

Christmastide
December 29, 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 29, 2024

Liturgist	Dave McCann
Preaching:	Karen McArthur, <i>Minister of Stewardship & Finance</i>
Leading Worship	Kate Layzer, <i>Minister of Street Outreach</i> Lee Prouty, <i>Facilities Manager</i> Peter Sykes, <i>Music Director</i>
Bulletin Cover Image	Christmas image by Perry Neubauer, <i>from the church archives</i>

Today's Programs and Events

- 10:15 a.m. Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary
- 11:00 a.m. Hybrid Morning Worship, Sanctuary and [via livestream](#)
- 12:15 p.m. Refreshments in Hastings Common

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

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

Have an edit or update for our website?
Complete the [FCC Website Changes](#) form

GATHERING

VOLUNTARY

In dulci jubilo

Dietrich Buxtehude

*HYMN 158

Good Christians All, Rejoice

EXTINGUISHING THE ADVENT WREATH

Dave McCann

L: Friends, we have journeyed through the four weeks of Advent and into the Christmas season. The waiting is over.

**All: Christ our Savior is Born and,
as the prophets foretold, our joy is now full!**

L: As we journey towards a new year,
we extinguish the first candle of Advent, the candle of Hope.

**All: We know that Jesus – the hope of the world –
is now born anew within each of us,
and goes with us to brighten our darkest moments.**

L: We extinguish the candle of Peace.

**All: We carry the peace of Christ from this place
to share with a hurting world.**

L: We extinguish the third candle of Advent, the candle of Joy.

**All: We take joy home with us
and let it shine throughout our lives in this coming year.**

L: We extinguish the final Advent candle, the candle of Love.

**All: May the love of God, so abundantly given to each one of us,
fill our hearts and homes,
and freely overflow into the world around us.**

L: We leave our Christ candle burning.
For Advent is over, and Christmas has come.

WORDS OF WELCOME

ANTHEM

Ding Dong, Merrily on High

Traditional arr. P. Sykes

CONFESSING

INVITATION TO CONFESSION

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.*

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

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

**C: Holy God, we confess
that we move too quickly to the next thing,
busy with lists of things to do, places to go, and people to see.
On this fifth day of Christmas, slow us down.
Let us linger in this Christmastide
and at the threshold of a New Year,
glad for the gift of Jesus,
grateful for the simple pleasures of life,
and focused on how we treat ourselves and others.
Let these brightening days fill us with your love,
that we may see your world illumined anew. Amen.**

DECLARATION OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS

***GREETING OF PEACE**

L: The peace of Christ be with you!

C: And also with you!

***HYMN 160**

Go, Tell It on the Mountain

OPENING THE WORD

PRAYER FOR UNDERSTANDING

READING

1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26

READING

Luke 2:41-52

SERMON

Karen McArthur

***HYMN 157**

Who Would Think That What Was Needed

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 ANTHEM

See, Amid the Winter's Snow

John Goss

*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 175, verses 1-3

O Sing a Song of Bethlehem

*BENEDICTION

*CHORAL RESPONSE

Christmas Benediction

Beverly Taylor

The Word is flesh and dwells among us! Glory to God in the highest!

VOLUNTARY

In Dulci Jubilo

J. S. Bach

Good Christians All, Rejoice

158

1. Good Chris-tians all, re-joyce, with heart and soul and voice;
 2. Good Chris-tians all, re-joyce, with heart and soul and voice;
 3. Good Chris-tians all, re-joyce, with heart and soul and voice;

give ye heed to what we say: Je - sus Christ is born to - day;
 now ye hear of end - less bliss; Je - sus Christ was born for this!
 now ye need not fear the grave; Je - sus Christ was born to save!

ox and ass be - fore him bow, and he is in the man - ger now.
 He has o - pened heav - en's door, and we are blest for - ev - er - more.
 Calls you one and calls you all, to gain his ev - er - last - ing hall.

Christ is born to - day! Christ is born to - day!
 Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!
 Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!

WORDS: German-Latin carol, 14th century; tr. John M. Neale, 1853, alt.
 MUSIC: German melody, 14th century

IN DULCI JUBILO
 66.77.78.55

The earliest version of this dance-like, macaronic carol (one combining two languages - in this case, Latin and German) dates back to c. 1400. The first English translation was published in 1708.

Go, Tell It on the Mountain

160

Refrain

Go, tell it on the moun - tain, o - ver the hills and ev - ery - where;

Fine

go, tell it on the moun - tain, that Je - sus Christ is born!

1. While shep-herds kept their watch-ing o'er si-lent flocks by night, be -
 2. The shep-herds feared and trem-bled when lo! a - bove the earth rang
 3. Down in a low - ly man-ger the hum-ble Christ was born, and

to Refrain

hold through-out the heav-ens there shone a ho - ly light.
 out the an-gel cho - rus that hailed our Sav - ior's birth.
 God sent us sal - va - tion that bless - ed Christ - mas morn.

WORDS: Stanzas, John W. Work II, 1907; refrain, African - American spiritual
 MUSIC: African-American spiritual, arr. John W. Work III, 1940

GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN
 76.76 w. refrain

John Wesley Work II added the present stanzas to an existing refrain. Work was a leader in the effort to study, preserve and perform African-American slave songs and spirituals.

© 1940 John W. Work III

157 Who Would Think That What Was Needed

1. Who would think that what was need-ed to trans-form and save the earth
 2. Shep-herds watch and sag-es won-der, mon-archs scorn and an-gels sing;
 3. Cen-tu-ries of skill and sci-ence span the past from which we move,

might not be a plan or ar-my proud in pur-pose, proved in worth?
 such a place as none would reck-on hosts a ho-ly, help-less thing;
 yet ex-per-i-ence ques-tions wheth-er with such prog-ress we im-prove.

Who would think, de-spite de-ri-sion, that a child should lead the way?
 sta-ble beasts and pass-ing stran-gers watch a ba-by laid in hay;
 In our search for sense and mean-ing, lest our hopes and hu-mor fray,


God sur-pris-es earth with heav-en, com-ing here on Christ-mas Day.

WORDS: John Bell and Graham Maule, 1990, alt.
 MUSIC: Traditional English melody, arr. by John Bell, 1990



SCARLET RIBBONS

O Sing a Song of Bethlehem



175



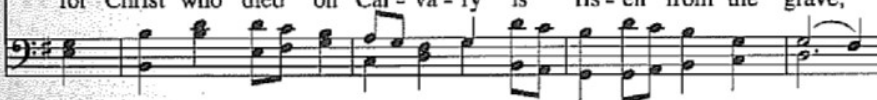

1. O sing a song of Beth-le-hem, of shep-herds watch-ing there,
 2. O sing a song of Naz-a-reth, of days of joy and sun,
 3. O sing a song of Gal-i-lee, of lake and woods and hill,
 4. O sing a song of Cal-va-ry, its glo-ry and dis-may,

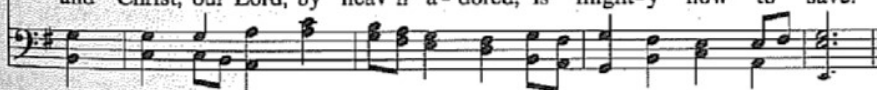
and of the news that came to them from an-gels in the air:
 O sing of fra-grant flow-ers' breath, and of the sin-less One:
 of One who walked up-on the sea and bade its waves be still:
 of One who hung up-on the tree, and took our sins a-way:

the light that shone on Beth-le-hem fills all the world to-day;
 for now the flowers of Naz-a-reth in ev-'ry heart may grow;
 for though, like waves on Gal-i-lee, rough seas of trou-ble roll,
 for Christ who died on Cal-va-ry is ris-en from the grave;

of Je-sus' birth and peace on earth the an-gels sing al-way.
 now spreads the fame of Je-sus' name on all the winds that blow.
 when faith has heard the Sav-ior's word, falls peace up-on the soul.
 and Christ, our Lord, by heav'n a-dored, is might-y now to save.



WORDS: Louis F. Benson, 1899; alt.
 MUSIC: Traditional English melody; coll. Lucy Broadwood;
 arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams, *The English Hymnal*, 1906

KINGSFOLD
 CMD

LOOKING AHEAD TO JANUARY AT FIRST CHURCH

Men's Breakfast

Saturday, January 4, 8:00 - 9:30 a.m., Harter Room

All who identify as men at First Church are invited to join us in person on Saturday morning for our monthly gathering. If you would like to be added to the Men's Breakfast email list to receive reminders of these gatherings, please contact Peter Byerly: p.byerly@comcast.net



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.

Epiphany Art Exhibit

January 5-6, 2025, Margaret Jewett Hall

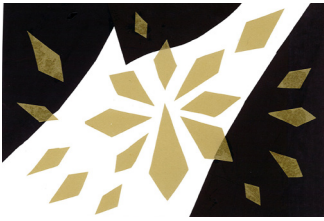
As we celebrate Epiphany at the start of a new year, First Church member and artist Henry Gates displays "I-THOU," celebrating the spiritual relation of the individual with God through times of life transition and passage.



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.

LOOKING AHEAD TO JANUARY AT FIRST CHURCH



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 rejoice in the sacrament of baptism and renew our own 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!

Young Adults: Faith on Tap

Tuesday, January 7, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Grendel’s Den, Harvard Square

If you’re in your 20s-30s, and looking for a new friend, a place to explore faith with peers, or just a new favorite restaurant, come to our next Faith on Tap! The Young Adults group meets a couple times each month for casual fellowship, and all in that age range are welcome. RSVP for our early January get-together and get on the mailing list for all Young Adults events by emailing: youngadults@firstchurchcambridge.org



We Need Some Good Questions

During the early months of 2025, in the Season after Epiphany, we will focus our worship and preaching on... well... questions. Specifically, questions that come from you! We want you to submit BIG questions about church / God / faith / Jesus / the Bible, etc., and we will respond to a selection of them (and only perhaps answer them) in our preaching and worship. Maybe you’ve been wondering, “Is there a hell, and if so who’s in it?” Or, “I don’t really believe in life after death: is that okay?” “I know we say science and faith aren’t really in conflict, but if science says that everything can be reduced to material causes, where’s the room for God?” Or “How can I forgive _____?” The idea is to learn more about where the cutting edge of faith is among us. This is a good task for this pastoral interim time, as we begin to ask “Who are we?”, “Where are the deep points of connection with our community?,” and “Where does God hope to lead us next?” So he can ask follow up questions for clarification if needed, please email your questions to Pastor Mike at mike@firstchurchcambridge.org. Now send in those BIG questions!



THIS WEEK

Looking ahead to this week's programs and events



Monday, December 30

4:30 p.m. Contemplative Practices Gathering, via Zoom

Wednesday, January 1 - Church Office & Building Closed for New Year's Day Holiday

Friday, January 3

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

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

Saturday, January 4

8:00 a.m. Men's Breakfast, Harter Room

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

Sunday, January 5

10:00 a.m. Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary

11:00 a.m. Hybrid Morning Worship, Sanctuary and via livestream

11:20 a.m. Church School, Pastoral Care Sunday

12:15 p.m. Refreshments in Hastings Common

12:20 a.m. Pastoral Transition Work: Listening Sessions, Harter Room

12:30 p.m. Our Whole Lives, the Well

7:30 p.m. Night Song, Sanctuary and via livestream

Monday, January 6

6:00 p.m. Festival of Epiphany Potluck and Worship Service, MJH

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

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