



First Congregational Church of Walpole, UCC
December 15, 2024, 10:00 a.m.
Third Sunday of Advent

*Keep fighting for freedom and justice, beloveds, but don't forget to have fun doin' it.
Lord, let your laughter ring forth. Be outrageous, ridicule the fraidy-cats,
rejoice in all the oddities that freedom can produce.*

— Molly Ivins

*Time is too slow for those who wait, too swift for those who fear,
too long for those who grieve, too short for those who rejoice,
but for those who love, time is eternity.*

— Henry Van Dyke

PRELUDE

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

INTROIT

CALL TO WORSHIP (Based on Psalm 12:2-6)

Leader: Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust. I will not be afraid.

People: **God is my strength and my song. God has become my salvation.**

Leader: With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

People: **On that day we will say: "Give thanks to God,
and call upon God's holy name.**

Make known God's deeds among the nations.

Leader: Sing praises to God, who has done gloriously.

Let God's works be known in all the earth.

All: **Shout, and sing for joy, inhabitants of Zion.**

Great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

HYMN* NCH #43 *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*

PRAYER OF INVOCATION AND CONFESSION* (unison)

O God, we wait for you to become flesh, the fruit of Mary's womb. We wonder at your love for us; you who call worlds into being, though not a sparrow falls without your notice. You are in the atom and the galaxy. Fill us with reverence and awe, so we may know your presence every moment. We are distracted by petty things and squander the time you give us. Too often we ignore your image in the ones closest to us. Forgive us, we pray. Reform us, so we might find joy in your service. Draw us ever closer, as we open our hearts to you in silence...

WORDS OF ASSURANCE*

SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST*

Leader: May the peace of Christ be with you.

People: And also with you.

LIGHTING THE CANDLE OF LOVE —Jane Vesper and Minna Good

Leader: We light the first candle to recall the prophet's great hope for a messiah.
(The first candle is lit.)

Leader: We light the second candle to herald the Prince of Peace and to signal our commitment to building a peaceful world.
(The second candle is lit.)

Leader: And today, we light a third candle, the candle of love, to remember the shepherds, whose love and care for their sheep became the example of God's love for us.
(The third candle is lit).

Leader: We think of everything this season of love means to us:

People: Love to our families, to our world; and we ask God's presence to deepen and increase our devotion to those who are far and near.

Leader: Let us pray.

All: Eternal God, with you each moment is full of wonder and surprise. We pray this Advent Day for the depth of love that keeps us centered and watchful for the coming Christ. Grant that we may not be found sleeping in our accustomed ruts, but awaken us to newness of life. Amen.

ADVENT HYMN *O Come, O Come Emmanuel vs. 3 and 4*

*O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer
our spirits by thine advent here;
and drive away the shades of night,
and pierce the clouds and bring us light! (Refrain)*

[Refrain:]

*Rejoice! rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel!*

*O come, thou Key of David, come,
and open wide our heavenly home;
make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery. (Refrain)*

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

LORD'S PRAYER (trespasses)

JOYS AND CONCERNS

PASTORAL PRAYER

SUNG AMEN

SCRIPTURE LESSONS: Zephaniah 3:14-20; Luke 3:7-18

Zephaniah 3:14-20

Sing, Daughter Zion;

shout aloud, Israel!

Be glad and rejoice with all your heart,

Daughter Jerusalem!

¹⁵ The LORD has taken away your punishment,
he has turned back your enemy.

The LORD, the King of Israel, is with you;
never again will you fear any harm.

¹⁶ On that day
they will say to Jerusalem,

“Do not fear, Zion;
do not let your hands hang limp.

¹⁷ The LORD your God is with you,
the Mighty Warrior who saves.

He will take great delight in you;
in his love he will no longer rebuke you,
but will rejoice over you with singing.”

¹⁸ “I will remove from you
all who mourn over the loss of your appointed festivals,
which is a burden and reproach for you.

¹⁹ At that time I will deal
with all who oppressed you.

I will rescue the lame;

I will gather the exiles.

I will give them praise and honor
in every land where they have suffered shame.

²⁰ At that time I will gather you;
at that time I will bring you home.

I will give you honor and praise
among all the peoples of the earth

when I restore your fortunes^[a]

before your very eyes,”

says the LORD.

Luke 3:7-18

⁷ John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸ Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ⁹ The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”

¹⁰ “What should we do then?” the crowd asked. ¹¹ John answered, “Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.”

¹² Even tax collectors came to be baptized. “Teacher,” they asked, “what should we do?”

¹³ “Don’t collect any more than you are required to,” he told them. ¹⁴ Then some soldiers asked him, “And what should we do?” He replied, “Don’t extort money and don’t accuse people falsely—be content with your pay.”

¹⁵ The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. ¹⁶ John answered them all, “I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with^[b] the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” ¹⁸ And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them.

SCRIPTURE RESPONSE

Leader: For the Word in Scripture, for the Word among us,
For the Word within us:

All: **Thanks be to God!**

SUNG RESPONSE (2 Times) Psalm 119:105

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

SERMON

HYMN* NCH #546 *Jesus, Lover of My of Soul*

CALL TO OFFERING

OFFERTORY

DOXOLOGY* Old Hundredth

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;

Praise Christ, the Word in flesh born low;

Praise God above, you heavenly host:

Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION* (unison)

God, you have given us so much. Accept, we pray, this portion we return for ministry in your name. Grant us wisdom to serve your purposes with vision and compassion. Grant us courage to follow where you lead, so we may be known for devotion to your Word, our passion for justice, and for shining the light of your love in all that we say and do. In Christ pray. Amen.

HYMN* TWC #622 *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*

BENEDICTION*

BENEDICTION RESPONSE* *Go Now in Peace*

Go now in peace. Never be afraid. God will go with you each hour of every day.

Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true. Know He will guide you in all you do.

Go now in love, and show you believe.

Reach out to others so all the world can see.

God will be there watching from above. Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.

POSTLUDE

The First Congregational Church of Walpole, NH is an Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ. Open and Affirming (ONA) is the United Church of Christ's (UCC) designation for congregations, campus ministries, and other bodies in the UCC which make a public covenant of welcome into their full life and ministry to persons of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions.

Pastor: Reverend Richard Malmberg

Ushers and Greeters: Charlie Lennon and Sue Krebs

Lay reader: Becky Pearson

Zoom Director: Paul Looney

Church Staff:

Office Administrator: Jane Vesper **Treasurer:** Tracey Martin

Music Director: Anna Dunn

Clerk: Linda Wright

Church Office Hours: M – F, 9 a.m.-12 noon

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Please pray for:

Dean Prentiss, Bill Sudsbury, Chuck Shaw,
Linda Smith, Ann Rogers, Stephen Hill,
Dave Adams, Carole Hill, Keith Sayers,
Brenda Turner, Marie Robbins.

Our sister church in Chiredzi, Zimbabwe

Members living in retirement homes:

Becky Hubbard, Carol Lamp

Convenient Online Giving to the First Congregational Church of Walpole is available through our website. Thank you for your support!

<https://apps.digigiv.org/o/walpolenhucc>

Peter Graves is the Deacon of the month of December.