

# *Light of the World*



*Your savior  
is born today  
in David's city.*

*He is  
Christ the Lord.*

— \* —  
LUKE 2:11



## A Christmas Welcome!



Merry Christmas to you and your loved ones this year! What a gift it is to have you with us celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. We are people on a journey together which is why we say, "No matter who you are or where you are at on life's journey, you are welcome here." Just like those who journeyed to witness the miracle of God's love taking human form and being born into this world, you have journeyed here to be with us. Just like the Wise Men, who brought their greatest treasure to share with the Christ child, know that we treasure your presence with us here in this place.

Our hope is that today you are blessed; by music and sound, by warm relationships and grace filled moments, by words in scripture and sermon, by prayers and traditions that ground us in the meaning of what it means to be human: That God is love and love came down. We hope that you might be changed by your time with us and filled with the hope that we long to share.

We are a progressive and Open and Affirming church that is a gathering place for those who seek to grow deeper in their faith, appreciate diversity, and long for justice. With creativity, curiosity, and courage, we worship, work, and seek God's presence as we follow Jesus Christ into the world to love and serve our neighbors.

Christmas Eve is just one of the many occasions we gather to celebrate, grow and travel together on a journey. In the coming months our vital church has a lot of great opportunities to join in. A few include:



**Weekly Youth & Children's Groups:** Beginning in late January, a 10-week mini-Our Whole Lives program will be offered on Sundays to ANY AND ALL 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> graders. Email [swilterdink@firstcongoappleton.org](mailto:swilterdink@firstcongoappleton.org) or call Sarah at 920-851-9559 if you would like to receive more information in a couple of weeks!

**Youth Groups:** MS volunteers at Assisted Living Homes and HS volunteers at Pillars on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month. On the other Wednesdays, come discuss and live out progressive Christian values, social justice, mission work and more! An evening at Appleton Axe and a morning making a Pancake Breakfast are just a few of the things that are coming soon...

**Children's Ministry:** Join us during 9:30AM church services on Sundays as we learn how Bible stories help teach us to be kind, reflective, and productive people of God. Stay after church for Children's Musical practices that start soon.

**Romans Bible Study via Zoom:** Wednesdays at 6:30PM, January 3-February 7. Join Pastor Mary Jo and others in growing deeper through the richness of scripture study of Romans on Wednesday nights. Bible study books available: free in front office.

**New Co-Pastor Candidate Sunday:** January 14, 9:30AM: Come watch the church in action as we meet and welcome our new Co-Pastor as our congregation gathers to vote on welcoming the candidate. Reception is 3:00-5:00PM on Saturday, January 13!

**Sanctuary Choir, YHB, Children's Musical:** Our Sanctuary Choir & Youth Handbells resume rehearsals January 3. Children's Choir resumes on January 7. Children are also invited to participate in a children's musical which we will enjoy in worship on March 17!

We invite you to consider unwrapping the gift of our wonderful community in the coming months. We pray that this Christmas renews all of us in the Joy of Jesus Christ. We are grateful for all that the Lord has done and continues to do to through us and creation to cause us to celebrate, further expand our understanding of justice, and equip us to follow the baby who would become the great "I Am."

Hope to see you again, soon!

The Members and Staff of First Congregational United Church of Christ in Appleton

NOEL HALLELUJAH MERRY CHRISTMAS HAPPY NEW YEAR  
*Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas, Happy New Year*

# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

December 24, 2023      4:00 PM

Family "Do-It-Yourself" Nativity

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<b>Children's Ministry Locations for 4:00PM Service</b>
Childcare for Infants and Toddlers in the Childcare Room
All other children will stay in the service.

## PRELUDE

*I Am So Glad Each Christmas Eve*

Tune by Peder Knudsen

Setting by Wilbur Held

*Away in a Manger*

American Tune

Setting by David Aaron Miller

*He Is Born*

French Carol

Setting by Mark Albrecht

*Oh, Sleep Now, Holy Baby*

Hispanic Folk Tune

Setting by David Cherwien

Dr. Nathan Birkholz, *piano*    Jann Kostecke, *flute*    Jennifer Hodges Bryan, *oboe*

## RINGING OF THE BELL

## WELCOME AND GREETING

## CHORAL INTROIT

*He Came Down*

Trad., from the Cameroons

*What Can I Give Him? (from In the Bleak Midwinter)*

G. Holst

Poem by Christina Rossetti

*Sing We Nowell!*

Terry D. Taylor

First Congregational Children's Choir

## \*CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Can one night make such a difference?

**All: Can one star outshine all others?**

One: Can one baby change a world?

**All: Yes, a thousand times yes!**

One: On a night like this night,

**All: With stars shining so bright,**

One: One birth changes the world.

**All: Yes, even this night,**

One: Hope springs fresh,

**All: Joy leaps in every song,**

One: Forgiveness sets loose new possibilities,

**All: Love flows from heart to heart.**

One: Can one night make such a difference?

**All: Yes, a thousand times, yes!**

\*OPENING CAROL (Stanzas 1, 2 and 3)

*O Come, Little Children*

IHR KINDERLEIN KOMMET

1. **O come, little children, O come, one and all,  
to Bethlehem run, to the manger so small,  
and see this glad gift God has sent you this night  
to be your great gladness, your joy and delight.**
2. **He's born in a stable for you and for me;  
draw near by the bright gleaming starlight to see,  
in swaddling clothes lying so meek and so mild  
and purer than angels, the heavenly child;**
3. **See Mary and Joseph with love beaming eyes  
are gazing upon manger bed where he lies;  
the shepherds are kneeling with hearts full of love  
while angels sing loud alleluias above.**

#### LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

One: Through the messages of ancient prophets we have caught glimpses of the light that was promised. Now, though the wreath is ablaze and the candles of hope, peace, joy, and love, have been lit, still, there is another prophecy to hear.

**All: With eyes wide open, ears attuned and hearts unguarded, we gather,  
longing to receive the Word within the words of the prophet.**

One: **Old Testament Scripture: Isaiah 9:6-7** Common English Bible

A child is born to us, a son is given to us, and authority will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be vast authority and endless peace for

David's throne and for his kingdom, establishing and sustaining it with justice and righteousness now and forever.

**All: This night these words are fulfilled in our hearing and in our living, for the promise of God has come to us. No longer do we seek light from another source; now the light burns in our hearts, and we become love's lamp.**

One: So, we light the candle at the center of our wreath and of our faith. We light it in the name of the One who is the light, and, as Mary did so long ago, we name this light "Jesus."

**CAROL (Stanza 4)**

*O Come, Little Children*

IHR KINDERLEIN KOMMET

**4. Dear Christ Child, what gifts can we children now bring?  
No riches or treasures, but carols to sing  
and hearts filled with praise we would offer today;  
we offer them gladly; accept them, we pray.**

**BRIEF MEDITATION**

*"God's Moment of Glory"*

Rev. Nicholas Hatch

**INVITATION TO OFFERING**

**MUSICAL REFLECTION**

*Love Has Come*

Flute and Oboe duet

French Carol  
Setting by A. Roberts

(During this time, you are invited to a virtual offering. Please visit our webpage and click "Give" to make your weekly offering, or text FCUCC GIVE to 73256.)

**\*DOXOLOGY**

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

**\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

## AN UNEXPECTED CHRISTMAS

MARY & JOSEPH: Elise Burton & Abe Slowinski      ANGEL: Logan Fox

READERS: Shelley & Lauren Aaholm      Anne & Winry Brahe  
Cameron & Evan Gabbey      Sarah Wilterdink, Director for CYF

### A SURPRISE VISIT

CAROL (Stanzas 1 and 2)

*Away in a Manger*

AWAY IN A MANGER

1. **Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,  
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head  
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,  
the little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.**
2. **The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,  
but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.  
I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky,  
and stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.**

### THE SHEPHERDS KEEP WATCH

CAROL (Stanzas 1 and 2)

*Silent Night*

STILLE NACHT

1. **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.**
2. **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!**

### ANGEL GREETINGS

CAROL (Stanzas 1 and 2)

*The First Nowell*

THE FIRST NOWELL

1. **The first Nowell the angel did say  
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;**

in fields where they lay keeping their sheep,  
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

*Chorus:* Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, born is the King of Israel.

2. They looked up and saw a star  
shining in the east, beyond them far,  
and to the earth it gave great light,  
and so it continued both day and night. *Chorus*

## THE SHEPHERDS VISIT JESUS

CAROL (Stanzas 1 and 2)

*O Little Town of Bethlehem*

ST. LOUIS

1. O little town of Bethlehem,  
how still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
the silent stars go by;  
yet in thy dark street shineth  
the everlasting Light;  
the hopes and fears of all the years  
are met in thee tonight.
2. For Christ is born of Mary,  
and gathered all above,  
while mortals sleep, the angels keep  
their watch of wondering love.  
O morning stars, together  
proclaim the holy birth!  
And praises sing to God the King,  
and peace to men on earth.

## THE WISE MEN FOLLOW A NEW STAR

CAROL (Stanzas 1 and 2)

*We Three Kings of Orient Are*

KINGS OF ORIENT

1. We three kings of Orient are,  
bearing gifts we traverse afar,  
field and fountain, moor and mountain,  
following yonder star.

*Chorus:* O star of wonder, star of night,  
star with royal beauty bright,  
westward leading, still proceeding,  
guide us to thy perfect light.



2. **Born a king on Bethlehem's plain,  
gold I bring to crown him again,  
King forever, ceasing never  
over us all to reign. *Chorus***

CAROL (Stanzas 1, 2, and 4)

*O Come, All Ye Faithful*

ADESTE FIDELES

1. **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;**

*Chorus:* **O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
Christ, the Lord!**

2. **Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,  
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!  
Glory to God, all glory in the highest; *Chorus***
3. **Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning,  
Jesus, to thee be all glory given;  
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing; *Chorus***

CLOSING WORDS

\*CAROL

*Joy to the World*

ANTIOCH

1. **Joy to the world! The Lord has 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.**
2. **Joy to the earth! The Savior reigns:  
let men their songs employ  
while fields and floods,  
rocks, hills, and plains  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**

3. 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.

THE BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

*In dulci jubilo, BWV 729 (In Sweet Rejoicing)*

J. S. Bach

THANK YOU TO TODAY'S WORSHIP LEADERS

Pastor Nicholas J. Hatch

Pastor Mary Jo Laabs

Dr. Nathan Birkholz, *organ and piano*

Children's Choir, John Albrecht, *director*

Jann Kostecke, *flute*

Jennifer Hodges Bryan, *oboe*

John M. Albrecht, *Director for Music Ministries*

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**The church office will be closed Monday, December 25 and Tuesday, December 26.**

**To receive a tax credit on church donations for the 2023 year, all contributions must be received in the church office by 3:00 PM on Friday, December 29 or postmarked by December 31.**

**Sunday, December 31, 2023 Worship Service**

*"Living On the Edge"*

Pastor Mary Jo Laabs

Luke 2:22-40

Musicians: Shelley Nulton, *organ*; Congregational Carols

**RECEPTION**  
TO

*Welcome*

**THE NEW PASTOR  
AND FAMILY**

Saturday, January 13, 2024  
3:00 - 5:00pm  
Fellowship Hall

Please join us to meet the new pastor and family for fellowship and light hors d' oeuvres

**RSVP BY FRIDAY, JANUARY 5TH**

Email: [zgonzales@firstcongoappleton.org](mailto:zgonzales@firstcongoappleton.org)  
Phone: 920-733-7393



ON REALM

## *2023 Advent/Christmas Gifts*

*In memory of Evelyn & James P. Vercooteren ~ Beth Vercooteren*

*In memory of Carlton & Arlene Beyer ~ Joan & Steve Hawkins*

*In memory of loved ones lost ~ Murphy & Murphy-Pociask family*

*In memory of Charles Eggenberger ~ Jill Anthony*

*In memory of our parents, Rollie & Gen Rath and Lloyd & Marie Heinz ~ Karl & Rose Heinz*

*In memory of Adele & John Bowman and Marion & Elmer Gosse ~ Karen & Dick Gosse*

*In memory of Rev. Harvey Kandler ~ Nancy Kandler family*

*In memory of Bill & Jan Dougherty and Tom & Helen Giese ~ Mark & Lori Dougherty*

*In memory of Marge & Jim Forsythe (mom and dad) ~ Susan Forsythe*

*In memory of Alicia Rose Arndt Dorn - she is so missed ~ Anne Brahe*

*In memory of Edwin Heinrich ~ Carol Heinrich and family*

*In memory of Kristy's mom, Carolyn Snyder ~ John & Kristy Albrecht*

*In celebration of my greatest loves, Quinn Virginia and Bellamy Dixon ~ Kristen Scheuerman*

*In celebration of our choir ~ Cheryl & Ron Reissmann*

*In celebration of another Season of Miracles ~ Pat Hansen & Bill Lenz*

*In celebration of Esther Gehrt ~ Sara & Bruce Companik*