

We welcome Joe Forte, timpanist, Britney Simone, mezzo-soprano, and Patrick Simone, bass-baritone as our guest musicians this evening. Special thanks to Charry Boris, Linda Peters and an anonymous donor for their generous contributions to cover the cost.

**THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT
Christmas Eve
December 24, 2014
Service of Lessons and Carols
10:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary**

*All of us at First Congregational Church
wish you a blessed Christmas and
a healthy, safe, and joyous New Year 2015.*



Church Directory

Ministers—All the people
Interim Pastor—The Rev. Susan L. Gibson
Organist and Choir Director—Timothy Wallace
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Christmas Eve
December 24, 2014
Service of Lessons and Carols
**All who are able please stand.*
Please turn off cell phones.

CHORAL PRELUDE

Candlelight Carol

Chancel Choir
John Rutter

How do you capture the wind on the water? How do you count all the stars in the sky? How can you measure the love of a mother, or how can you write down a baby's first cry? Candlelight, angel light, firelight and star-glow shine on his cradle till breaking of dawn. Gloria, gloria in excelsis Deo! Angels are singing, the Christ child is born.

Shepherds and wise men will kneel and adore him, Seraphim round him their vigil will keep; Nations proclaim him their Lord and their Savior, but Mary will hold him and sing him to sleep. Candlelight, angel light, firelight and star-glow shine on his cradle till breaking of dawn. Gloria, gloria in excelsis Deo! Angels are singing, the Christ child is born.

Find him at Bethlehem laid in a manger: Christ our Redeemer asleep in the hay. God-head incarnate and hope of salvation: A child with his mother that first Christmas Day. Candlelight, angel light, firelight and star-glow shine on his cradle till breaking of dawn. Gloria, gloria in excelsis Deo! Angels are singing, the Christ child is born.

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

Cloth for the Cradle, Iona Community

*When the world was dark
and the city was quiet,
you came.*

You crept in beside us.

And no one knew.

*Only the few
who dared to believe*

that God might do something different.

Will you do the same this Christmas, Lord?

*Will you come into the darkness of tonight's world;
not the friendly darkness*

*as when sleep rescues us from tiredness,
but the fearful darkness,*

*in which people have stopped believing
that war will end or that food will come*

or that a government will change

or that the Church cares?

SHARING THE LIGHT

Sabeel Liberation Theology Centre (Jerusalem), Shine on, Star of Bethlehem

On the Eve of Christmas Hatred will vanish

On the Eve of Christmas The earth will flourish

On the Eve of Christmas War will be gone

On the Eve of Christmas Love will be born

When we offer a glass of water to a thirsty person

it is Christmas

When we clothe a naked person with a gown of love

it is Christmas

When we wipe the tears from weeping eyes

it is Christmas

When the spirit of revenge dies in me

it is Christmas

When in my heart I no longer want to stay apart

it is Christmas

When I am buried in the being of God

it is Christmas

CAROL AND CANDLELIGHTING

(The candles are lit from the Christ Candle as we sing "Silent Night")

Silent Night, Holy Night

Arr. By Timothy Wallace

All four verses:

Grand Choir (All)

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 afar, 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.

Silent night, holy night, wondrous star, lend thy light; with the angels let us sing, alleluia to our King; Christ, the Savior, is born, Christ, the savior, is born.

BENEDICTION

Depart in peace, confident that God's love holds us all.

SIXTH LESSON *Luke 2:8-20* *The Shepherds and the Angels*

***CAROL**

Joy to the World

Chalice #155

SEVENTH LESSON *Matthew 2:1-12* *The three wise men*

INVITATION TO GIVE GIFTS

OFFERTORY

Chancel Choir

Cantique de Noel (O Holy Night)

O holy night, the stars are brightly shining, It is the night of the dear Savior's birth;

Long lay the world in sin and error pining, Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.

A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices, For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn;

Chorus

Fall on your knees, Oh hear the angel voices!

O night divine, O night when Christ was born!

O night, O holy night, O night divine.

Led by the light of faith serenely beaming, with glowing hearts by His cradle we stand.

Led by a star, above them brightly gleaming, appeared the wise men from far Eastern land.

The King of Kings lay in a lowly manger, to us this day is born to be our God:

Chorus

Fall on your knees, Oh hear the angel voices!

O night divine, O night when Christ was born!

O night, O holy night, O night divine.

EIGHTH LESSON *John 1:1-5* *The mystery of the incarnation*

Will you come into that darkness

and do something different

to save your people from death and despair?

Will you come into the quietness of this town,

not the friendly quietness

as when lovers hold hands,

but the fearful silence when

the phone has not rung

the letter has not come,

the friendly voice no longer speaks,

the doctor's face says it all?

Will you come into that darkness,

and do something different,

not to distract, but to embrace your people?

And will you come into the dark corners

and the quiet places of our lives?

We ask this not because we are guilt-ridden

or want to be,

but because the fullness our lives long for

depends upon us being as open and vulnerable to you

as you were to us, when you came,

wearing no more than diapers,

and trusting human hands

to hold their maker.

Will you come into our lives,

if we open them to you

and do something different?

When the world was dark

and the city was quiet you came.

You crept in beside us.

Do the same this Christmas, Lord.

Do the same this Christmas.

Amen.

CONGREGATIONAL INTROIT

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Chalice #119

INVOCATION

Cloth for the Cradle, Iona Community

Light looked down

and saw darkness.

"I will go there," said Light.

Peace looked down

and saw war.

"I will go there," said Peace.

Love looked down
and saw hatred.
"I will go there," said Love.

So
the Lord of Light
the Prince of Peace
the King of Love
came down
and crept in
beside us.

***CAROL** Chalice #148
O Come, All Ye Faithful

FIRST LESSON Luke 1:26-38 *The message of the angel*

LIGHTING OF THE FIRST ADVENT CANDLE

***CAROL** Chalice #149
Angels, from the Realms of Glory

SECOND LESSON Luke 1:39-45 *Good news for two women*

LIGHTING OF THE SECOND ADVENT CANDLE

ANTHEM Chancel Choir
Angel's Carol John Rutter

Have you heard the sound of the angel voices ringing out so sweetly, ringing out so clear? Have you seen the star shining out so brightly as a sign from God that Christ the Lord is Here? Have you heard the news that they bring from heaven to the humble shepherds who have waited long? Gloria in excelsis Deo! Hear the angels sing their joyful song.

Have you heard the sound of the angel voices ringing out so sweetly, ringing out so clear? Have you seen the star shining out so brightly as a sign from God that Christ the Lord is here? Have you heard the news that they bring from heaven to the humble shepherds who have waited long? Gloria in excelsis Deo! Hear the angels sing their joyful song.

He will bring new light to a world in darkness, like a bright star shining in the skies above; He will bring new hope to the waiting nations when he comes to reign in purity and love. Let the earth rejoice at the Savior's coming; let the heavens answer with the joyful morn: Gloria in excelsis Deo! Hear the angels singing 'Christ is born'.

THIRD LESSON Luke 1:46-55 *Mary's hymn of praise*

LIGHTING OF THE THIRD ADVENT CANDLE

CAROL Chalice #153
It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

FOURTH LESSON Matthew 1:18-25 *Joseph's Dream*

LIGHTING OF THE FOURTH ADVENT CANDLE

***CAROL** Chalice #162
What Child is This

PRAYER WITH LORD'S PRAYER

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 Chancel Choir
Christmas Bringeth Jesus Words: Christina Rossetti
Music: David Lantz III

Christmas hath darkness brighter than the blazing noon, Christmas hath a chillness warmer than the heat of June, Christmas hath a beauty lovelier than the world can show: For Christmas bringeth Jesus, brought for us, for us so low. Gloria, gloria, gloria, gloria, for Christmas bringeth Jesus, brought for us, for us so low.

Earth, strike up your music, birds that sing and bells that ring; Heaven hath answering music for all Angels soon to sing: Earth, put on you whitest bridal robe of spotless snow: For Christmas bringeth Jesus, brought for us so low. Gloria, gloria, gloria, gloria, for Christmas bringeth Jesus, brought for us, for us so low, For Christmas bringeth Jesus, brought for us so low. Gloria, gloria, gloria, gloria, for Christmas bringeth Jesus, brought for us, for us so low.

FIFTH LESSON Luke 2:1-7 *The birth of Jesus*

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

CAROL Chalice #147
Away in a Manger

