



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



**Order of Worship for
December 17, 2023, 10:30am**

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

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

**Please rise in body or spirit.*

CHIMES

ORGAN PRELUDE: *Greensleeves*

arr. R. Vaughn-Williams

CHORAL INTROIT: *How Great Our Joy!*

H. Jungst

WELCOME

BECOMING PRESENT – AN ADVENT RITUAL

Leader: The faith narrative is careful to show us a lineage from King David to Jesus. It is no ordinary lineage; it is one that began in the shepherding of sheep, of leading and delivering the people in search of a home. Mary's womb becomes part of that lineage of love, offering the world the gift of God's presence "in the flesh." As we enter the story of the birth of Love Among Us, we are invited to be present with love. We may think the perfect gift is outside our reach to give, but in reality we have all that we need... the heart's love and presence.

Dan Theriault, Soloist:

What can I give Him, poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;

If I were a Wise [One], I would do my part;

Yet what can I give Him: I will give my heart.

Reader: We unwrap a present on this third Sunday of Advent with great anticipation for the gift that God will reveal.

People: We open our hearts as we open the gift!

Reader: The promise of Love is the Divine Gift we receive.

People: And what will we do with it?

Reader: The gift of love is the essence of the birth of Christ.

The Holy One wanted to be so present to us that God's Spirit became flesh in order to inhabit the gifts of touching, healing, comforting, and challenging.

Love is the clarion call to us as Jesus' disciples.

The more love we put into the world, the better the world will be.

People: We light this Candle of Love as a sign that we will be

Present with Love in the world.

[congregation joins singer]

What can I give Him, poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;

If I were a Wise [One], I would do my part;

Yet what can I give Him: I will give my heart.

PRAYER OF PRESENCE (*unison*)

Let us pray:

**Holy Living Light of God,
you are our Loving Presence.**

**Let this love grow in our lives each day,
so we can be a Present of Love to others.**

Unwrap and open our hearts.

May it be so.

Amen.

OPENING HYMN: NCH 126 *Angels From The Realms of Glory*

tune: REGENT SQUARE

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

We encourage you to greet each other verbally or by a friendly wave of peace

Did you ever participate in a Christmas pageant as a child? Do you remember your role(s)?

SCRIPTURE: *2 Samuel 7:1-11 & Psalm 89:1-4*

Reader: King David didn't start out a king. He started out as a caretaker of sheep. God's anointed ones — whether that is a King like David or the "Christ," which means "anointed one" — come time and again in our faith narrative from humble beginnings, from those who tend carefully to those in their care. Hear this excerpt from the Book of Second Samuel:

When David finally settled into the palace, and YHWH gave him rest from enemies on every side, he said to the prophet Nathan, "Here I am living in this house of cedar while the Ark of God sits in a tent!" Nathan replied to David, "Go, do whatever you have in mind, for YHWH is with you." That night the word of YHWH came to Nathan, and said, "Go and tell my servant David that this is what YHWH wants: 'Are you the one to build me a Temple? I have been without a Temple from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a Tent as my dwelling place. Wherever I traveled with the people of Israel, did I ever say to the governors whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, "Why have you not built me a Temple made out of cedar?"' "Now then, tell my servant, David, 'This is what YHWH Omnipotent says: I took you from the pastures and from following sheep to be the ruler of my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you went, and destroyed all your enemies in your path. I will give you fame like the fame of the great ones on the earth. I will provide a place for my people Israel. I will plant them where they will have a home of their own — a place where they will never be disturbed. Never again will the sinners oppress them as they did in the past ever since the time I appointed judges to lead my people Israel. I will give you security from all your enemies. . . Furthermore, I alone will establish your house.'"

The gift of God's presence permeates the scriptures and finds its culmination in the presence of God among us, living and in the flesh. God's love is steadfast, from generation to generation.

We are the heirs of the kin-dom, the family, of God. No matter what happens in this world, we are not alone. Let us read responsively:

Forever I will sing the wonders of your love, YHWH,
proclaiming your faithfulness to all generations!
**I'll tell them that your love stands firm forever,
your fidelity is fixed in the heavens.**
“I have made a covenant with my chosen;
sworn an oath to David, my faithful one:
**‘I will establish your line forever,
and make your throne firm throughout all generations.’”**

GOSPEL READING: *Luke 1:26-38*

Reader: And so it is that the Child of Love comes from the most humble of families, though we are sure to be informed by the gospel writer that Joseph was from the lineage of David. While David had built a house for God in his time, Mary's womb became a house of the holy in hers. She accepts the role she is given... to be Present with Love growing inside of her.

Six months later, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a young woman named Mary; she was engaged to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. Upon arriving, the angel said to Mary, “Rejoice, highly favored one! God is with you! Blessed are you among women!” Mary was deeply troubled by these words and wondered what the angel's greeting meant. The angel went on to say to her, “Don't be afraid, Mary. You have found favor with God. You'll conceive and bear a son, and give him the name Jesus — ‘Deliverance.’ His dignity will be great, and he will be called the Only Begotten of God. God will give Jesus the judgment seat of David, his ancestor, to rule over the house of Jacob forever, and his reign will never end.” Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I have never been with a man?” The angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you — hence the offspring to be born will be called the Holy One of God. Know too that Elizabeth, your kinswoman, has conceived a child in her old age; she who was thought to be infertile is now in her sixth month. Nothing is impossible with God.” Mary said, “I am the servant of God. Let it be done to me as you say.” With that, the angel left her.

REFLECTION: *Love*

Rev. Liza Arulampalam

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS TABLEAU

Please join our church's young people in singing the carols during this morning's tableau.

COME, THOU LONG EXPECTED JESUS

Come, Thou long expected Jesus
Born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us,
Let us find our rest in Thee.
Israel's strength and consolation,
Hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver,
Born a child and yet a King,
Born to reign in us forever,
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.
By Thine own eternal Spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone;
By Thine all sufficient merit,
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

O COME ALL YE FAITHFUL

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;
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

AWAY IN A MANGER

Away in a manger, no crib for a 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.
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 'til morning is
nigh.

HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING

Hark! The herald angels sing,
“Glory to the new-born King;
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!”
Joyful, all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With th’angelic host proclaim,
“Christ is born in Bethlehem!”
Hark! The herald angels sing,
“Glory to the new-born King!”

WE THREE KINGS OF ORIENT ARE

We three kings of Orient are
Bearing gifts we traverse afar—
Field and fountain, moor and mountain
Following yonder star.
O, star of wonder, star of night,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect Light.

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL: NCH 139 *The First Noel*

tune: THE FIRST NOWELL

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Dan Theriault, Soloist:

*Right here and right now we open our senses
to see and perceive the gifts we've been given,*

*to know and believe that what we must do
is open our hearts to let all gifts flow through.*

PRAYER & QUESTIONS

Soloist and Congregation:

***Right here and right now we open our senses
to see and perceive the gifts we've been given,
to know and believe that what we must do
is open our hearts to let all gifts flow through.***

PRAYER

Soloist and Congregation:

***Right here and right now we open our senses
to see and perceive the gifts we've been given,
to know and believe that what we must do
is open our hearts to let all gifts flow through.***

CALL TO OFFERING

OFFERTORY: *O Holy Night*

arr. J. Rutter

Katie Suarez and Chris Dukes, soloists & The Center Church Choir

*DOXOLOGY: *O Come Let Us Adore Him*

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It consists of two systems of music. The first system has a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The vocal line begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: "O come, let us a - dore him, O come, let us a - dore him,". The piano accompaniment begins with a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. The second system also has a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The vocal line continues with the lyrics: "O come, let us a - dore him, Christ, the Lord! A-men." The piano accompaniment continues with the same key signature and includes chords and melodic lines.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

*CLOSING CAROL: NCH 132 *Joy To The World*

tune: ANTIOCH

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BENEDICTION

CHORAL BENEDICTION

ORGAN POSTLUDE: *Swiss Noel*

L. C. Daquin

Center Church News & Announcements

Subscribe to our E-News newsletter for up-to-date news and happenings at Center Church: <https://centerchurchhartford.org/>
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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 Thursday, 9:30am to 2:30pm

Library Hours by Appointment

P 860.249.5631 F 860.246.3915 www.centerchurchhartford.org

Senior Pastor: The Reverend Liza Arulampalam (ext. 202)

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

*If you'd like to meet with Pastor Liza,
please schedule a time by
sending her an email at pastor@cchartford.org*

Minister Emeritus: The
Reverend J. Alan McLean

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

Church Office Manager:
Emily McKenna (ext. 200)

Bookkeeper: Brenda Russell
(ext. 201)

Sexton: Thomas St. Amant

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