



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

WORSHIP AT FIVE  
DECEMBER 22, 2025  
LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE

WELCOME TO FIRST CHURCH!

You are welcomed, affirmed, and loved here; our faith informs us that you are a child of a loving God. Your characteristics and gifts will enrich our congregation. In this community, you will be celebrated, embraced, and honored, no matter how you identify or how your identity may evolve. Wherever you are on your faith journey, we invite you to join us in our diverse yet united experience.

*Please use this time for quiet preparation for worship.*



PRELUDE

WELCOME AND INVOCATION

Rev. jessica young chang

Leader: Let us pray.

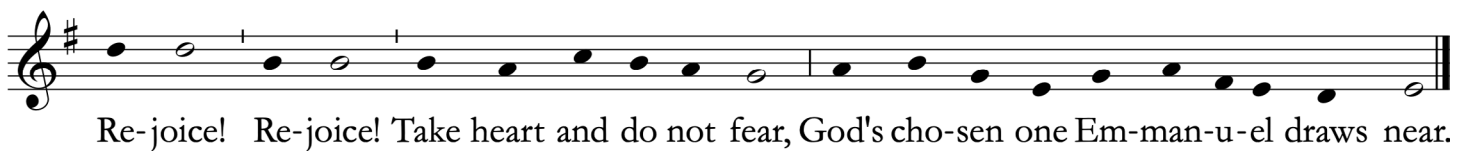
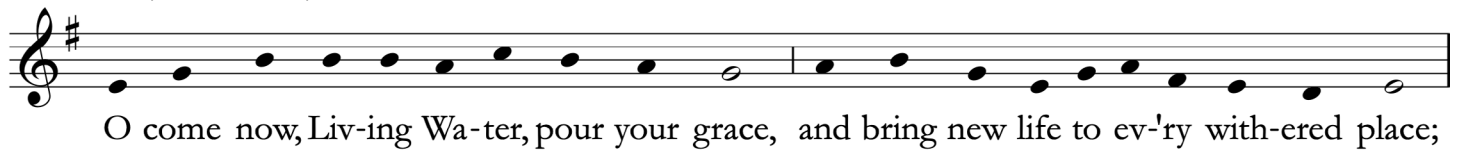
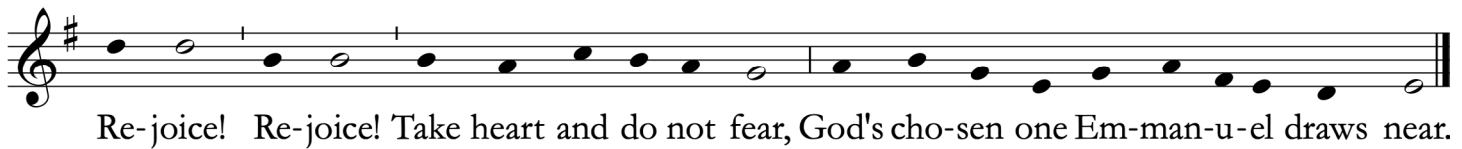
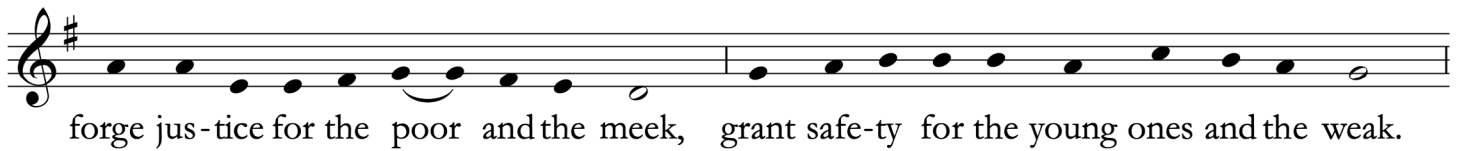
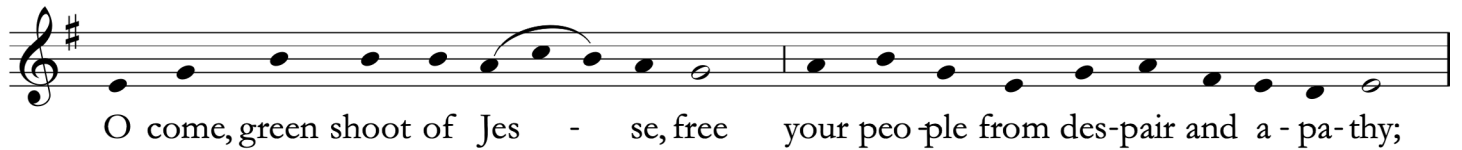
**All: God who Hears, dwell with us in our hearts,  
in the space between our bodies,  
and everywhere all around, as we make room for the dark this day.  
Accompany us. Comfort us. Grieve with us.  
And remind us that no matter what we feel,  
You are never not with us, and we cannot be separated from You.  
Be here now, our God. Be here now. Amen.**

\*GATHERING SONG

*Veni Emmanuel*, plainsong, 15th c.

"O come, O come Emmanuel"

Great 'O' Antiphons, adapted by Barbara Kay Lundblad, 2016



THE FIRST READING

Psalm 13

Rev. young chang

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

How long must I bear pain[a] in my soul

and have sorrow in my heart all day long?

How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

Consider and answer me, O Lord my God!

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,

and my enemy will say, "I have prevailed";

my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.

But I trusted in your steadfast love;

my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

I will sing to the Lord

because he has dealt bountifully with me.

## CAROL

"In the bleak midwinter"

Cranham, Gustav Holst, 1906

Christina Rossetti, c. 1872, alt.

1 In the bleak mid-win - ter, frost - y wind made moan;  
 2 Our God, heaven can - not hold him, nor earth sus - tain;  
 3 An - gels and arch - an - gels may have gath - ered there;  
 4 What can I give him, poor as I am?

earth stood hard as i - ron, wa - ter like a stone;  
 heaven and earth shall flee a - way when he comes to reign:  
 cher - u - bim and ser - a - phim thronged the air;  
 If I were a shep - herd, I would bring a lamb;

snow had fall - en, snow on snow, snow on snow,  
 in the bleak mid - win - ter a sta - ble place suf - ficed  
 but his moth - er on - ly, in her maid - en bliss,  
 if I were a wise man, I would do my part;

in the bleak mid - win - ter, long a - go.  
 the Lord God in - car - nate, Je - sus Christ.  
 wor - shipped the be - lov - ed with a kiss.  
 yet what I can I give him: give my heart.

## SILENCE

## THE SECOND READING

"Amazing Peace, A Christmas Poem" by Maya Angelou

Rev. Becky David

"Thunder rumbles in the mountain passes  
 And lightning rattles the eaves of our houses.  
 Flood waters await us in our avenues.

Snow falls upon snow, falls upon snow to avalanche  
 Over unprotected villages.  
 The sky slips low and grey and threatening.

We question ourselves.  
What have we done to so affront nature?  
We worry God.  
Are you there? Are you there really?  
Does the covenant you made with us still hold?  
Into this climate of fear and apprehension, Christmas enters,  
Streaming lights of joy, ringing bells of hope  
And singing carols of forgiveness high up in the bright air.  
The world is encouraged to come away from rancor,  
Come the way of friendship.  
It is the Glad Season.  
Thunder ebbs to silence and lightning sleeps quietly in the corner.  
Flood waters recede into memory.  
Snow becomes a yielding cushion to aid us  
As we make our way to higher ground.  
Hope is born again in the faces of children  
It rides on the shoulders of our aged as they walk into their sunsets.  
Hope spreads around the earth. Brightening all things,  
Even hate which crouches breeding in dark corridors.  
In our joy, we think we hear a whisper.  
At first it is too soft. Then only half heard.  
We listen carefully as it gathers strength.  
We hear a sweetness.  
The word is Peace.  
It is loud now. It is louder.  
Louder than the explosion of bombs.  
We tremble at the sound. We are thrilled by its presence.  
It is what we have hungered for.  
Not just the absence of war. But, true Peace.  
A harmony of spirit, a comfort of courtesies.  
Security for our beloveds and their beloveds.  
We clap hands and welcome the Peace of Christmas.  
We beckon this good season to wait a while with us.  
We, Baptist and Buddhist, Methodist and Muslim, say come.  
Peace.  
Come and fill us and our world with your majesty.  
We, the Jew and the Jainist, the Catholic and the Confucian,  
Implore you, to stay a while with us.  
So we may learn by your shimmering light  
How to look beyond complexion and see community.  
It is Christmas time, a halting of hate time.  
On this platform of peace, we can create a language  
To translate ourselves to ourselves and to each other.

At this Holy Instant, we celebrate the Birth of Jesus Christ  
Into the great religions of the world.  
We jubilate the precious advent of trust.  
We shout with glorious tongues at the coming of hope.  
All the earth's tribes loosen their voices  
To celebrate the promise of Peace.

We, Angels and Mortal's, Believers and Non-Believers,  
Look heavenward and speak the word aloud.  
Peace. We look at our world and speak the word aloud.  
Peace. We look at each other, then into ourselves  
And we say without shyness or apology or hesitation.

Peace, My Brother.  
Peace, My Sister.  
Peace, My Soul."

#### THE GOSPEL READING

Matthew 11:28-30

Leslie Fulford

Leader: A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew, the eleventh chapter.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.  
Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me,  
for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.  
For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Leader: The Word of God for the people of God.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

#### SILENCE

#### RITUAL

#### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE / THE LORD'S PRAYER

Rev. young chang

**All: 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.  
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,  
for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

#### COMMUNION

Rev. young chang

Leader: I know you can't believe I love you so.  
I know you fear you never will be fine.  
I know you think you don't deserve a thing,  
but I'm telling you, beloved, you are mine.

**People: You are the one this bread is waiting for.  
You are the one for whom this cup pours free.  
You are the one whose place I've saved and set,  
and I welcome you, beloved: taste and see.**

**God, we are grateful for these elements, bread and cup,  
signs of your love, justice, and grace.  
As we partake in this feast today,  
may we be transformed into this very love, justice, and grace**

made flesh  
for the good of all creation.  
Keep us ever thankful for your bountiful, steadfast care for us all. Amen.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Rev. David

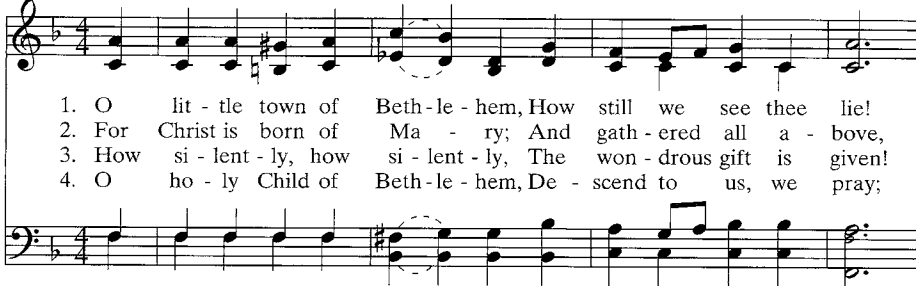
**All:** Thanks be to God whose name is Love.  
Thanks be to God who hungers  
to know us and be known by us.  
As we leave this table,  
may we carry with us a taste  
Of the inherent worth and dignity of every person,  
offering the same to all we meet. Amen.

CAROL

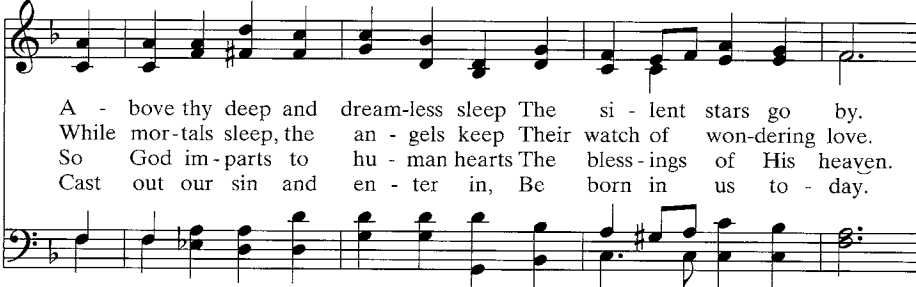
*St. Louis*, Lewis Henry Redner, 1868

"O little town of Bethlehem"

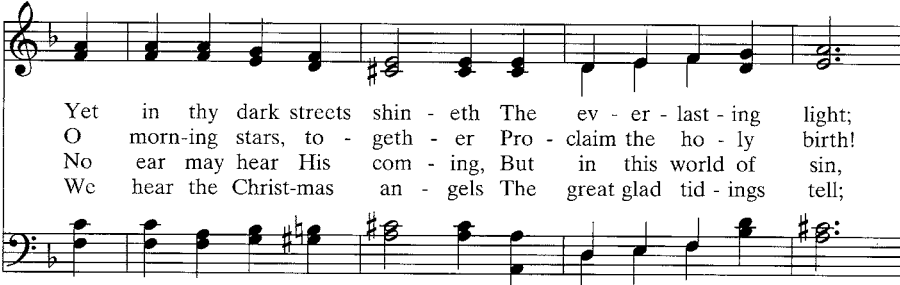
Phillips Brooks, 1868



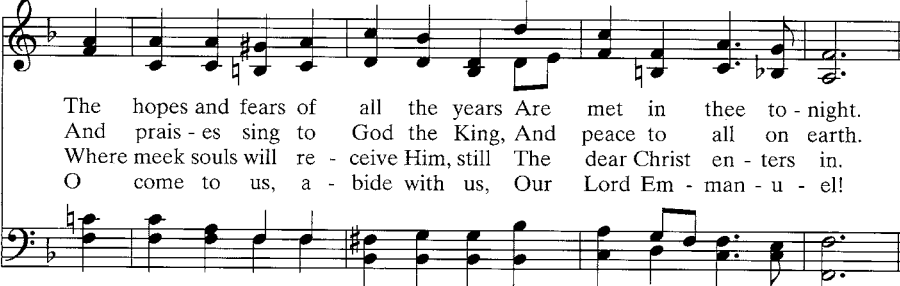
1. O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, How still we see thee lie!  
2. For Christ is born of Ma - ry; And gath - ered all a - bove,  
3. How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly, The won - drous gift is given!  
4. O ho - ly Child of Beth - le - hem, De - scend to us, we pray;



A - bove thy deep and dream-less sleep The si - lent stars go by.  
While mor - tals sleep, the an - gels keep Their watch of won - dering love.  
So God im - parts to hu - man hearts The bless - ings of His heaven.  
Cast out our sin and en - ter in, Be born in us to - day.



Yet in thy dark streets shin - eth The ev - er - last - ing light;  
O morn - ing stars, to - geth - er Pro - claim the ho - ly birth!  
No ear may hear His com - ing, But in this world of sin,  
We hear the Christ - mas an - gels The great glad tid - ings tell;



The hopes and fears of all the years Are met in thee to - night.  
And prais - es sing to God the King, And peace to all on earth.  
Where meek souls will re - ceive Him, still The dear Christ en - ters in.  
O come to us, a - bide with us, Our Lord Em - man - u - el!

SILENCE

THE THIRD READING

“Blessing When the World is Ending” *by Jan Richardson*

Rev. young chang

Look, the world  
is always ending  
somewhere.  
Somewhere  
the sun has come  
crashing down.  
Somewhere  
it has gone  
completely dark.  
Somewhere  
it has ended  
with the gun,  
the knife,  
the fist.  
Somewhere  
it has ended  
with the slammed door,  
the shattered hope.  
Somewhere  
it has ended  
with the utter quiet  
that follows the news  
from the phone,  
the television,  
the hospital room.  
Somewhere  
it has ended  
with a tenderness  
that will break  
your heart.

But, listen,  
this blessing means  
to be anything  
but morose.  
It has not come  
to cause despair.  
It is simply here  
because there is nothing  
a blessing  
is better suited for  
than an ending,  
nothing that cries out more  
for a blessing  
than when a world  
is falling apart.  
This blessing  
will not fix you,  
will not mend you,  
will not give you  
false comfort;  
it will not talk to you  
about one door opening  
when another one closes.  
It will simply  
sit itself beside you  
among the shards  
and gently turn your face  
toward the direction  
from which the light  
will come,  
gathering itself  
about you  
as the world begins  
again.

BENEDICTION

Rev. David

Leader: Even at the center of a stone-cold heart, Christ dwells—warm and alive,  
whispering our name, calling our souls back.

**All: We rest in the dark, trusting this time of stillness, and trusting the sun to return again.**

Leader: There is no hurry, there is always enough time;  
but Christ will not let us stay, ashen and immobile, in the dark forever.

**All: We rest in the dark, trusting this time of reflection, trusting hope to resume within us.**

Leader: Like the coming and going constancy of our breath,  
the Light grows brighter and brighter each day. Here, it is waxing even now, on the horizon.  
Can you see it?

**All: Not yet, but I believe it is coming, just the same. Amen.**

SILENCE

LEADERSHIP IN TODAY'S LITURGY  
The Rev. jessica young chang, *preacher*  
The Rev. Becky David, *worship leader*  
Leslie Fulford, *worship leader*  
Joshua Stafford, *pianist*

## FIRST CHURCH IS A FAITH COMMUNITY

- † Called together by God, the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of life, to worship, pray and serve;
- † Led by Jesus Christ, our Teacher and Savior, to learn the faith and welcome all God's children;
- † Empowered by the Holy Spirit to witness God's love and justice between ourselves, and throughout the world.

We covenant with the Lord Jesus Christ and one another, and bind ourselves in the presence of God to live together in all God's ways as revealed to us by the Holy Spirit and holy scripture. The church acknowledges that all members have the right of individual interpretation of the principles of the Christian faith and respects them in their honest convictions. In accordance with the teaching of our Lord, the church recognizes two sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion.

## OPEN AND AFFIRMING STATEMENT

We, the members of First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, welcome and affirm all. We believe we are all created in God's image and called to love our neighbors as Jesus loves us. We believe we are many members, but one body in Christ, called to unite all people in God's love. We are a community seeking God's presence and love in our lives. We seek to unite persons of all ages, races, nationalities, ethnicities, sexual orientations, sexes, gender identities and expressions, family structures, mental, intellectual and physical conditions, economic circumstances, political, theological and faith backgrounds. Together in our diversity, and being empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit, we will "do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God." (Micah 6:8)

—Adopted September 8, 2002 by the congregation  
Revisions adopted January 27, 2019 by the congregation

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