

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



*“One of the truer things about bodies is that it is just about impossible to increase the reverence I show mine without also increasing the reverence I show yours. Wearing skin is not a solitary practice but one that brings me into communion with all other embodied souls.”*

— Rev. Barbara Brown Taylor

# 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 15, 2024

Third Sunday of Advent

10:00 a.m.

## *An Altar in the World – The Practice of Wearing Skin*

GATHERING CHIMES

*Let us be gathered in silence so that we may prepare to worship.*

GREETING AND NOTICES OF PARISH LIFE

PRELUDE

*O Come, Little Children*  
Bell Choir

Johann A. P. Schulz/  
arr. Michael Helman

INTROIT

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

One: We light candles for the four weeks leading to Christmas  
in anticipation of the inbreaking of God’s love and light in Jesus.

**Many: The first candle reflects the Hope we feel as we wait for that light.**

One: The second candle reflects our dreams for Peace.

**Many: Today we light the third candle, the candle of Joy.**

*(Two purple candles and one pink candle are lit.)*

One: This candle reminds us that God invites us to find joy in the beauty of Creation.

**Many: This candle reminds us that God invites us to find joy in one another.**

One: This candle reminds us that joy is found in the birth of a baby in a manger.

**Many: This candle reminds us that joy is found in the story of God becoming human.**

**All: Let us worship together with joy!**

\*HYMN

*Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates*

No. 8

*Please rise in body or spirit.*

WELCOMING GOD'S PRESENCE (unison)  
*The congregation may be seated.*

**Holy One, during this season of Advent  
we prepare the way for you to enter our world.  
Today we gaze into the hearts of Elizabeth and Mary.  
To experience the joy of anticipation and songs of liberation.  
To envision the promise you gifted us through John and Jesus.  
God of Advent, today we wait with joy.  
Be present with us, as we pray the words 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.**

\*SONG OF PRAISE

*Gloria*

**Gloria in excelsis Deo; Gloria in excelsis Deo.**

MESSAGE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

ANTHEM

*A Simple Stable*  
Youth Choir

Don Besig and  
Nancy Price

\*THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

The peace of God be with you. **AND ALSO WITH YOU.**

## THE PRACTICE OF WEARING SKIN – EMBODYING GOD

TELLING THE STORY

Luke 1:39-56

### **Mary Visits Elizabeth**

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

## **Mary's Song of Praise**

And Mary said,  
"My soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant.  
Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed,  
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name;  
indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.  
He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.  
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones  
and lifted up the lowly;  
he has filled the hungry with good things  
and sent the rich away empty.  
He has come to the aid of his children,  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

And Mary remained with Elizabeth about three months and then returned to her home.

REFLECTING ON THE STORY

"Elizabeth and Mary"

TELLING THE STORY

Luke 1:57-80

## **The Birth of John the Baptist**

Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. But his mother said, "No; he is to be called John." They said to her, "None of your relatives has this name." Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." All who heard them were amazed and said, "What then will this child become?" For indeed the hand of the Lord was with him.

## **Zechariah's Prophecy**

Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

“Blessed be the Lord God,

for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.

He has raised up a mighty savior for us

in the house of his child David,

as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,

that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High,

for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,

to give his people knowledge of salvation

by the forgiveness of their sins.

Because of the tender mercy of our God,

the dawn from on high will break upon us,

to shine upon those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,

to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to God's people.

REFLECTING ON THE STORY

“John and Jesus”

SHARING OUR OFFERINGS

*All are invited to place their Offerings and Prayer Cards in the plates as they're passed.*

OFFERTORY

*Bring a Torch, Jeanette Isabella*  
Chancel Choir

arr. Lloyd Larson

SHARING OUR PRAYERS

ADVENT PRAYER (unison)

**O God of Elizabeth and Mary,  
Sender of John and Jesus,  
you gifted us with the Good News  
of the coming of the One we've longed for.  
The Bringer of Hope, the Prince of Peace,  
The Spirit of Joy, the Embodiment of Love.  
May our hearts leap and may we sing songs  
of gratitude, healing, and grace,  
as we announce glad tidings to all  
and welcome the Christ into our world.  
Amen.**

\*HYMN

*My Heart Sings Out with Joyful Praise*

side page 7

\*THE LIGHT OF CHRIST GOES OUT INTO THE WORLD

\*SENDING

One: The God who makes everything whole, sends us forth:

**Many: to bring healing to the broken-hearted,  
to bring Good News to all.**

One: The Christ who comes to be with us, sends us forth:

**Many: to stand with those longing for liberation,  
to feed those who hunger in body and soul.**

One: The Spirit who calls us to action, sends us forth:

**Many: to live the gospel,  
to embody God's presence,  
to magnify hope, peace, joy, and love.  
Amen!**

\*POSTLUDE

*People, Look East*

James Mansfield

*(\*Please rise in body or spirit.)*

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

# 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, 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. Our membership is open to all those who choose to walk with us in our witness. Please speak with any of our deacons or pastors should you have any questions regarding our church or our membership.

## Worship Notes:

- Church school is available for children Pre-K through grade 7.
- Our church nursery is staffed and available for parents with young children.
- Joys and Concerns may be written on the cards found in the pews. You are also welcome to submit your prayer request through our website in advance of the worship service.
- Please remember to wear your nametag each Sunday, so that we may all greet our neighbors. If you do not have a permanent nametag, temporary nametags may be found inside the friendship registers. If you are in need of a new, permanent nametag, please see one of the deacons.
- Please join us in the community room for a time of fellowship after the worship service. Coffee and beverages are offered.
- In the event of an emergency, please remain seated until instructions have been given. An emergency plan is in place for the children in the church school.

The church office is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 10:00 to 1:00 p.m., and available Monday through Friday by telephone 673-3231 and by email [info@ccamherst.org](mailto:info@ccamherst.org). Please feel free to leave a message and we will get back to you as soon as we can. Visit our church’s website at [www.ccamherst.org](http://www.ccamherst.org), and follow us on Facebook.com/ccamherst and Instagram.com/ccamherstnh.

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

## PARTICIPATING IN TODAY'S WORSHIP SERVICE

Members and Friends of The Congregational Church  
 Rev. Maureen R. Frescott  
 Rev. Charlotte E. Y. Bell  
 Rev. Shayna Appel  
 Shellie Brook  
 Sara L. Phelps  
 Michael Havay  
 Sally Hooper  
 Steve Boczenowski, John Swanson  
 Nathan, Jessica, Evan and Julia Greer  
 Mark Baddeley, Reid Cunningham  
 Fran Baddeley, Ken Bell  
 Patricia Bodan

Ministers to the World  
 Senior Pastor  
 Associate Pastor  
 Guest Pastor  
 Student Pastor  
 Director of Music  
 Organist/Accompanist  
 Deacon in Charge  
 Deacons  
 Advent Candle Lighters  
 Liturgists  
 Ushers  
 Videographer

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## LEADING OUR CHURCH SCHOOL TODAY

Larissa Riley  
 Sue Werst  
 Larissa Riley  
 Dave Hagerstrom  
 Melissa Lewis

Director of Youth Ministries  
 Teacher, Preschool /Kindergarten  
 Teacher, Grades 1 to 4  
 Teacher, Grades 5 to 7  
 Nursery Attendant

**THE CHRISTMAS FUND** for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund is a unique special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that allows us to recognize and honor those who serve our beloved church. One of the special aspects of the Christmas Fund is that the funds do not support programs, make grants to institutions, or fund advocacy programs, but rather, they provide direct financial assistance to individual UCC clergy and lay employees. Thank you for your generosity and support.

**BEWARE OF FALLING SNOW AND ICE:** During the winter months, we want to remind everyone that snow and ice may fall from our roof at any time. Please use caution when in our driveway, and do not walk too close to the building.

### Financial Summary

(as of November 30, 2024)

|            | YTD<br><u>Actual</u> | YTD<br><u>Budget</u> | <u>Difference</u> |
|------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Income     | \$232,763            | \$230,781            | \$ 1,982          |
| Expenses   | \$205,598            | \$209,113            | \$(3,514)         |
| Net Income | \$ 27,165            | \$ 21,668            | \$ 5,496          |

*Numbers have been rounded to the nearest whole dollar; as such, some columns may not appear to total correctly.*

*We hope you are finding this information helpful. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to anyone on the Finance Team: Ken Bell (Treasurer), Don Lyon, Paul Spiess, Doug Topliffe, and Todd Whitney.*



**CAREGIVER'S CIRCLE:** Are you providing caregiving to a family member, an adult child, in your home, living away or long distance? Would you be interested in being participating in a Caregivers Circle Support Group with others who are on a similar journey as you? Being a caregiver brings many emotional, physical, and financial tolls on the most loving person. If you or someone you know might be interested in attending a monthly Caregivers Circle Support Group here at the Congregational Church of Amherst, please contact Pastor Charlotte.

**SHARE FOOD PANTRY** requests for December include condiments, cooking sauces and seasonings, cooking oil, pasta sauce, tomato sauce, tomato paste, diced tomatoes. Donations should be brought directly to the SHARE Center in Milford; if you are unsure where, please call their office at 673-9898. Many thanks for your continuing support!

**STORM WEATHER CANCELLATIONS:** As many know heading into the winter season, New England weather is ever changing and at times can be quite unpredictable. In the case of bad weather and the need to cancel an in-person worship service, we will post announcements on WMUR Channel 9 television, and on our website and Facebook pages. Of course, that doesn't mean you will miss out on Sunday morning worship. Our live streamed service will still be available for folks to tune to at 10:00 a.m. on our Facebook page, and we will continue to upload the recorded service to our website by noon.

## Our Church Calendar December 15—21, 2024

Some events are taking place virtually.

Links are sent out directly by email, and a list of recurring meetings with their links can be found in the member section of our website.

|           |                                       |  |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Today     | 10:00 a.m.<br>11:15 a.m.<br>4:00 p.m. | Worship<br>Fellowship<br>Christmas Concert |
| Tuesday   | 7:00 p.m.                             | Communications                             |
| Wednesday | 10:00 a.m.                            | Wednesday AM<br>Adult Ed                   |
| Thursday  | 6:00 p.m.<br>7:30 p.m.                | Bell Choir<br>Chancel Choir                |
| Saturday  | 5:00 p.m.                             | Longest Night<br>Service                   |

**Christmas Eve  
Services  
December 24  
5:00 p.m. & 8:00 p.m.**



Our **5:00 p.m. Family Service** is tailored for families with young children and for the young at heart. Come hear the Christmas story as told by our Youth Groups and Confirmands in our traditional Christmas Pageant. We'll raise our child-friendly glow stick "candles" as we sing *Silent Night* and *Joy to the World* together!

Our **8:00 p.m. Candlelight Service** tells the Christmas story through lessons and carols with music from our Bell and Chancel Choirs. As the sanctuary gradually fills with candlelight and the singing of *Silent Night*, we proclaim the birth of Jesus, the light of the world!

Both services will be livestreamed on Facebook and will be available on our website after 9:30 p.m.

# Mary Visits Elizabeth



Sunday, December 15, 2024

