

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 9th-11th graders. Email 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 3rd 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

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
A SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS,
CANDLELIGHT AND COMMUNION**

December 24, 2023

8:00 PM

Children's Ministry Locations for 8:00PM Service
No Childcare

PRELUDE

Music of Christmas

Various

Dr. Nathan Birkholz, *organ and piano*

Carols of Christmas

Trad.

String Quartet

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

Joel Jicha, *bass*

R. S. Willis/E. Sears
arr. Joel Richard Jude Jicha

Come Love, Come Lord

Jack Murphy, *tenor*

Matthew Michelic, *viola*

R. Vaughan Williams
text by Richard Crashaw

WELCOME

A CAROL (Congregation stands for stanzas 2 and 3)

Once in Royal David's City

H. J. Gauntlett
arr. D. Willcocks

Stanza 1, Abe Slowinski, *boy treble*; Stanzas 2 and 3, ALL

**Please rise, in body or in spirit*

***2. He came down to earth from heaven**

**who is God and Lord of all,
and his shelter was a stable,
and his cradle was a stall;
with the poor and mean and lowly
lived on earth our Savior holy.**

***3. Not in that poor lowly stable,**

**with the oxen standing by,
we shall see him, but in heaven,
set at God's right hand on high;
where like stars his children crowned
all in white shall wait around.**

A BIDDING PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER (In unison)

**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.**

A CAROL FOR CHOIR

What Is This Lovely Fragrance?

Sanctuary Choir

French Carol
arr. Healey Willan

FIRST LESSON ISAIAH 6:1-8 (OT, P. 778)

God commissioned Isaiah to be a prophet of the Advent.

LouAnn Graf

RESPONSE

Leader: This is what God has done for us.

People: Thanks be to God!

A CAROL #148

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

Es Ist Ein' Ros

SECOND LESSON ISAIAH 11:1-9 (OT, P. 784)

Isaiah foretells Christ's birth and kingdom.

Pastor Dianne Droster

RESPONSE

Leader: This is what God has done for us.

People: Thanks be to God!

A CAROL #151

O Little Town of Bethlehem

St. Louis

THIRD LESSON LUKE 1:26-35 (NT, P. 69)

The Angel Gabriel announces to Mary that she will bear the Son of God.

Pastor Mary Jo Laabs

RESPONSE

Leader: This is what God has done for us.

People: Thanks be to God!

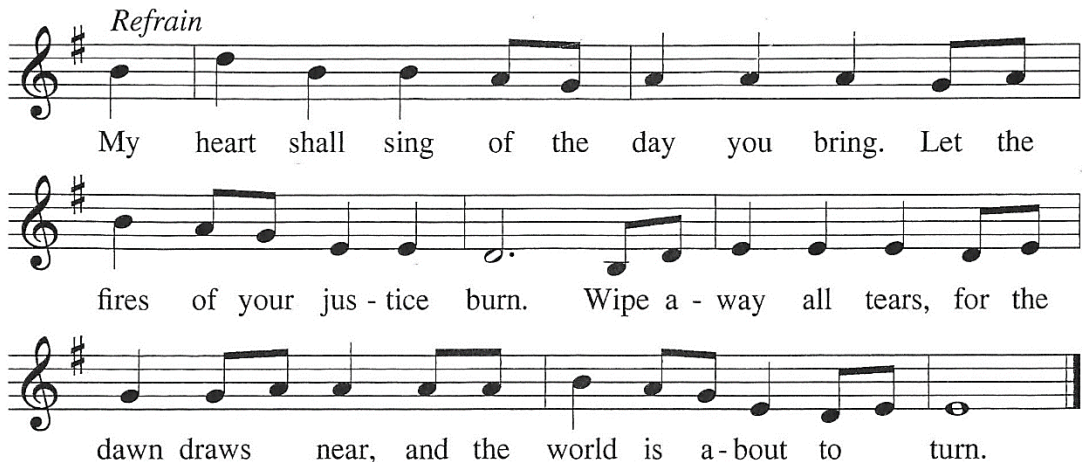
A CAROL FOR CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

My Heart Shall Sing (Based on *Magnificat*, Luke 1:46-55)

Rory Cooney
arr. Karen Marrolli

Lori Murphy, *violin* David Murphy, *percussion*
ALL are invited to join in singing the refrain printed below, on cue.

Refrain



My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the
fires of your jus - tice burn. Wipe a - way all tears, for the
dawn draws near, and the world is a - bout to turn.

from "Canticle of Turning." Text by Rory Cooney. Tune: *STAR OF THE COUNTY DOWN*, Irish melody, *adapt.* Rory Cooney.
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Used in *My Heart Shall Sing* by Karen Marrolli, published by MorningStar Music Publishers, Inc.

FOURTH LESSON MATTHEW 1:18–23 (NT, P. 1)

Marcus Lewis

St. Matthew tells of Christ's Holy birth. First Nations Version.

RESPONSE

Leader: This is what God has done for us.

People: Thanks be to God!

A DUET

Virgin's Slumber Song

Max Reger

Melanie Riley, *soprano* Dr. Karen Leigh-Post, *mezzo-soprano*

FIFTH LESSON LUKE 2:1–7 (NT, P. 71)

Jerry Dees

The Christ child is born.

RESPONSE

Leader: This is what God has done for us.

People: Thanks be to God!

What Child Is This



1 What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mar-y's lap is sleep-ing?
2 Why lies he in such mean es - tate where ox and ass are feed - ing?
3 So bring him in - cense, gold, and myrrh; come, peas-ant, king, to own him.



Whom an - gels greet with an-thems sweet while shep-herds watch are keep - ing?
Good Chris-tian, fear; for sin-ners here the si - lent Word is plead - ing.
The King of kings sal - va - tion brings; let lov - ing hearts en-throne him.



This, this is Christ the king, whom shep-herds guard and an-gels sing;
Nails, spear shall pierce him through, the cross be borne for me, for you;
Raise, raise the song on high, the vir - gin sings her lul - la - by;



haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mar - y!
hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe, the son of Mar - y!
joy, joy, for Christ is born, the babe, the son of Mar - y!



MEDITATION

“Who this child was - and will always be.”

Rev. Nick Hatch

A LULLABY

Excerpt from *Geistliches Wiegenlied, Op. 91* (A Sacred Cradlesong) Johannes Brahms

Dr. Karen Leigh-Post, *mezzo-soprano* Matthew Michelic, *viola*

*You who hover around these palms, in night and wind,
You holy angels, silence the tree-tops! My child is sleeping. . .*

A CALL FOR THE OFFERING

Pastor Mary Jo Laabs

A MUSICAL OFFERING

God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen

English carol
arr. J. N. Koudelka

Michael Murphy, *tenor* Lori Murphy, *violin*

(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.)

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

THE CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

INVITATION

UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Gracious God, who promised to send a Redeemer to your people, we confess that we have not trusted your promise but have busied ourselves with so many distractions. We give presents but fail to be present with one another.

We welcome friends but fail to welcome the stranger, the sojourner in our midst. We celebrate the holiday but ignore the holy-ness of this precious birth.

We pack up our Christmas stuff within days and forget to cherish the trust gifts of your Son, Jesus. Forgive us. Help us to see the real gifts of Christmas all around us. Help us to find our way to the manger tonight. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

*GLORIA PATRI (#36)

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be world without end. Amen.**

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

DISTRIBUTION OF THE ELEMENTS

(Gluten-free elements are available from an usher.)

MUSIC DURING COMMUNION

Still, Still, Still

Austrian Carol
arr. Norman Luboff

Sanctuary Choir Lori Murphy, *violin*

UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

We give you thanks, O God, that you have come to us through Jesus Christ, both in the midst of time and history in the city of Bethlehem and in the timeless presence of Christ's Spirit, as we receive the gifts of bread and fruit of the vine. Send us out into the world rejoicing, ready to share your love with the people we meet; through the grace of Jesus Christ. Amen.

SIXTH LESSON JOHN 1:1-14 (NT, P. 111)

Pastor Nick Hatch

St. John Reveals the Mystery of the Incarnation.

RESPONSE

Leader: This is what God has done for us.

People: Thanks be to God!

Note: During the candle-lighting, the ushers will come forward to receive the light of Christ and will share it with the person on the end of each pew. Please tip the unlit candle to the lit one and pass it down the row. We will extinguish the candles after the Benediction.

CANDLE-LIGHTING CAROL #142

Silent Night

Stille Nacht

Stanza 1, sung **in German by the choir** with guitar,
then **Stanzas 1, 2 and 3 sung in English by ALL.**

1. *Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht!
Alles schläft, einsam wacht
nur das traute, hochheilige Paar.
Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar,
schlaf in himmlischer Ruh,
schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!*
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!**

3. **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.**

THE BENEDICTION

*CONGREGATIONAL CAROL #132
O Come, All Ye Faithful

Adeste Fideles
arr. D. Willcocks

St. 1, 2 & 4

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

Pastor Dianne Droster

Dr. Nathan Birkholz, *organ and piano*

Sanctuary Choir

Dr. Karen Leigh-Post, *mezzo-soprano*; Matthew Michelic, *viola*; Lori Murphy, *violin*;

Melanie Riley, *soprano*; Joel Jicha, *bass and arranger*; Jack Murphy, *tenor, violin*;

Michael Murphy, *guitar, tenor, cello*; David Murphy, *percussion*; Abe Slowinski, *boy treble*

John M. Albrecht, *Director for Music Ministries*

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Sunday, December 31, 2023 Worship Service

"Living On the Edge"

Pastor Mary Jo Laabs

Luke 2:22-40

Musicians: Shelley Nulton, *organ*; Congregational Carols

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.

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
Phone: 920-733-7393



ON REALM

2023 Advent/Christmas Gifts

In memory of Evelyn & James P. Vercouteren ~ Beth Vercouteren

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