

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



*"As you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves,
singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts."*

—Ephesians 5:19

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 29, 2024

First Sunday after Christmas

10:00 a.m.

GATHERING CHIMES

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

GREETING AND NOTICES OF PARISH LIFE

PRELUDE

Angels We Have Heard on High

Dale Wood

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Please rise in body or spirit.

One: Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all you lands!

Many: Serve the Lord with gladness; come into God's presence with a song.

One: Know that the Lord is God, our maker to whom we belong;
we are God's people and the sheep of God's pasture.

**Many: Enter the gates of the Lord with thanksgiving and the courts with praise;
give thanks and bless God's holy name.**

**All: Good indeed is the Lord, whose steadfast love is everlasting,
whose faithfulness endures from age to age.**

*HYMN

This Is My Father's World

This is my Father's world, and to my list'ning ears
all nature sings, and round me rings the music of the spheres.

This is my Father's world; I rest me in the thought
of rocks and trees, of skies and seas; his hand the wonder wrought.

This is my Father's world, the birds their carols raise;
the morning light, the lily white, declare their maker's praise.

This is my Father's world; he shines in all that's fair.
In the rustling grass I hear him pass; he speaks to me ev'rywhere.

This is my Father's world; oh, let me not forget
that, though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet.

This is my Father's world; why should my heart be sad?
The Lords is king, let the heaven ring; God reigns, let earth be glad!

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

The congregation may be seated.

Giver of gifts, amid the tall, tinseled trees your light breaks through to the world. We hear that you have come to us in love and in flesh. Speak to us anew of the eternal love which reaches out to us in the birth of Jesus. Hear us now, as we pray in the words that 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

Special Music

Pastor Shellie Anne Brook and Rebecca Brook

*THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

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

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION

THE SCRIPTURE LESSON

Psalm 67

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, *Selah*
that your way may be known upon earth, your saving power among all nations.

Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations
upon earth. *Selah*

Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.

The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, has blessed us.

May God continue to bless us; let all the ends of the earth revere him.

HYMN INTRODUCTION

Studies have stated that in 129 A.D. Pope Telesphorus ordained that the “Gloria” be sung at the Christmas eve midnight mass. The phrase became known as the “Angels Hymn” and considered one of the earliest known Christmas hymns.

The “Gloria” is believed to have inspired the chorus in Angels We Have Heard on High. The tune is believed to be inspired by an unknown tune that was arranged by Edward Shippen Barnes in the early 1900’s.

French legend indicates that in medieval times on Christmas Eve, the shepherds would sing and call to one another from one hillside to another. “They would call “Gloria in excelsis Deo” which means “glory to God in the highest” in Latin. It was how they would spread their holiday message and cheer from points far away to one another. From hillside to valley, the shepherd’s song must have truly sounded like angels calling to one another in celebration of the birth of Christ for the Christians living in nearby regions. The song reflects the shepherd’s joy that the time of the holiday season has arrived yet again.”

*HYMN

Angels We Have Heard on High
verses 1 and 2

No. 23

HYMN INTRODUCTION

One of the best – known hymns of the Christmas season, is “O Little Town of Bethlehem.” The Rector Phillip Brooks found the inspiration for his hymn after the war, during a year abroad (1865-66) in Europe and the Holy Land. While traveling, he wrote to the children of his parish about visiting Bethlehem on Christmas Eve and feeling reminded of the hymn singing of his home congregation. It was not until three years later, however, in 1868, that he reflected on his experience by writing a poem for his Sunday School students, with the first stanza beginning: “O little town of Bethlehem, / How still we see thee lie! / Above thy deep and dreamless sleep / The silent stars go by.” The church organist, Lewis Redner, set the words to the music of a composition he had titled “St. Louis,” and the hymn had its first performance at Holy Trinity during the last Christmas season before Brooks left in 1869 to become rector of Boston’s Trinity Church. This piece of music resonated themes of stillness and peace in the aftermath of the Civil War.

*HYMN

O Little Town of Bethlehem
verses 1 and 2

No. 44

HYMN INTRODUCTION

“Infant Holy, Infant Lowly” is thought to be a very old traditional Polish carol of unknown origin. It may date back to the 1200’s, attributing to Piotr Skarga, in the 1500’s. In 1920. Edith Margaret Glibarand Reed, translated the piece into English. It was published in *Spiewniczek Piesni Koscielne* in 1908 and speaks of the stable scene; baby Jesus lying in a manger bed with the animals nearby. It also speaks of the hillside where shepherds heard the story from the angels and rejoiced.

The short, rhymed phrases move the piece forward, and its rhythm is similar to a Polish folk dance. Pointing to the final statement to the purpose of the song, “Christ the babe is Lord of all.”

*HYMN

Infant Holy, Infant Lowly
verses 1 and 2

No. 37

HYMN INTRODUCTION

The First Noel is one of the most famous carols. It is of Cornish origin and is thought to have originated in the 15th century. It was passed down through oral tradition during the Proto-Renaissance period, leading into the Renaissance. during the 13th or 14th century. Miracle Plays were among the earliest forms of theater, and came about during this time. The plays portrayed famous Bible stories, and the story of Jesus' birth would have been amongst the most popular. The First Noel is thought to have originated from one of these Miracle Plays to spread the joy and hope proclaiming the coming of Christmas.

The carol was first published in 1823 in some ancient Christmas Carols by Davies Gilbert and William Sandys. Sandys arranged the carol, and Gilbert added new lyrics. They are credited for bringing the song into the modern era, and would be overjoyed to know their work has led to the carol being more alive today than ever before.

The melody was later standardized in 1876 by Sir John Stainer.

The word "Nowell" is an Early Modern English synonym for "Christmas" and comes from the French word Noël, which means "the Christmas season". The word ultimately comes from the Latin word natalis, which means "birth".

The world may look very different today, but we still gather to sing the song for the same reasons. The song is a testament to the fact that no matter what the earth looks like, no matter how much time passes, the encouraging story of Jesus will always connect with the hearts that are desperate for Him.

*HYMN

The First Nowell
verses 1 and 2

No. 56

HYMN INTRODUCTION

Behind every song, there is a story. "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice" is a medieval Christmas carol that shares the news of the birth of Christ and calls Christians to rejoice. The words were written by a Dominican monk by the name of Heinrich Suso. Suso lived in a time when darkness and poverty and hopelessness were the facts of everyday life. He was born into a family that would have made him part of the ruling class, but with a great concern for the common man and his sufferings, Suso chose the priesthood. He attempted in his ministry to lift the spirits of the people; people who he knew had very little to cause them to rejoice. This was not the normal ministry of the church at that time, so Suso suffered persecution for his service of worship. However, this did not derail this determined man. He continued until his death to reach the common man with his song and its message.

The carol is part of a medieval tradition of teaching Bible stories to peasants through folk music. The earliest manuscript of the carol's text is from around 1400 in Leipzig, Germany, but it wasn't published until 1533. The original text was bilingual, combining Latin and German.

John M. Neale provided an English paraphrase of the carol in 1853. The English text originally began "Good Christian men, rejoice", and is often used in Christmas Day or Christmas Eve worship services, festivals of lessons and carols, and church school programs.

The carol calls Christians to "rejoice with heart and soul and voice" in the good news of Christ's birth. Heinrich Suso rejoiced, and so have many listeners and singers of this traditional hymn down through the ages. What a wonderful message to ponder in the midst of a fallen world . . . this message of Christmas: Now ye need not fear the grave; Jesus Christ was born to save!

HYMN INTRODUCTION

“Away In A Manger” is one of the most popular Christmas carols and its history has been obscured by false information for a long time. In 1887 American hymn writer James R. Murray entitled the tune to “Away in a Mager” as “Luther’s Cradle Hymn.” In Murray’s popular songbook *Dainty Songs for Litle Lads and Lasses*, tradition claims that Martin Luther was its author, having sung it to his children each night before bed. It is believed that German mothers, following Luther’s example, also sang this song to their children. Truth be told, German mothers did not sing this song, at least not until they received it from ...the United States.

The tune was composed by a J. E. Clark. The author of the first two stanzas of the carol are unknown, and a man named Charles Hutchinson Gabriel, music director for Grace Methodist Episcopal Church, published a new version of the hymn that included the third verse. The legend of the song being that it was written by Martin Luther continued to grow as passing decades brought in the new century.

It’s likely we will never know the true author or the place of origin and the circumstances that led to the composition of this beautiful song, however, as has so eloquently been written of this song:

“Regardless of its author, the beauty of this carol is the beauty of Christmas. It is simple. Christmas is not the gold or glitter, the wrappings or trappings. It is the story of God humbling Himself to become a baby, born in crude circumstances to a young woman in ancient Palestine.”

JOYS AND CONCERNS and PASTORAL PRAYER

If you have a prayer to share, fill out a prayer card in your pew. Cards will be collected by one of the pastors during the hymn after the sermon, and will be shared during Joys and Concerns.

ORGAN RESPONSE

INVITATION TO SHARE OUR OFFERINGS

OFFERTORY MUSIC

The First Nowell

David Cherwien

*DOXOLOGY (Tune: *From All That Dwell Below the Skies*)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God all creatures here below. Alleluia, Alleluia.
Praise God above, ye heavenly host;
Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost.
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia! Amen.

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION (unison)

God, we bring these gifts, a small portion of our lives, and in this offering we find ourselves not lessened, but newly worthy, truly wealthy and deeply blessed. Amen.

*HYMN

Go, Tell It on the Mountain

No. 29

*THE LIGHT OF CHRIST GOES OUT INTO THE WORLD

*COMMISSION AND BENEDICTION (sung in unison)

The Work of Christmas

Howard Thurman

**When the song of the Angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins;
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among others,
To make music in the heart. Amen.**

*POSTLUDE

Sound the Bells on Christmas Day

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 on break this week and will resume next Sunday.
- Our church nursery is open, but not staffed today. It 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.
- 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.

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. 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, 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. Charlotte E. Y. Bell
 Shellie Brook
 Michael Havay
 Sally Hooper
 Steve Boczenowski, Doug Topliffe
 Tim Wiegand

Ministers to the World
 Associate Pastor
 Student Pastor
 Organist/Accompanist
 Deacon in Charge
 Deacons
 Videographer

CAREGIVERS CIRCLE is a support group for individuals providing caregiving to a family member, in your home, living away, or long distance. Caregiving can be a lonely role that is demanding and physically exhausting. The meeting enables the caregiver to receive support, and access resources that may help you to navigate the journey.

The first Caregivers Circle meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 21, 2025, 10:00 am - 11:30 am in the church parlor, on the second floor, accessible by the elevator or stairs. Light refreshments will be provided. The group will be facilitated by Rev. Charlotte Bell MDIV, MSW, and will be capped at 8-10 participants. You do not need to be a member of this church to attend. If you are interested in attending the meeting, kindly contact Pastor Charlotte by email revcbell20@gmail.com, or phone her office phone 603-673-3231 x14 and leave a message.

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.

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.

Financial Summary (as of November 30, 2024)

	YTD <u>Actual</u>	YTD <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.

Sunday, December 29, 2024

