

The Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
Amherst, New Hampshire



*“Come to Bethlehem and see,
Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come adore on bended knee,
Christ, the Lord, the newborn King.”*

THE ORDER OF SERVICE FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD

The Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
Amherst, New Hampshire

*“No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey,
you are welcome here.”*

December 24, 2023

Christmas Eve

5:00 p.m.

PRELUDE

Now is Born the Divine Christ Child

Lani Smith

WELCOME

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLES

The Gascoyne Family

One: Over the last four Sundays of Advent we’ve lit four candles – for hope, for peace, for joy, for love. On this Christmas Eve we light all four again. With these candles we recognize the presence of God that surrounds and fills us at all times, and comes to us in a special way in the Christmas story. At the end of our service, we will light the center candle – the Christ Candle – to celebrate the birth of Jesus and welcome his light into the world.

(All four outer candles are lit.)

One: Please join us in the Prayer of Invocation and The Lord’s Prayer:

Many: **Life giving God, on this Christmas Eve we hear your call ringing in our ears. We see the light of stars and candles, leading the way. We long for a sign, an experience, to know you face to face. We come to be part of your story of love, liberation, healing, and grace. And we find all of this in a tiny baby, lying in a manger. We give thanks to you this night as we pray as Jesus taught us:**

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.

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

Please stand in body or in spirit.

One: Let us go, in heart and mind:

Many: to see what has happened in Bethlehem.

One: Let us go with the shepherds:

Many: to find the child they've been waiting for.

One: Let us go with the wise ones:

Many: to find God's promise, born for us all!

One: Let us go with all people who seek peace, love, joy, and hope.

Many: Come, let us adore him: Christ the Lord!

***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!

AN INVITATION TO WORSHIP

The congregation may be seated.

THE CHRISTMAS STORY IN LESSONS AND CAROLS

THE ANNOUNCEMENT TO MARY

CAROL

O Little Town of Bethlehem

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

CAROL

Away in a Manger

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where He lay,
The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE SHEPHERDS

CAROL

The First Nowell

The first Nowell the angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay a-keeping their sheep,
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
Born is the King of Israel.

THE SHEPHERDS GO TO BETHLEHEM

CAROL

Angels We Have Heard on High

Angels we have heard on high sweetly singing o'er the plains.
And the mountains in reply echo back their joyous strains.
Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come adore on bended knee, Christ, the Lord, the newborn King.
Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE MAGI

CAROL

We Three Kings of Orient Are

We three kings of Orient are, bearing gifts we traverse afar,
Field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star.
O star of wonder, star of night, star with royal beauty bright;
Westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

OFFERTORY MUSIC

What Child is This

Ruth Elaine Schram

*DOXOLOGY

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!

*DEDICATION OF OUR GIFTS

One: We dedicate these gifts to Jesus that we might serve in his name.

Many: We ask God's blessing on Mary for we remember her courage and love.

One: We ask God's blessing on Joseph for we remember his care and concern.

Many: We ask God's blessing on the baby Jesus as he grows strong and full of faith.

One: God bless the angels who brought the good news.

Many: God bless the shepherds who came to worship.

One: May the animals remind us that all God's creatures are a blessing.

Many: May the Magi remind us that it is good to give gifts out of love.

One: We are grateful for the gift of Jesus, born in a manger long ago.

Many: Let us celebrate the good news that Jesus Christ is born! Amen.

*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 earth! The Savior reigns:
Let us our 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.

LIGHTING OF CHRIST CANDLE

One: Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

Four candles, four promises offered to us by God, and all of them made real in this one light tonight: the Christ Candle. In Christ we find hope and transformation, empowering us to make our own unique contributions to the world. In Christ we find light and life, and the courage to be like him, answering his call and following in his footsteps.

(The Christ Candle is lit.)

One: Please join me in the Christmas Eve prayer:

Many: O God of answered promises, we are thankful that you have come to us in Jesus. In our continuing journey of faith, give us courage to share your light with one another and with our world. Amen.

*CAROL

Silent Night

(All are invited to activate and hold up their glow sticks for the singing of 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 a-far,
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.

*BLESSING AND BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Joy to the World!

G.F. Handel/
Ruth Elaine Schram

*(*Indicates that those who are able may stand.)*

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF AMHERST, NH, UCC



**A Welcoming, Open and Affirming Congregation
of the United Church of Christ**



**“No matter who you are or where you are on life’s
journey, you are welcome here.”**

We extend a special greeting to all visitors and special guests
who are worshipping with us this evening.

We, the members of The Congregational Church of Amherst, New Hampshire, United Church of Christ, believe God’s Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ call us to love all our neighbors as we would want to be loved. We are called to be as one body, seeking to walk together in the full life and ministry of our church.

We welcome each individual as a child of God. As covenant members of Christ’s church, we celebrate God’s love for people of all races and ethnic backgrounds, all mental and physical abilities, all socioeconomic backgrounds, all sexual orientations, all gender identities and gender expressions, and all of the other diverse attributes woven into the fabric of humankind.

With God’s grace, we invite all to share in the life and leadership, ministry and fellowship, worship and sacraments, responsibilities and blessings of our church.

We are pleased that you have chosen to worship with us this evening.

- Our church nursery is open, but not staffed, and is available when parents with young children feel the need for a quiet, safe space to go to during worship. A monitor is available to watch and listen to the service.
- The offering collected this evening will go towards the Congregational Church of Amherst’s mission, to be grounded in love, serving neighbors near and far, and welcoming to all. Checks should be made payable to the *Congregational Church of Amherst*. Thank you so much for your support!
- In the event of an emergency, please remain seated until instructions have been given.

Grounded in God’s Love—Serving Neighbors Near and Far—Welcoming to All

*Permission to podcast/stream the music in this service
obtained from One License with license #A-731944.*

Christmas Eve 5:00 p.m., December 24, 2023

PARTICIPATING IN THE SERVICE

Members and Friends of The Congregational Church

The Rev. Maureen R. Frescott

Kevin G. S. Marsh

Michael Havay

Russ Demarest

Ariel and Josh Baker, Deb Boczenowski,

Christie Gould, Tim Wiegand

Shannon, Maya, Isaac, Ivan and Shea Gascoyne

Our Children and Youth

Doug Topliffe

Sara L. Phelps

Larissa Riley

Ministers to the World

Senior Pastor

Acting Associate Pastor

Organist/Accompanist

Deacon In Charge

Ushers

Advent Wreath Lighters

Pageant Participants

Videographer

Director of Music

Church School Coordinator



THE WREATHS ON THE FRONT OF OUR CHURCH and the many seasonal decorations

have been provided by the Jackson Fund, established many years ago by Robert Jackson to honor his mother's tradition of providing Christmas wreaths for our church. Elizabeth Darling Jackson began this family's tradition of providing the wreaths on the advice of her mother, Louella Darling.