

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



*“Do not be afraid; for I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people:
to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.”*

—Luke 2:10-11

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

8:00 p.m.

PRELUDE

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Felix Mendelssohn/
Anna Laura Page

INTROIT

WELCOME and CHRISTMAS PROCLAMATION

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Please stand in body or in spirit.

One: We wait in the night

Many: In the hush that only stars can hold

One: We wait in the night

Many: Filled with anticipation of what midnight shall bring

One: We wait in the night

Many: With our hearts beating in rhythm with the birth of hope

One: We hold our collective breaths

Many: With the angelic host as they clutch their restless alleluias

One: For God is on the way:

Many: the mother is laboring

One: the father is pacing

Many: the stable is readying

One: the light is increasing

Many: and the promise is breaking through

One: We wait in the longing for midnight

Many: in expectation of Good News

One: Our wait is now over!

Many: for the Word has been born among us!

*PROCESSIONAL HYMN

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!

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

The congregation may be seated.

The Hornor Family

Introductory Sentences

Scripture Reading

John 1:1-5, 9

Lighting of the Christ Candle

PRAYER OF INVOCATION and THE LORD'S PRAYER (in unison)

God of holy peace, we come to your manger in the stillness of this night.

We hear your newborn cry; the cry we have been waiting for.

You come as a tiny light in a vast darkness,

yet that fragile and flickering light changes the darkness completely.

Meet us here at your manger.

Meet us as a newborn child meets new parents—

insisting that we make room for you,

requiring that we reorder and center our lives around you,

changing our lives forever.

We pray in the name of Jesus, the Light of the world:

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.

ANTHEM

Carol of Joy
Chancel Choir

Dan Forest

THE CHRISTMAS STORY IN LESSONS AND CAROLS

THE VISITATION TO MARY Luke 1:26-38

THE VISITATION TO JOSEPH Matthew 1:18-21

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 all, from heaven's all-gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the 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.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS Luke 2:1-7

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 is Christ the King, Whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, Haste to bring Him laud, the babe, the Son of Mary!

Why lies he in such mean estate where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian fear: for sinners here the silent Word is pleading.
This, this is Christ the King, Whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, Haste to bring Him laud, the babe, the Son of Mary!

THE VISITATION TO THE SHEPHERDS Luke 2:8-14

ANTHEM *Glory to the Lamb*
Chancel Choir

Don Besig

THE ARRIVAL OF THE SHEPHERDS Luke 2:15-20

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

“Christmas Present”

*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

Matthew 2:1-5, 7-11

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

OFFERTORY

The First Nowell

David Cherwien

*HYMN OF DEDICATION

As With Gladness Men of Old

(hymn 63, verse 3)

As they offered gifts most rare, at that manger plain and bare,
So may we with holy joy, give our best for God’s employ,
All our costliest treasures bring, Christ, to you from whom they spring.

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION (in unison)

Thank you, God, for coming to us in a human life so expressive of love that two thousand years have not extinguished the flame. May that love burn so brightly in us that its light will spread. Use our offerings to ignite in the world such caring and compassion that all your children may know joy and peace, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

SERVICE OF LIGHT

The light from the Christ candle will be passed to the Deacons, who in turn, will light the candle of the end person in each pew. The lighted candle should be held upright, and the candle to be lighted held horizontally to avoid spilling hot wax.

CAROL

Silent Night

Members of the Bell Choir

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.

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER

*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.

*BLESSING and BENEDICTION

*CHORAL RESPONSE

*POSTLUDE

Angels We Have Heard on High

Anna Laura Page

Please extinguish candles before leaving pews; leave candles in baskets at exits.

*(*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 8:00 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

Sara L. Phelps

Michael Havay

Russ Demarest

Nye, Angela, Thomas, Carolyn and Hadley Hornor

Fred Dyke, Regina Kinney, Irene and Peter Labombarde

Ministers to the World

Senior Pastor

Acting Associate Pastor

Director of Music

Organist/Accompanist

Deacon In Charge

Advent Wreath Lighters

Ushers



THE WREATHS ON THE FRONT OF OUR CHURCH

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.