



*An Open and Affirming Congregation
of The United Church of Christ*



Order of Worship for December 24, 2021, 4:00pm

**Welcome to Worship at Center Church!
We are delighted that you are with us today.**

Christmas Eve

Service of Lessons & Carols

It's not over, this birthing. There are always newer skies into which God can throw stars. When we begin to think that we can predict the Advent of God that we can box the Christ in a stable in Bethlehem, that's just the time that God will be born in a place we can't imagine and won't believe. Those who wait for God watch with their hearts and not their eyes, listening, always listening for the angel words. - Ann Weems

PRELUDE: *Sweet Little Jesus Boy*
O Holy Night

R. MacGimsey
A. Adam

Stewart Battle, soloist
Caroline Christopher, soloist

WELCOME

Pastor Donna Cassity

CHORAL INTROIT: *Once in Royal David's City*

Vocal Quartet

Caroline Christopher, soprano Brianne Gilbert, alto
Chris Hartel, tenor Stewart Battle, bass

THE CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Come all who are faithful and all who seek joy in your lives.

All: It is the season to sing praises to God for the Christ Child is near.

Leader: The symbols of hope, peace, love, and joy shine brightly in our hearts.

All: May they remain with us throughout the year.

Leader: We now share a promise that was fulfilled by God:

**All: That the beloved Christ Child is born and will call us to new lives
of love, joy, and faith in action. Amen.**

INVOCATION PRAYER

CAROL: *O Come, All Ye Faithful*

(vs. 1, 2, and 4)

VERSE 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;

VERSE 2: Sing, choirs of angels, sing in
exultation;
O sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest;
Refrain

REFRAIN: O come, let us adore him, O
come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

VERSE 4: Yea, Lord we greet thee, Born
this happy morning,
Jesus, to thee be all glory given;
Word of the Father, now in flesh
appearing;
Refrain

The True Light

THE LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES

Lindsay & Layla Gibson

Reader: One candle for the Prophet who foresaw the Light. And we waited.

(The first candle is lit)

One candle for the Priest who received the Gift.

(The second candle is lit) And we waited.

One candle for the Mother who gave birth to the Christ Child.

(The third candle is lit) And we waited some more.

One candle for the Angels who sang the song.

(The fourth candle is lit)) And still we wait.

Reader:

We wait for the Light.

We wait for the Gift.

We wait for the Power.

We wait for the Song.

But waiting is so hard.

We get so impatient.

We count the days backwards:

How many days until Christmas?

Reader: Rejoice! We're nearly there. Our waiting is almost over. Later in the evening we will light the candle for Christ. For tonight the Baby is born. Christmas is finally here!

CAROL: *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

(vs 1 and 2)

VERSE 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 streets shineth the everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

VERSE 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 all on earth!

The Annunciation

OLD TESTAMENT READING: *Isaiah 9:2, 6-7*

ANTHEM: *Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence*

arr. G Holst
Center Church Choir
Caroline Christopher and Stewart Battle, solo

THE GOSPEL: *Luke 1:26-33*

CAROL: *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear*

(vs. 1 and 2)

VERSE 1: 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 Earth, goodwill to men, From heaven's all gracious king
The world in solemn still-ness lay, To hear the angels sing

VERSE 2: Still through the cloven skies they come, With peaceful wings un-furled
And still their heavenly music floats o'er all the weary world
Above its sad and lowly plains they bend on hovering wing
And ever o'er its Babel sounds the blessed angels sing

The Nativity

THE GOSPEL: *Luke 2:1-7*

Pastor Donna Cassity

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FOR ALL AGES

CHRISTMAS PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER (DEBTS)

CAROL: *Away in a Manger*

(vs. 1-3)

VERSE 1: Away in a manger, no crib for his bed, the little Lord Jesus lay down his sweet head
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay, the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay

VERSE 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

VERSE 3: Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask you to stay close by me forever and love me, I pray
Bless all the dear children in your tender care, and fit us for heaven to live with you there

The Christmas Offering

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

One: The Love of God is born new in the world as often as we embody that love
in the works of compassion, peace and justice.

All: Let us offer our gifts in a spirit of generosity and hope.

MUSICAL OFFERING: *Gesu Bambino (The Infant Jesus)*

P. Yon
Center Church Choir
Stewart Battle, soloist

*Prayer of Dedication (*in unison*)

**With these gifts, dear God,
accept the praise and thanksgiving of our hearts,
which rejoice in your goodness and love.
Let our gifts point to your presence in the world,
and further your dream for the world
through Jesus, Emmanuel, God-with-us. Amen.**

The Adoration

THE GOSPEL: *Luke 2:8-14*

CAROL: *Angels We Have Heard on High*

(vs. 1 and 3)

VERSE 1: Angels we have heard on high, Sweetly singing o'er the plains
and the mountains in reply echo back their joyous strains

REFRAIN: Glo - - - - - ria in excelsis deo
Glo - - - - - ria in excelsis deo

VERSE 3: Come to Bethlehem and see, Him whose birth the angels sing
Come adore on bended knee, Christ, the Lord, the newborn king

REFRAIN

THE GOSPEL: *Luke 2:15-20*

The Lighting of the Christ Candle

“and the glory of the Lord shone around them. . .”

Ushers will assist in the lighting of candles as the house lights are lowered.
When everyone's candles are lit, we will sing “Silent Night” together.

Please extinguish your candles carefully when the house lights come up during the last carol. Place them in the basket as you leave. If you are worshipping with children, we ask for their safety that you do not allow them to hold the lit candles. Thank you!

CAROL: *Silent Night*

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Silent Night, Holy Night

Joseph Mohr, 1792-1848
Tr. John F. Young, 1820-1885

STILLE NACHT Irregular
Franz Gruber, 1787-1863

1 Si - lent night, ho - ly night, All is calm, all is bright
2 Si - lent night, ho - ly night, Shep-herds quake at the sight,
3 Si - lent night, ho - ly night, Son of God, love's pure light

Round yon vir - gin moth-er and child. Ho - ly in-fant so ten-der and mild,
Glo - ries stream from heav-en a - far, Heaven-ly hosts sing al - le - lu - ia;
Ra - dant beams from thy ho-ly face, With the dawn of re - deem - ing grace,

Sleep in heav-en-ly peace, Sleep in heav-en-ly peace.
Christ, the Sav - ior, is born! Christ, the Sav - ior, is born!
Je - sus, Lord, at thy birth, Je - sus, Lord, at thy birth.

Pastor: Jesus Christ is the Light of the world.

All: A light no darkness can extinguish.

CLOSING HYMN: *Joy to the World*

130

Joy to the World! the Lord Is Come

Isaac Watts, 1674-1748

ANTIOCH C.M.

Attr. to Georg F. Handel, 1685-1759

Arr. by Lowell Mason, 1792-1872

1 Joy to the world! the Lord is come: Let earth re -
2 Joy to the earth! the Sav - ior reigns: Let men their
3 He rules the world with truth and grace, And makes the

ceive her King; Let ev - ery heart pre - pare him room,
songs em - ploy; While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
na - tions prove The glo - ries of his right - eous - ness,

And heaven and na - ture sing, And heaven and na - ture
Re - peat the sound - ing joy, Re - peat the sound - ing
And won - ders of his love, And won - ders of his

And heaven and na - ture sing, And
Re - peat the sound - ing joy, Re -
And won - ders of his love, And

sing, And heaven, and heaven and na - ture sing.
joy, Re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
love, And won - ders, won - ders of his love. A - men.

heaven and na - ture sing.
peat the sound - ing joy,
won - ders of his love,

*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE: *Medley of Carols*

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Our thanks to everyone who created today's service. Go in peace!

Center Church News & Announcements

Subscribe to our E-News newsletter for up-to-date news and happenings at Center Church:

<https://centerchurchhartford.org/>
<https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/OzymYij/CenterChurch>

And, don't forget to follow us on FB!



THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST IN HARTFORD

A member of the United Church of Christ (UCC)

CENTER CHURCH, 60 Gold Street, Hartford, CT 06103

Office Hours: Tuesday thru Friday, 9:30am to 3:30pm

Library Hours by Appointment

P 860.249.5631 F 860.246.3915 www.centerchurchhartford.org

Bridge Senior Pastor: The Reverend Donna Cassity (ext. 202)

***If you'd like to meet with Pastor Donna,
please schedule a time by calling Emily
in the office at 860-249-5631 ext. 200***

Minister Emeritus: The Reverend J. Alan McLean

Director of Music/Organist: Robert F. Gilbert (ext. 204)

Coordinator for Justice & Faith Formation Ministries: Dr. Eric Hearst (ext 209)

Church Office Manager: Emily McKenna (ext. 200)

Bookkeeper: Brenda Russell (ext. 201)

Sextons: Thomas St. Amant and Ileia Belton Sunday

Meals Program Coordinator: Carrie Howe (ext 205)

Nursery Care: Tina Franklin

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Would you like to learn more about Center Church? Email us at info@cchartford.org

AN OPEN AND AFFIRMING Congregation. "We include into full participation in the life of this church persons of any age, race, economic status, gender, sexual orientation, marital status and physical, emotional and mental capacity" (from the statement adopted October 23, 1994.) In recognition of the richness of backgrounds of our congregation, a **DIVERSITY OF LANGUAGES** will find expression in our worship services. Center Church offers an **OPEN COMMUNION**. Adults and children from all religious backgrounds are invited to partake. **TEXT ALERTS** To receive text alerts regarding church activities and cancellations, please text the word CENTER to (860) 300-3697. (Message and data rates may apply according to your data plan.)

FACEBOOK LIVE We livestream our worship services on Facebook each week, and your presence here constitutes your permission for your image to be shown. If you prefer not to be seen, speak with the minister or whoever is operating the phone up front to determine where a good seat might be to avoid the camera. Our viewership is growing and we are excited to welcome a congregation in cyberspace!

Church Information

ON STREET PARKING is available during Sunday Worship Services on Gold Street and on the west side of Lewis Street, and is FREE on Sundays. The church is maintaining our relationship with the Traveler's Garage which is temporarily closed due to Covid-19. Stay tuned as we partner with other garages in the area.

REST ROOMS are located in the basement of the Meeting House. Please use the stairs in the southeast corner of the building. For safety, please have an adult accompany your child to the restroom.

CHURCH SCHOOL is held at the Church House (60 Gold Street) for preschool to 12th Grade. Children are to remain with their families in the Meeting House during worship until they depart for Church School following the Children's Moment. Please pick your child up promptly at 12:00pm. For their safety, children will remain with their Church School instructor until an adult picks them up. Church School is not held during the Summer.

CHILDCARE and NURSERY care are provided by trained, capable, and nurturing staff and volunteers, and is available in the Meeting House basement for infants and toddlers (up to two years of age.) A nursery without staff is also located on the second floor of the Church House.

CURRENT SUNDAY ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION CLASSES Announcements regarding Adult Education classes are announced in our publications.

HANDICAPPED ACCESS to the sanctuary is via the lift outside at the south end of the portico. If possible, please call the church office in advance for assistance in using the lift.

The latest issue of **CENTER CHURCH E-NEWS** is available on our church website. If you would like a paper copy mailed to you, please contact us at info@cchartford.org / 860-249-5631