Blue Christmas

During this time, the seasonal color in the Church is blue – deep blue like the color of the waters of creation, the sky just before dawn, the time between night and day, between already and not yet. As one year closes and another begins, this blue is a reminder to reflect upon the already and not yet of our own lives: what has been, and what could be. “Incarnation” is a word that means that God’s presence came to dwell among all people, and we believe this happened in a special way in the birth of Jesus – illuminating the sacred in all places of our lives.

GATHERING MUSIC

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

UCC Resources

PRELUDE

INVOCATION

One: In the beginning, before time, before people,
before the world began,

All: God was.

One: Here and now among us, beside us, enlisting the people of earth
for the purposes of heaven,

All: God is.

One: In the future, when we have turned to dust,
and all we know has found its fulfillment,

All: God will be.

One: Not denying the world but delighting in it,
not condemning the world, but redeeming it,
through the little boy, Jesus the Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit,

All: God was, God is, God will be.

WORDS OF WELCOME

by Rev. Sarah Are

Call: Here we are. **Response: We are in the dark**

***CAROL** *What Child is This?*

What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, While shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this the angels sing, is Christ, God's holy offering;
Haste, haste your praise to bring, the babe, the child of Mary

Why lies the Child in manger bare, Where ox and ass are feeding?
Give heed, draw near; For sinners here, The silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce him through, the cross be borne for me, for you;
Hail, hail, the Word made flesh, the babe, the child of Mary.

REFLECTION

The Spirit is breathing. All those with eyes to see, women and men with ears for hearing, detect a coming dawn, a reason to go on. They seem small, these signs of dawn, perhaps ridiculous. All those with eyes to see, women and men with ears for hearing, uncover in the night a certain gleam of light; they see a reason to go on.

from Dom Helder Camara, *It's Midnight, Lord*

LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES

CANDLE OF GRIEF:

One: We light candles to name our grief, and remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their names, their faces, their voices, the memory that binds them to us in this season.

All: May God's eternal love surround them.

*(You are invited to name the persons
you miss and wish to remember during this service and season of the year.)*

CANDLE OF COURAGE:

One: We light candles to redeem the pain of loss; the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health, the loss of time. We pause to gather up the pain of the past and offer it to God, asking that from God's hand we may receive the gift of peace and the courage to confront our sorrow, to comfort each other, to share our feelings honestly and openly with each other, and to dare to hope in the midst of pain.

All: Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into your future.

*(You are invited to light one or more candles during the musical meditation,
to ask God to illuminate your loss and grief.)*

SCRIPTURE READING

Isaiah 40:1-9

MUSICAL MEDITATION

Waiting for You

The Many

THE CANDLE OF MEMORY

One: The third candle we light for our world, to remember the injustice and brokenness of the world around us, and to proclaim that this brokenness is where God enters in. This candle, then, is the candle of memory, lighting up all the times in history where God has taken the injustice in our hearts and redeemed it. Recognizing the brokenness, we make a gift of it to God, asking that our woundedness might give way to, and bring forth, wholeness.

All: We remember that dawn does arise from darkness.

*(You are invited to name the places of injustice and brokenness
you would like to remember during this service and
season of the year – aloud or in the chat.)*

SCRIPTURE READING

From Psalm 139

CANDLE OF FAITH:

One: We remember the gift of faith, the gift of hope which God offers to our very mortal flesh in the Christmas story. We remember that God, who shares our life, shows the way and goes with us into our tomorrows.

All: We remember the One who shows the way, who brings the truth, and who bears the light.

*(You are invited to light one or more candles during the musical meditation,
to remember all the places that have illuminated the sacred for you this season..)*

MUSICAL MEDITATION

BIDDING TO MISSION

The Longest Night

by Jan Richardson

CLOSING SONG

Alleluia

NCH 765

BENEDICTION

WELCOME VISITORS!

Welcome to First Congregational Church in Burlington. Our faith is over 2,000 years old, but our thinking is not! First Church opens its doors to the Greater Burlington area, to seekers, to tourists from near and far, to those in need, to an array of building users, and to a congregation (of members, friends, and family—both curious and the committed) who call our faith community their church home.

We celebrate the sacred worth of all persons as unique individuals made in the image of God. Whatever your age, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, or physical, cognitive, or emotional ability, we invite you to find a safe and nurturing spiritual home with us. All are welcome to participate, fully and without reservation, in the life, leadership, ministry and mission of this church as we seek to grow together in a community of faith.

The First Congregational Church of Burlington
is an Open & Affirming Church of the United Church of Christ.
This means everyone – **everyone** – is welcome. Including YOU!

Staff Directory

Elissa Johnk, *Lead Minister*

Caroline Catlin, *Office & Nursery Administrator*

Lucy Samara, *Communications Coordinator*

Jennifer Coleman, *Bell Choir Director*

Laura Elder-Connors, *Children's Choir Director*

Derik Breen, *Building & Grounds*

Amy Shortt, *Director of Music*

Hilah Clarke, *Faith Formation Director*


Max Johnson, *A/V Coordinator*

Jason Vanderlaan, *Youth Ministries*

Ian Rock-Jones, *Security Staff*

Jesse O'Gorman, *Security Staff*

Lou Rochford, *Digital Usher*

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