

Advent
December 15, 2024

**FIRST CHURCH
IN CAMBRIDGE**
Congregational 1633-1636
United Church of Christ
Garden and Mason Streets
Cambridge, Massachusetts

WELCOME TO FIRST CHURCH IN CAMBRIDGE...

Grounded in God • Growing in Community • Acting in Love

We're glad you are worshiping with us today! First Church is a vibrant, multi-generational, engaged, urban church. We care a lot about each other and what's happening in the world around us. Wherever you are on the journey of faith, you are welcome here.

FIRST CHURCH
IN CAMBRIDGE
CONGREGATIONAL

388 YEARS
ON THE WAY

1636 – 2024

December 15, 2024

Liturgist

Lindsey Baker

Preaching Today

Mike Solberg, *Interim Senior Minister*

Leading Worship

Isabel Atkinson, Cynthia Mathiesen, Maddy Stewart,

and Molly Tucker, *guest musicians*

Kate Layzer, *Minister of Street Outreach*

Lee Prouty, *Facilities Manager*

Peter Sykes, *Music Director*

Bulletin Cover

Advent image by Perry Neubauer, from the church archives

Today's Programs and Events

- 9:30 a.m. Multigenerational Advent Formation, Harter Room
- 10:15 a.m. Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary
- 11:00 a.m. Hybrid Morning Worship, Sanctuary and [via livestream](#)
- 11:20 a.m. Church School: Godly Play and Bible 101 classes, Library and The Well
- 12:15 p.m. Refreshments in Hastings Common
- 7:30 p.m. Night Song, Sanctuary and [via livestream](#)

New to First Church?

Have you just begun joining us for worship? Consider filling out a visitor card found on the small clipboards or this "[virtual visitor card](#)" so that we might connect with you about our community.

Give to First Church

You can give electronically by using the QR code in the bulletin or explore more options for giving at: www.firstchurchcambridge.org/give

Contact a Pastor or Staff Member

Find [contact information](#) for our ministerial, program, and building staff on our website.

For general information and inquiries: info@firstchurchcambridge.org

Minister On Call

If you have an urgent pastoral need, please call 617-547-2724 ext. 222. Your call will be routed to a First Church minister based on a rotating schedule that covers staff time off.

GATHERING

VOLUNTARY

Toccata

Johann Pachelbel

*HYMN

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

alt. Kate Layzer

**O come, Thou Wisdom, from on high, and order all things far and nigh;
to us the path of knowledge show, and cause us in her ways to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel, shall come to us, in peace to dwell.**

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

Our Whole Lives class

L: Advent is a season of waiting and preparation.

**C: We wait for the Divine Light to show us the way to hope, peace and joy,
and we prepare our hearts and lives to welcome a surprising savior.**

L: Loving and patient God, be with us now,
as we light the first three candles of Advent.

C: Help us open our hearts to hope, peace, and joy.

L: The Light of Christ!

C: Thanks be to God!

WORDS OF WELCOME

Lindsey Baker

CONFESSING

INVITATION TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

L: Let us ask for healing, pardon and peace.

**C: In your presence, God, and in each other's company,
we confess that our lives and the life of the world
are cast in shadow by what we do and by what we fail to do.
But we know a light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness does not overcome it.
Pardon our deliberate faults.
Heal our weaknesses and fears.
Give us strength to grow in the love we lack.
Illumine our souls with the first glimmers
of the Coming Light of Christ, our Comfort and Redeemer. Amen.**

SILENCE

**You are invited to stand. Hymns preceded by a "C" are found in the beginning section of the hymnal. This section contains hymns written and composed by current and past members of First Church in Cambridge.*

**Give me hope in the darkness, hope in the darkness,
hope in the darkness to sing my soul awake.**

*(After the Choir sings it through, please join in singing it twice more,
adding harmony as on page 4.)*

DECLARATION OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS

*GREETING OF PEACE

L: The peace of Christ be with you!

C: **And also with you!**

*HYMN 124

My Heart Sings Out with Joyful Praise

A MUTUAL BLESSING

Adults: **God be with you there.**

Children: **And God be with you here.**

Children up through 6th grade are now invited to Church School classes. Godly Play (PreK-4th grade) and Bible 101 (5/6th grade) students can meet their teachers at the side door by the Children's Book Corner. Caregivers can find the children in the Chapel after worship.

OPENING THE WORD

PRAYER FOR UNDERSTANDING

ANTHEM

Magnificat in D

Johann Pachelbel

READING

Luke 1:26-38

SERMON

Mary, Mother of God

Mike Solberg

*HYMN 129

Of Eternal Love Begotten

SHARING OUR LIFE TOGETHER

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Kate Layzer

PRAYERS FOR THE CHURCH AND WORLD

L: God be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

L: Let us pray... *(silence, intercessions, and the Lord's Prayer)*

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Please pray this prayer in words most meaningful to your heart.

**All: Our Creator, 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 trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not
into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

INVITATION TO OFFERING

*Our offering supports the many ministries of our church,
with 10% for missions in the community and beyond.
Please use our new [all-in-one link](#) for gifts from your
bank account or by credit/debit card:*



OFFERTORY

Canon in D

Johann Pachelbel

*ADVENT DOXOLOGY

**To God, all glorious heavenly Light,
to Christ revealed in earthly night,
to God the Spirit now we raise
our joyful songs of thankful praise. Amen.**

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

GOING FORTH

*HYMN 127

Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates

*BENEDICTION

*CHORAL RESPONSE

O Emmanuel

Healey Willan

VOLUNTARY

Magnificat Fugue

Johann Pachelbel

First Church Land Acknowledgment

We, gathered here, acknowledge that we are meeting on land which has been the traditional ancestral homeland of the Massachusetts people. We acknowledge that this land is unceded and remains sacred to the Massachusetts, and to their close neighbors and relatives, the Nipmuc and Wampanoag peoples.



You can find a longer version of this acknowledgment [here](#)
or by scanning the QR code.

ADVENT SONG

Give Me Hope In The Darkness

The musical score is written for three parts: Treble, Alto, and Bass. It is in the key of D major (two sharps) and 3/4 time. The lyrics are: "Give me hope in the dark-ness, hope in the dark-ness, hope in the dark-ness to sing my soul a - wake." The word "hope" is circled in each instance. There are some faint, hand-drawn scribbles above the second system of music.

Give me hope in the dark-ness, hope in the dark-ness,
Give me hope in the dark-ness, hope in the dark-ness,
hope in the dark-ness to sing my soul a - wake.
hope in the dark-ness to sing my soul a - wake.

The song included in our Advent Confession is based on “Give Me Birds at the Dawning”, written by Betsy Binstock and arranged by Peter and Mary Alice Amidon, from “Twenty-Five Anthems for Interfaith and Community Choirs”, copyright 2016, Amidon Music Publishing. The words have been adapted to fit the Advent season.

PEACE HYMN

124 My Heart Sings Out with Joyful Praise
(Song of Mary)

1. My heart sings out with joy - ful praise to God who rais - es me,
2. The arm of God is strong and just to scat - ter all the proud.
3. The prom - ise made in a - ges past at last has come to be,

who came to me when I was low and changed my des - ti - ny.
The ty - rants tum - ble from their thrones and van - ish like a cloud.
for God has come in pow'r to save, to set all peo - ple free.

The Ho - ly One, the Liv - ing God, is al - ways full of grace
The hun - gry all are sat - is - fied; the rich are sent a - way.
Re - mem - b'ring those who wait to see sal - va - tion's dawn - ing day,

to those who seek their Mak - er's will in ev - 'ry time and place.
The poor of earth who suf - fer long will wel - come God's new day.
our Sav - ior comes to all who weep to wipe their tears a - way.

WORDS: Ruth Duck, 1981, 1985, 1992
MUSIC: Traditional English melody; coll. Lucy Broadwood;
arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams, *The English Hymnal*, 1906

KINGSFOLD
CMD

SERMON HYMN

129

Of Eternal Love Begotten

Unison



1. Of e - ter - nal love be - got - ten, ere the worlds be -
 2. O ye heights of heaven sing prais - es; an - gel hosts sweet
 3. Christ, to thee with God Cre - a - tor, and O Ho - ly

gan to be, Christ is Al - pha and O - me - ga, he the
 an - thems sing! And on earth let all the faith - ful now their
 Ghost, to thee, hymn and chant and high thanks - giv - ing and un -

source, the end - ing he, of the things that are, that have been,
 joy - ous car - ols ring, ev - 'ry tongue Christ's name con - fess - ing,
 wea - ried prais - es be: hon - or, glo - ry, and do - min - ion,

and that fu - ture years shall see, ev - er - more and ev - er - more!
 count - less voic - es an - swer - ing, ev - er - more and ev - er - more!
 and e - ter - nal vic - to - ry, ev - er - more and ev - er - more!

WORDS: Aurelius Clemens Prudentius (4th century); sts. 1,3, tr. John Mason Neale, 1854, DIVINUM MYSTERIUM and Henry W. Baker, 1859, alt.; st. 2, tr. R. F. Davis, 1906, alt. 87.87.877

MUSIC: Plainsong, Mode V (13th century); harm. C. Winfred Douglas, *The Hymnal*, 1940

Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates 127

1. Lift up your heads, O might - y gates; be - hold the
 2. Fling wide the por - tals of your heart; make it a
 3. Re - deem - er, come! I o - pen wide my heart to
 4. So come, my Sov - ereign; en - ter in! Let new and

King of Glo - ry waits! The Prince of Peace is
 tem - ple, set a - part from earth - ly use for
 you; here, Lord, a - bide! Let me your in - ner
 no - bler life be - gin; your Ho - ly Spir - it

draw - ing near; the Sav - ior of the world is here.
 heaven's em - ploy, a - dorned with prayer and love and joy.
 pres - ence feel; your grace and love in me re - veal.
 guide us on, un - til the glo - rious crown be won.

WORDS: Georg Weissel, 1642; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1855, alt.
 MUSIC: Thomas Williams' *Psalmodia Evangelica*, 1789

TRURO
 LM

COMMUNITY PRAYERS

- We pray for Kate Layzer and her family as they mourn the death of Kate's mother Anne, who died peacefully on Tuesday.
- We pray for Jeff, Nathan, and Peter Wilson-Braun, their extended family and friends, and all of us who are mourning the loss of Carol Wilson-Braun, who died on November 24, after a clear-eyed and courageous battle with ALS.
- We pray for Susie Neubauer, her family, and all of us who are mourning the loss of Perry Neubauer, who died on November 13 after a brief but difficult illness.
- We pray for the Ingersoll family as they mourn the loss of Evan's father Phil Ingersoll, who died at the age of 87 on Tuesday, November 19, after a year of decline.
- We pray for all who are living with significant health challenges and their families and caregivers: Ellen Frith, who is living with a serious chronic illness; Poppy Coffin, who is experiencing Alzheimer's Disease; Carter West, who is experiencing a chronic neurological disorder; and Keith Manville, who has atypical Parkinsonism. We also pray for those in treatment for cancer: Dana Hunt, Claire Morgan's mother; Ellen Smith, Devin Hansen's aunt; Judith Semmler, Alice Napoleon Jones's mother; Karen Anne Zee's daughter Becky Collet and her son-in-law Stewart Bailey; Beth and Polly, Ann McCann's sisters; and Abby Shuman's uncle Barry.
- We pray for our nation following the election and its outcomes. We pray for all those who fear policies and power that may threaten who they are, and what and who they love and value. We pray for all who are vulnerable, including our planet. We pray for ourselves, that we will remember who we are as followers of Christ, and what that means for our responsibilities in this place at this time.
- We pray for immigrants in the U.S. who are experiencing anxiety about their future safety, given the promise of the incoming administration of mass deportation.
- We pray for our neighbors all over the world. Especially we pray for all whose lives are affected by political upheaval in Syria and South Korea and by wars in Gaza and Israel, Ukraine, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Haiti, and Sudan. We pray for the dead, for their loved ones, and for their broader communities. We pray for changed hearts for all those inflicting violence upon others, and thus upon their own souls. We give thanks for the peacemakers. We pray that we, like they, may be free of the myth of redemptive violence, and take collective action, however small, to be people of true peace in this world.
- We continue to pray for all who are recovering from natural and climate-related disasters. We pray for our rapidly warming planet and for efforts to reduce fossil fuel emissions.
- We pray for the wellbeing and safety of our trans and gender non-conforming siblings as they face the potential for even more restrictive and criminalizing national policies from the incoming administration.
- We continue to pray for those most affected by changes in reproductive rights: for all those struggling with the moral and political complexities of pregnancy and childbearing, and for patients and healthcare providers who are unable to give and receive care in their own states.

TODAY AT FIRST CHURCH

Advent Formation Series: Hope in the Dark

Today, 9:30 - 10:15 a.m., Harter Room

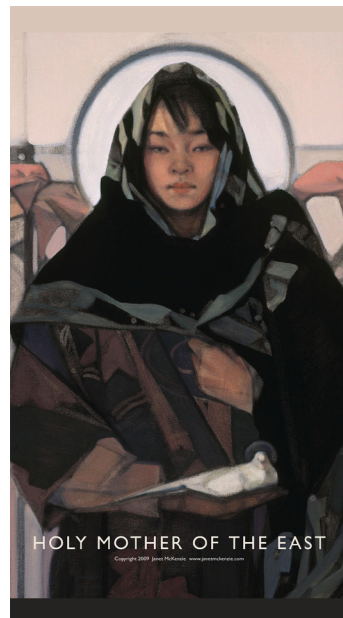
Our three-part Multigenerational Advent Formation series concludes this week, as participants of all ages are invited to gather at 9:30 in the Harter Room to share stories of finding hope, losing hope and reclaiming hope. Susan Reynolds and Brent Coffin facilitate this discussion, using wisdom and insights from *Hope In the Dark*, by Rebecca Solnit, to help us understand the role of hope in our personal lives, our church lives, and in our national lives. All are welcome!



Special Advent Music Sunday

Today at 11:00 a.m., Sanctuary and via livestream

It's all about Pachelbel this year! The First Church Choir and guest instrumentalists present a setting of the beloved Magnificat text by this famous composer. We also experience the famous Canon in person! Seeing it, as well as hearing it, will show everyone what an amazing piece it really is.



As we encounter Mary's song in both musical performance and as our sermon text, we celebrate with **our three Advent banners honoring Mary**. First displayed in 2020, the banners depict three images designed by Vermont artist Janet McKenzie that lift up historically and biblically underrepresented images and voices of women and persons of color.

TRANSITION AT FIRST CHURCH

This “Interim” Time at First Church

The purpose of an interim, or transitional, time in a congregation is for the church to prepare itself for new pastoral leadership...

[Read Pastor Mike’s full letter and see a possible timeline for this interim period on the Transition page on our website.](#)



Pastoral Transition Work: Discovery Team Nominations

At our Fall Congregational Meeting, we announced a [proposed timeline](#) for our interim period. The next task is for the congregation to nominate people to serve on the Discovery Team. The Discovery Team is a prelude to the Search Committee, which will be created in a few months. The Discovery Team will reflect the diversity of the congregation and help the congregation look inward at ourselves, our systems, priorities, patterns in the exercise of power, resources, and hopes, as well as help us look outward at the context in which we now live and serve. We now invite you to nominate members of our church family who would make great members of the Discovery Team.

Please [complete this form](#) by December 20, so we have time to do the necessary outreach before the team is created at the Annual Meeting in January.



Pastoral Transition Work: Listening Sessions

Sunday, January 5 at 12:20 p.m., Harter Room

Sunday, January 12 at 10:00 a.m. and 12:20 p.m., Harter Room

In order to set the stage for the work of the transitional Discovery Team, we will be hosting listening sessions in January. The goal is to follow up on some themes and hopes from the last few years of our church life and do a “check in” about how the transitional time is going. We have three

in-person sessions scheduled in early January, each lasting about 45 minutes. Look for other Zoom session times to be announced soon. Please come, share your thoughts, and help set the stage for the transitional work ahead

New Year, New Sunday Morning Schedule

As we begin a new year in January, we will be shifting the order of our Sunday morning programs and rehearsals to a new (but really, an old) schedule. Longtime members will remember that our pre-worship formation used to take place in “the ten o’clock hour.” We would like to return to this structure, allowing for folks to attend formation programs directly before Morning Worship. As of January 5, our Sunday morning schedule will be:

9:15 a.m. Choir rehearsal

10:00 a.m. Christian Formation program

11:00 a.m. Morning Worship

Formation programs at 10:00 will end by 10:45 to allow everyone to make a smooth and non-hurried transition into Morning Worship.

ADVENT AT FIRST CHURCH



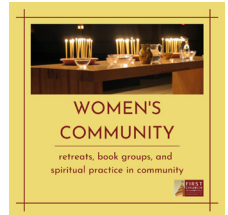
Christmas Gifts for First Church Shelter Guests

Each Christmas the Shelter Oversight Committee tries to make sure each shelter guest receives \$50 in CVS gift cards. Providing guests with these cards allows them to decide what they need or want. With the cards, they can buy socks, health or hygiene products, food, beverage, snacks etc. If you want to contribute towards the purchase of these cards, contact Shelter Director Jim Stewart at: jstewart@firstchurchcambridge.org

Aging with Grace Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, December 17, 3:00 - 4:15 p.m., via Zoom

Join us for conversation and support in our process of becoming elders and how to soften the inner ageist within us all (or most of us!). We are using a text—this month's reading is pp. 68-78 of Connie Zweig's [*The Inner Work of Age: Shifting from Role to Soul*](#)—but everyone is welcome; homework is not required! If you would like the Zoom link, please reach out to Martha Mueller Cook at: marthamuellercook@gmail.com.



The UnPageant

Sunday, December 22 at 11:00 a.m., Sanctuary and via livestream

On the fourth Sunday of Advent, we'll gather for our untraditional take on the Christmas pageant: the UnPageant! The UnPageant is First Church's unrehearsed, low-stress, multigenerational telling of the story of Jesus' birth. Come hear the age-old texts and sing the cherished carols as we celebrate the wonder of God's love among us.

Festive Christmas Coffee Hour

Sunday, December 22 at 12:15 p.m., Margaret Jewett Hall

We invite everyone to contribute a favorite holiday treat for a festive time of fellowship after the UnPageant. Whether it's a batch of your sought-after Christmas cookies or a holiday veggie plate in the shape of a snowman, we want to see it and eat it! Plan to drop off your offering in the Kitchen before worship, and then come ready to enjoy a mini-feast of snacks for the season.

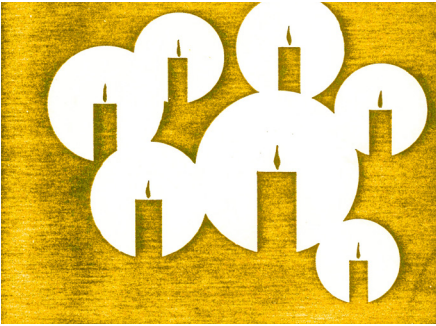


The Seraphim Singers: *Light from Deepest Heaven*

Sunday, December 22 at 7:30 p.m., Sanctuary and via livestream

After the joyful UnPageant in the morning, settle into a comfortable chair and tune into First Church's livestream to hear a special Night Song with the Seraphim Singers. You will hear selected pieces from this year's Christmas concert, directed by Jennifer Lester. This unique Night Song will take the place of the Seraphim Singers' annual Christmas concert at First Church. For details about Seraphim's other upcoming Christmas concerts, visit www.seraphimsingers.org

CHRISTMAS AND EPIPHANY AT FIRST CHURCH



Christmas Eve Candlelight Service **Tuesday, December 24, at 6:00 p.m.** **Sanctuary and via livestream**

Come, all ye faithful, and come, worship together on Christmas Eve! Join us in person or online for this festive, family-friendly, candlelit service of lessons and carols. In the warmth and light of our Sanctuary or by your Christmas tree at home, join us as we celebrate this holy night and sing out our joy to the world!

Christmas Day Service **Wednesday, December 25 at 11:00 a.m.** **Lindsay Chapel & via livestream**

Join us on Christmas morning for a joy-filled and bright service in which we will fill our Chapel with the sounds of Christmas—readings, prayers of thanksgiving and praise, and a very special harpsichord meditation by Peter Sykes of William Byrd’s “The Bells.” We will also celebrate Christmas Communion together.



Epiphany Art Exhibit **January 5-6, 2025, Margaret Jewett Hall**

As we celebrate Epiphany at the start of a new year, First Church member and artist Henry Gates displays “I-THOU,” celebrating the spiritual relation of the individual with God through times of life transition and passage.

Epiphany Potluck & Service **Monday, January 6, 2025** **6:00 p.m. Potluck, MJH; 7:10 p.m. Service, Chapel to Sanctuary**

Epiphany (“manifestation”) is a Christian feast so ancient that it predates Christmas. We will celebrate Epiphany on Monday, January 6, beginning at 6:00 p.m. with a potluck dinner in Margaret Jewett Hall. The meal will be potluck through and through: you are invited to bring either a main dish casserole (last names beginning with A-H), a salad or side dish (last names beginning with I-M), dessert (N-R), or drinks (S-Z). After our feast and a brief gathering ritual in the Chapel, we will set off together on a candlelight journey through the darkness until we arrive at the Sanctuary and circle it with light. Under the dome in the chancel, we will renew our baptismal promises, ending with a joyful “sprinkling” of all present. This event is for all ages, so gather up friends, neighbors, kids, and come share the light!





THIS WEEK

Looking ahead to this week's programs and events



Monday, December 16

- 4:30 p.m. Contemplative Practices Gathering, via Zoom
- 6:00 p.m. Faith & Life Group: Care Group for the Caregivers, via Zoom

Tuesday, December 17

- 3:00 p.m. Aging with Grace Monthly Meeting, via Zoom
- 7:00 p.m. Beloved Community Meeting, via Zoom
- 7:30 p.m. Shelter Oversight Committee, via Zoom

Sign up [here](#) to receive our weekly e-newsletter.

Wednesday, December 18

- 9:30 a.m. Staff Meeting, Harter Room and via Zoom
- 3:00 p.m. Buildings & Grounds Committee, via Zoom
- 5:00 p.m. Staff Policy Committee, via Zoom

Have a church program or event to promote? Complete the [First Church Communications Request form](#).

Friday, December 20

- 12:00 p.m. Friday Café, Margaret Jewett Hall (MJH)

See our [Events Calendar](#) for Zoom links and details.

Sunday, December 22 - Fourth Sunday in Advent

- 10:15 a.m. Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary
- 11:00 a.m. Multigenerational Morning Worship, Sanctuary and via livestream
- 12:15 p.m. Festive Christmas Coffee Hour, MJH
- 7:30 p.m. Seraphim Singers Concert, Sanctuary and via livestream

Tuesday, December 24 - Christmas Eve

- 5:00 p.m. Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary
- 6:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, Sanctuary and via livestream

Wednesday, December 25 - Christmas Day

- 11:00 a.m. Christmas Day Service, Chapel and via livestream

Scan to find the online bulletin.



SCAN ME

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