

Advent
December 8, 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
1 6 3 6 – 2 0 2 4

December 8, 2024

Liturgist

Paula Paris

Preaching Today

Mike Solberg, *Interim Senior Minister*

Leading Worship

Sarah Higginbotham, *Director of Communications & Christian Formation*

Emma Mitchell, *Pastoral Associate*

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
- 12:15 p.m. Alternative Christmas Fair, Margaret Jewett Hall
- 12:30 p.m. Our Whole Lives (OWL) for 7/8th graders, The Well
- 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

Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland

Dieterich Buxtehude

*HYMN

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

alt. Kate Layzer

**O Come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thine advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight.**

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to us, in peace to dwell.

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

Bible 101 class

L: Advent is a season of waiting and preparation.

**C: We wait for the Divine Light to show us the way to hope and peace,
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 two candles of Advent.

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

L: The Light of Christ!

C: Thanks be to God!

WORDS OF WELCOME

Paula Paris

ANTHEM

There is no rose

Jessica Nelson

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.

**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.*

SILENCE

ADVENT SONG

Give Me Hope in the Darkness

see page 4

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

*(After Sarah sings it through, please join in singing it twice more,
adding harmony as you wish.)*

DECLARATION OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS

*GREETING OF PEACE

L: The peace of Christ be with you!

C: **And also with you!**

*HYMN 121

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

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

READING

Luke 3:1-6

SERMON

John the Baptists Among Us

Mike Solberg

*HYMN 113

Isaiah the Prophet Has Written of Old

SHARING OUR LIFE TOGETHER

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Emma Mitchell

PRAYERS FOR THE CHURCH AND WORLD AND 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 AND GIFT GIVING

We invite everyone to bring forward your regular morning offering, as well as your unwrapped gifts (or gift cards) for Coat Boston and the Holiday Shop. For other monetary donations to Coat Boston and the Holiday Shop, please use the QR code below to donate online at coatboston.org. If you don't have a tangible gift today, please come forward anyway and open your hand over the baskets as a sign of the offering of your heart to God and others.



*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

Adam lay ybounden

Peter Warlock

***ADVENT DOXOLOGY AND PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

**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.**

GOING FORTH

***HYMN 352**

Go Forth for God

***BENEDICTION**

***CHORAL RESPONSE**

O Radix

Healey Willan

VOLUNTARY

Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland

J. S. Bach

First Church Land Acknowledgment

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



SCAN ME

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

ADVENT SONG

Give Me Hope In The Darkness

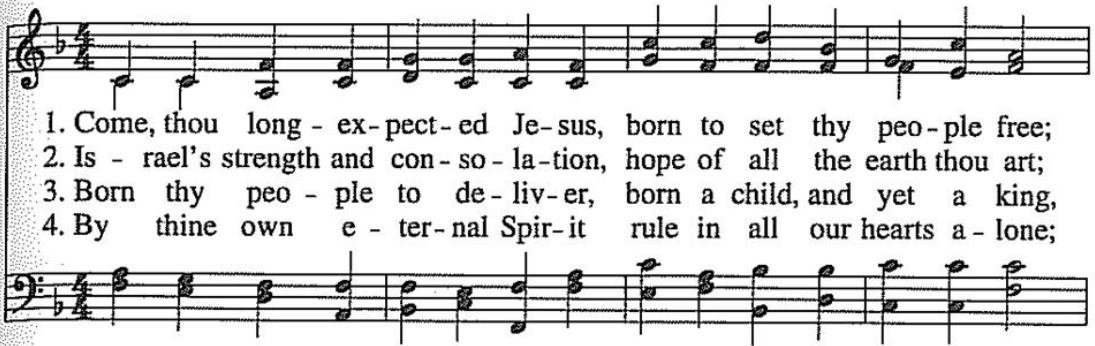
The musical score is written for three parts: Treble, Alto, and Bass. It is in the key of D major (two sharps) and 3/4 time. The lyrics are: "Give me hope in the dark-ness, hope in the dark-ness, hope in the dark-ness to sing my soul a - wake." The word "hope" is circled in each instance. There are some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

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.

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

121



1. Come, thou long - ex - spect - ed Je - sus, born to set thy peo - ple free;
 2. Is - rael's strength and con - so - la - tion, hope of all the earth thou art;
 3. Born thy peo - ple to de - liv - er, born a child, and yet a king,
 4. By thine own e - ter - nal Spir - it rule in all our hearts a - lone;



from our fears and sins re - lease us; let us find our rest in thee.
 dear de - sire of ev - ery na - tion, joy of ev - ery long - ing heart.
 born to reign in us for - ev - er, now thy gra - cious king - dom bring.
 by thine all - suf - fi - cient mer - it raise us to thy glo - rious throne.

WORDS: Charles Wesley, 1744, alt.

MUSIC: Melody attr. Christian F. Witt, (1660-1716), *Psalmodia Sacra*, Gotha, 1715STUTTGART
87.87

SERMON HYMN

113 Isaiah the Prophet Has Written of Old

1. I - sa - iah the proph - et has writ - ten of old how
 2. The moun - tains and hills shall break forth in - to song, the
 3. Yet na - tions still prey on the meek of the world, and
 4. God, bring to fru - i - tion your will for the earth, that

God's new cre - a - tion shall come. In - stead of the thorn tree, the
 peo - ples be led forth in peace; the earth shall be filled with the
 con - flict turns par - ent from child. Your peo - ple de - spoil all the
 no one shall hurt or de - stroy, that wis - dom and jus - tice shall

fir tree shall grow, and the wolf shall lie down with the
 knowl - edge of God as the wa - ters cov - er the
 sweet - ness of earth; and the brier and the thorn tree grow
 reign in the land and your peo - ple shall go forth in

lamb, the lamb, the wolf shall lie down with the lamb.
 sea, the sea, as the wa - ters cov - er the sea.
 wild, grow wild, the brier and the thorn tree grow wild.
 joy, in joy, your peo - ple shall go forth in joy.

CLOSING HYMN

Go Forth for God

352

1. Go forth for God, go to the world in peace; be of good
 2. Go forth for God, go to the world in love; strength - en the
 3. Go forth for God, go to the world in strength; hold fast the
 4. Go forth for God, go to the world in joy, to serve God's

cour - age, armed with heaven-ly grace, in God's good Spir - it
 faint, give cour - age to the weak; help the af - flict - ed;
 good, be ur - gent for the right; ren - der to no one
 peo - ple ev - ery day and hour, and serv - ing Christ, our

dai - ly to in - crease, till in the king - dom we be - hold God's
 rich - ly from a - bove, God's love sup - plies the grace and power we
 e - vil; Christ at length shall o - ver - come all dark - ness with his
 ev - 'ry gift em - ploy, re - joic - ing in the Ho - ly Spir - it's

face. Go forth for God, go to the world in peace;
 seek. Go forth for God, go to the world in love;
 light. Go forth for God, go to the world in strength;
 power. Go forth for God, go to the world in joy,

WORDS: John Raphael Peacey, 1975
 MUSIC: *Trente quatre Pseaumes de David*, Geneva, 1551

OLD 124th
 10 10.10 10.10

COMMUNITY PRAYERS

- We pray for Caitlin Anderson, who is recovering from emergency abdominal surgery on Monday.
- 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, who will be dealing with the changes resulting from the U.S. elections. Especially we pray for all whose lives are affected by the wars and political upheaval in Gaza and Israel, Ukraine, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Haiti, Sudan, and so many other places. 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. May we all see your way more clearly, O God.
- 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 pray for all those impacted by the violence of war and political upheaval throughout the Middle East, in Ukraine, in Sudan, in Haiti, and in far too many other places in our world.

TODAY AT FIRST CHURCH

- 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.
- We pray for the 14 men finding sustenance and protection in our First Church Shelter; and we pray for the guests of the Friday Café, who are finding resources and listening ears.

Join the [First Church List](#) to see and offer up more community prayer requests.

Advent Formation Series: Hope in the Dark

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

Inspired by writer and activist Rebecca Solnit's book *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities*, we will gather to explore what it

looks like to find hope in the dark – in the darkness of this season, in the darkness of the unknown of what's ahead, in the darkness of the womb

before the birth of Jesus. In this pregnant and liminal time, we need each other. These multi-generational formation sessions will include storytelling, art making, embodied practices, and discussions of sacred and grounding texts. We welcome teens, adults, and kids ages 8 and up with a grown-up to join us. Whether you can come to one or all three, come gather in and find hope in the dark with us!



Alternative Christmas Fair

Today, 12:15 - 2:00 p.m., Margaret Jewett Hall

Please join us for First Church's annual Alternative Christmas Fair. What makes it "alternative?" All proceeds raised by the vendors will go directly to benefit their non-profit organizations' charitable and social justice causes. Come buy presents for your loved ones, support worthy causes, and celebrate the season with friends and family. Hope to see you there!

Our Whole Lives (OWL) for 7/8th graders

Today, 12:30 - 2:00 p.m., The Well

7th and 8th graders from First Church and Old South Church meet for a session of their year-long sexuality education curriculum.



Night Song

Today, 7:30 - 8:15 p.m., Sanctuary and via livestream

Night Song is a worship opportunity that offers stillness and sublime music in a darkened sanctuary for respite and reset.

[Learn more about Night Song.](#)

ADVENT SEASON GIFT-GIVING AND DONATION SUGGESTIONS

The Missions & Social Justice Committee is pleased to share with you a list of organizations with which First Church partners closely and who are seeking donations in this holiday season.



Christmas at the First Church Shelter

At Christmas, each Shelter guest receives a \$50 gift card for personal purchases. Would you like to sponsor one this year? Look for the Shelter Table at the Alternative Christmas Fair or give online. Your donation will truly be appreciated by the Shelter guest. Pies and other dessert items are welcome, as well. For more information contact [Shelter Director Jim Stewart](#).

Friday Café

This year, The Friday Café would love to help guests out with donations of warm winter gloves. Shop locally, visit the Café's Table at the Alternative Christmas Fair on December 8, and/or order from our Amazon wish list by visiting our [website](#).

Coat Boston and the Holiday Shop

This year, First Church is collecting donations of new children's coats, mittens, hats, socks, books, toys, and sporting goods (Soccer balls, baseballs, etc) for [Coat Boston and the Holiday Shop](#). These gifts will be given directly to schools, partner agencies, and organizations in Boston that serve individuals and families in need of resources. As is our tradition, First Church will collect unwrapped gifts for the Holiday Shop and Coat Boston during our worship service today. *All adult coats, gloves, scarves, and other clothes for cold weather should be donated to our own Friday Café, where the need is enormous.*

Helping Hands Food Pantry

Donations are welcomed by [Helping Hands Food Pantry](#) hosted by St. James Episcopal Church. The volunteer-run, donation-driven pantry offers a grocery-shopping experience the second Saturday of each month. The Food Pantry welcomes donations of spices/condiments, cereals/grains/pasta, canned fruit/veggies, oils, incontinence, and feminine hygiene products (no tampons). Things that cannot be accepted are baby diapers, tampons, fresh or frozen food. Please be sure that your contributions are unopened, unexpired, and not in glass containers. *Please bring your holiday season donations to First Church on Sunday, January 5.*

Solutions at Work

Visit [Solutions at Work](#) at the Alternative Christmas Fair, where they will be accepting cash donations to support their mission in breaking the cycle of poverty and homelessness by providing individuals and families with resources and opportunities to strengthen their self-confidence, achieve self-sufficiency, and participate in helping others. At the Fair, you will be able to purchase a gift card for a teenager, a voucher for someone who needs to go back to work, and/or a voucher for a family in need. Unwrapped new toys are also welcome.

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. Given the importance of pastoral leadership in a congregation, the goal of the transitional time is to lay the groundwork for a good, healthy, faithful, and “successful” tenure by the next leader...



[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.



Do you want to follow the hyperlinks, but you're holding a paper bulletin in your hand? Use your phone's camera to hover over the QR code marked “scan me;” this will take you to the Members & Friends page of our website, where you'll find the bulletin online, as well as links to news, events, and more.

ADVENT AT FIRST CHURCH



Young Adults: Christmas Party & Hymn Sing **Friday, December 13, 6:30 - 9:00 p.m.** **Home of Angela & Phil Servello-Jones**

Come celebrate the season by singing carols, drinking cider, and sharing fellowship with other Young Adults (20s-30s). RSVP by emailing youngadults@firstchurchcambridge.org or letting Angela or

Phil know. Whether you're brand new to First Church, or have been here your whole life, you're welcome to join the party. Keep an eye out for monthly Young Adult gatherings in 2025.

Special Advent Music Sunday

Sunday, December 15 at 11:00 a.m., Sanctuary and via livestream

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

Our three Advent banners honoring Mary will be on display in our worship next Sunday, as we encounter Mary's song in both musical performance and as our sermon text. 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.



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.





THIS WEEK

Looking ahead to this week's programs and events



Monday, December 9

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

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

Wednesday, December 11

9:30 a.m. Staff Meeting, Harter Room and via Zoom

3:00 p.m. Buildings & Grounds Committee, via Zoom

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

Thursday, December 12

7:30 p.m. Choir Rehearsal, Harter Room

Friday, December 13

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

6:30 p.m. Young Adults: Christmas Party & Hymn Sing, Servello-Jones family home

Sunday, December 15 - Third Sunday in Advent

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 & The Well

12:15 p.m. Refreshments in Hastings Common

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



Scan to find the online bulletin.

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

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