

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, 2024

Christmas Eve

8:00 p.m.

PRELUDE

The First Noël

David Paxton

INTROIT

WELCOME and CHRISTMAS PROCLAMATION

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Please rise in body or in spirit.

One: We gather in anticipation
on this holy night,

**Many: to welcome God’s presence
into our world.**

One: With eyes wide open
and our ears on edge,

**Many: we keep watch with shepherds
and listen for the songs of angels.**

One: In the glow of the winter’s moon,
with the stars above lighting the way,

**Many: we gather outside a simple stable,
wondering if we dare enter.**

One: With family and friends we love,
with strangers we have just met,

**Many: we gather to hear the Good News,
for Christ is 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.

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 the world —

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

Come Join Their Song
Chancel Choir

Jayne Rasmussen/
Mark Shepherd

THE CHRISTMAS STORY IN LESSONS AND CAROLS

THE VISITATION TO MARY

Luke 1:26-38

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

Bring a Torch, Jeanette Isabella
Chancel Choir

trad. French carol/
arr. Lloyd Larson

THE ARRIVAL OF THE SHEPHERDS

Luke 2:15-20

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

"A Child Is Born"

*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

Away in a Manger

James R. Murray/
David H. Hegarty

*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

Paeon on "Joy to the World"

David Lasky

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

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

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 general operating fund, in support of our church’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, 2024

PARTICIPATING IN THE SERVICE

Members and Friends of The Congregational Church

The Rev. Maureen R. Frescott

The Rev. Charlotte E. Y. Bell

Shellie Brook

Sara L. Phelps

Michael Havay

Sally Hooper

Heather Stone and Zach Hoyt

Ministers to the World

Senior Pastor

Associate Pastor

Student Pastor

Director of Music

Organist/Accompanist

Deacon In Charge

Advent Candle Lighters



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.