Promise
fulfilled

A FAMILY & CHILDREN OF ALL AGES CHRISTMAS EVE

December 24, 2020 **4:00 PM**

*****If it is comfortable for you to do so, please stand.

PRELUDE *Of the Father's Love Begotten* W. Held
Divinum Mysterium *(1914 – 2015)*

GREETING

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for God has visited and redeemed God's people.

People: God has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of God's servant David.

Leader: The day shall dawn upon us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,

People: To guide our feet into the way of peace and blessedness.

UNISON PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Loving God, by the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ you have given us the true light to shine in our darkness. Move among us as we gather to celebrate the promise made plain in your advent in our lives so that we may see ourselves and each other more clearly and raise our voice in thanksgiving for your grace among us. We pray this in the name of the One whose birth we now celebrate, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

***HYMN 132** *O Come, All Ye Faithful* ADESTE FIDELIS
Portugese, 17th century

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come- ye to Beth-lehem;
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!

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning,
Jesus, to thee-- be all glo-ry giv'n;
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing;
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him-, Christ, the Lord!

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

Leader: Rejoice, people of God! The light has come into the world. Now we light the candle of Christ's nativity! With the company of heaven and with sounds of great joy, Christ comes to us. This is the time of light and resplendent joy. The prophet Isaiah proclaimed a time when those who walked in the shadows would see a great light. A light would shine and a child would be born to us. The evangelist Luke painted the nativity sky and repeated the heavenly song of the angels, "Glory, peace on earth and goodwill!" John declared that this great light is Christ, the Word made flesh. This great light lives among us. By it we behold God's glory—full of grace and truth. At Christ's nativity, we now rejoice.

People: God, our Life and Light, thank you for coming this night to us. Thanks for touching all heaven and earth with your splendor. In every corner of the world, shine with your peace. In every corner of our hearts, shine this night with your grace. Amen.

(The Christ candle is lit)

POEM *Star Giving* Ann Weems

What I'd really like to give you for Christmas
is a star…
Brilliance in a package,
something you could keep in the pocket of your jeans
or in the pocket of your being.
Something to take out in times of darkness,
something that would never snuff out nor tarnish,
something you could hold in your hand,
something for wonderment,
something for pondering,
something that would remind you of
what Christmas had always meant:
God's Advent light into the darkness of this world
But stars are only God's for giving,
and I must be content to give you words and wishes and
packages without stars.
But I can wish you life
as radiant as the Star
that announced the Christ Child's coming,
and as filled with awe as the shepherds who stood
beneath its light.
And I can pass on to you the love
that has been given to me,
ignited countless times by others,
who have knelt in Bethlehem's light.
Perhaps if you ask, God will give you a star.

OFFERTORY *Bring Your Torch, Jeanette, Isabella* UN FLAMBEAU
Mary Bliss, cello *French, 18th century*
Cynthia Bliss, piano *arr. D. Kelley*

***DOXOLOGY** OLD HUNDRETH LM

***UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

Amazing God, we want to invest in your promise of endless peace when the authority of your holy child is established. Let your peace come here and now as we dedicate ourselves and our offerings for the purpose of upholding justice and extending the gift of salvation to all people. May our offerings and our lives be a blessing to others, proclaiming good news of great joy in ways that all of us can understand. Amen.

FIRST LESSON Isaiah 9:2-7

HYMN 134 *O Little Town of Bethlehem* ST. LOUIS
English, 19th century

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.

How silently, how silently, The wondrous- gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts The blessings- of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming, But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him, still The dear Christ en-ters in.

SECOND LESSON Luke 1:26-38

HYMN 140 *What Child Is This?* GREENSLEEVES
English, 19th century

What child is this-, who, laid to rest, On Mary's lap- is sleeping?
Whom angels greet- with anthems sweet-,
While shep--herds watch- are keeping?

Refrain: *This, this- is Christ the King-,*
Whom shepherds guard- and angels sing:
Haste, haste- to bring him laud-, The babe-, the son- of Mary.

Why lies he in- such mean estate- Where ox and ass are feed-ing?
Good Christian, fear-: for sinners here- The silent Word is pleading.
Refrain

THIRD LESSON Luke 2:1-7

VOLUNTARY *He Is Born* *IL EST NÉ*
French, 18th century
arr. C. McMichael

FOURTH LESSON Luke 2:8-20

HYMN 116 *Angels We Have Heard on High* GLORIA
French, 18th century

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.*

Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
Say what may the tidings be, Which inspire our heavenly song.
Refrain

FIFTH LESSON John 1:1-5, 14

HYMN 138 *Silent Night* STILLE NACHT
Austrian, 19th century

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.

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE Rev. Dr. Andrew Armstrong

CHRISTMAS EVE PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER (debts/debtors)

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.

***HYMN 130** *Joy to the World! The Lord Is Come!* ANTIOCH

English, 18th century

Joy to the world! The Lord is 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 hea--ven and nature sing.

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.

***BENEDICTION**

Leader: Let us look up, lest we miss the light. Let us go where God leads, lest we miss the good news.

People: Let us leave behind the burdens God has lifted. We want to embrace the hope of God's justice.

Leader: Sing a new song to the God of our salvation. Declare God's glory by the way we live.

People: We want our lives to be songs of praise. We want to communicate the joy we have found.

Leader: God's truth and righteousness will prevail. The child of Bethlehem will lead us.

All: Then we will follow where Christ leads. Glory to God and peace on earth! Amen.

***BENEDICTION RESPONSE 130** *He Rules the World with Truth and Grace!*

He rules the world with truth and grace, And make the nations prove
The glo--ries of-- his righteousness--, And wonders of his love,
And wonders of his love, And won--ders, won--ders of his love.

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Worship Leaders: Rev. Dr. Andrew Armstrong,
LeeAnne Steenhoek, Director of Christian Formation

Minister of Music: Joseph R. Olefirowicz, CAGO

A Blessed Christmas to You All -
May Peace Prevail on Earth.

THE FIRST CHURCH

STAFF

Senior Minister, *Rev. Dr. Andrew W. Armstrong*, aarmstrong@tfcucc.org
Associate Minister for Congregational Care, *Rev. Jami D. Boyle*, jboyle@tfcucc.org
Minister of Music, *Joseph R. Olefirowicz, CAGO*, jolefirowicz@tfcucc.org
Director of Christian Formation, *LeeAnne Steenhoek, lsteenhoek*@tfcucc.org
Church Business and Marketing Manager, *Dianne Smigliani*, dsmigliani@tfcucc.org
Secretary/Receptionist, *Susan T. Englander*, senglander@tfcucc.org
Sexton, *Bruce Lund*

Pastors Emeriti, *Rev. James S. Chaloner & Rev. Dr. Jeffrey C. Evans*

WELCOME

A warm welcome is extended to all who are attending this worship service. A special greeting to those who are visiting or worshiping for the first time. Please sign the guest book in the back of the sanctuary or fill out the visitor card found in the pew racks. Fill out the back of the card, and put it in the offering plate or hand it to a minister, Usher or Deacon so we may acknowledge your visit. Join in the time of fellowship, in Chapel Hall, following worship. If you have any questions about the life and ministry of First Church, please seek out the individuals wearing colored name tags; they are members of the various boards and committees.

INFORMATION

First Church was gathered on December 16, 1685 as The Church of Christ in Dunstable. On the same day Thomas Weld was ordained and settled as minister of the church. The current building, built in 1894, is the tenth building to house the First Church community. In 1961, the church entered fellowship with the United Church of Christ. We welcome into our membership any who will own the covenant of First Church and seek to continue the ministry of Jesus Christ in the community and world. Those interested in joining the church should contact the church office for information. New members are received during worship in November, February and May. The Sacrament of Communion is celebrated on the first Sunday of the month and the Sacrament of Baptism on the last. First Church is supported almost entirely by pledges. Every member is expected to make a financial pledge according to their ability.

PASTORAL CARE

Pastoral Care is available to all in need. Please keep the ministers informed of occasions of sickness, sorrow, and joy. Let the church office know if you or family member or friend is hospitalized.

COMMUNICATIONS

All information for the weekly bulletin must be in the office by noon on Wednesday. All information for the monthly newsletter must be in the office by 4:30 PM on the second Monday of the month.

All use of the building must be scheduled by the Secretary.

The First Church * One Concord Street * Nashua, New Hampshire 03064 882-4861

In-person Sunday Worship Service: 10:00 AM- The service is livestreamed & airs on WSMN Radio AM 1590 & FM 95.3. The Church Office is closedto visitors at this time. Staff is available for phone calls Monday-Friday 9:00 AM- Noon and 1:00- 4:00 PM.
Visit our web site at www.tfcucc.org
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