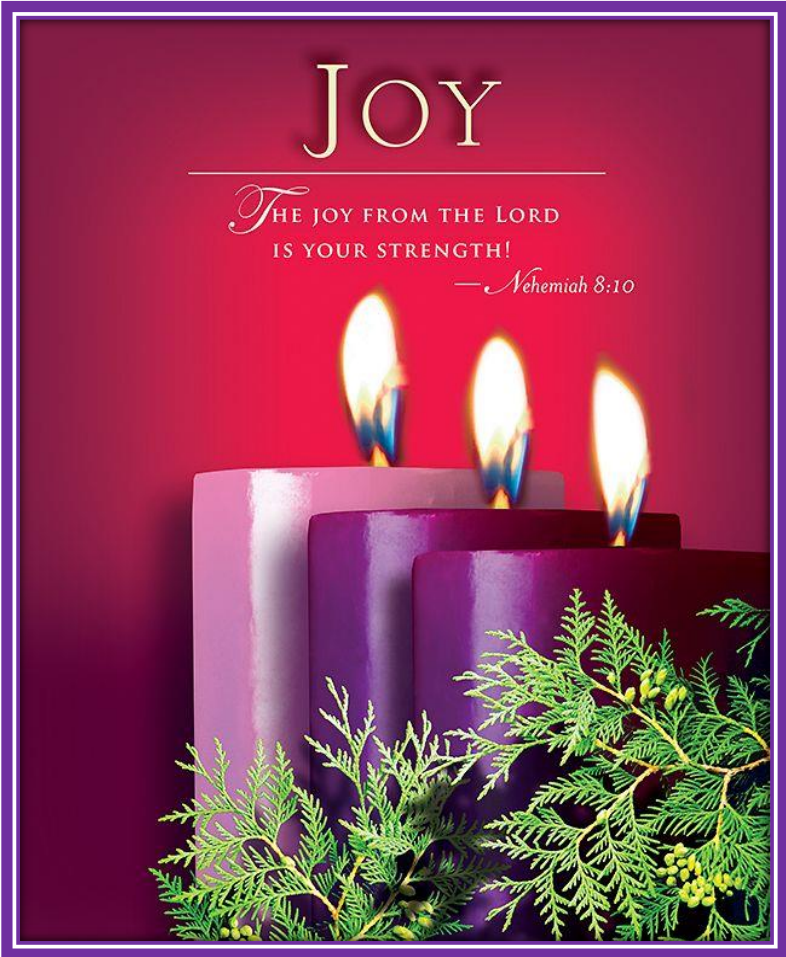


FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST IN LONGMEADOW

“Striving to be a Church the world needs Today!”



“True Light Is Coming”

**Third Sunday of Advent
ORDER OF WORSHIP
December 15, 2024**

☞ *Those who are able, please stand.*

Prelude: "The Little Drummer Boy" Arr. Daniel E. Hermany
Bell Choir

Welcome

Lighting of the Third Advent Candle, by Confirmand, Sophie and her Family

☞ **Call to Worship**

Leader: Throughout human history, God's promise has been:

People: "I will be your God, and you will be my people."

Leader: This day we worship our God, whose name
"Emmanuel" reminds us of the promise.

People: God-with-us.

Leader: On this third Sunday of Advent, we give thanks for
God's abiding presence among us.

People: Let us worship God.

Opening Prayer

Sharing the Peace of Christ

☞ **Hymn:** #131 "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" CAROL. New Century Hymnal (Black)

Scripture: Luke 1:26-38 Liturgist, Stew Creelman

Special Music "Nocturne" Mikhail Glinka. Sophie, piano

Children's Moment: A Message for All Ages,
Children are dismissed to Church School upstairs.

Sermon: "Do Not Be Afraid!" Rev. Doug Bixby
(HS & MS students are dismissed to the COOP after.)

Anthem: "Evergreen." Daniel Pinkham Chancel Choir

"How fine the sweetness from the bough, evergreen, ever living, like the prayer offered now for a whole world's forgiving; while the Christ Child is sleeping, worlds of woe in his keeping, worlds of joy in his dream. Lord, redeem us! That when thou art waking, the hearts we uplift shall be thy Christmas gift and be well worth thy taking. How bright the radiance of the tree, evergreen, everlasting, like the feast day to be after long years of fasting. Bright in hope Christmas morning to the Christ Child returning, once again we believe. Lord, receive us! When we come before thee, the heart's joy we bring Noel, Noel shall sing and forever adore thee."

Joys, Concerns, and Pastoral Prayer

Lord's Prayer (debts) 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. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever, Amen.

Prayer Response: "Amen"

Jim McEathron

A - men A - men A - men A - men

A - men A - men A - men A - men

Announcements

Rev. Doug Bixby

Call to Offering

Offertory "Come to Bethlehem." Peter Warlock.

Carey Larsen, soprano

"Come to Bethlehem and see the new-born King; Come and lay your heart before him while you sing. Lo, the God of earth and heaven, Lord of all, Lies within the manger of an ox's stall. Born of God the Father in the bliss above, Born a baby in a stable for our love. Lord of all creation ere our race began."

☞ Doxology: *Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise God all creatures here below. Praise God for all that love has done: Creator, Christ and Spirit One. Amen.*

☞ Prayer of Dedication

☞ Hymn: #51 "O Sing a Song of Bethlehem" KINGSFOLD New Century Hymnal (Black)

☞ Benediction

☞ Postlude "Do You Hear What I Hear." Arr. Douglas E. Wagner
Bell Choir



Please enjoy the beautiful flowers on the Altar.

They were arranged by Marieke and Doug Burt.

First Church of Christ Staff:

Rev. Doug Bixby – Pastor

Daniel Rose - Director of Music Ministries

Marilyn Paul-Lewis – Family Ministries Director

Crystal Dunn - Youth Leader

Stan Zdonick - Building and Technology Manager

Noelia Ortiz – Communications Director

Jill Labonte – Administrator

Church School Teachers:

Carolyn McGarr – Church School Teacher

Elaine Booke – Church School Teacher

Alexandra (Alex) Zolotor – Pre-K and Nursery Teacher

Chancel Choir Section Leaders:

Carey Larsen, soprano

Sue McNary, alto

Mark Todd, tenor

John Thomas, baritone



Christmas Pageant Rehearsal Is Today!



Children's Christmas pageant is on Sunday, Dec. 22nd.
Pageant roles are open to all children from Pre-K to Grade 5.

Please contact Marilyn Paul-Lewis with any questions
marilyn@firstchurchlongmeadow.org

**Rehearsal today is in the Sanctuary from
11:30 am until 1:00 pm**

**Next Sunday, December 22, is our
Christmas Pageant!
(10 am – 11 am)**

Festive & Fun Youth Event Today!!!!

YOUTH CHRISTMAS

Party

DECEMBER 15

1 PM – 3 PM

Interskate 91 South, Boston Rd,
Wilbraham, MA

Please email our Youth Director for more details.
crystal@firstchurchlongmeadow.org

Feeling blue? Please join us
in the Sanctuary
for this tender service
today at 4 pm.



Moving Forward Together



Compassionate • Inclusive • Generous

Take a look at the picture above. What do you see? People walking hand in hand up a hill. Are they hopeful about the future? United in a cause? Drawing comfort from each other? Looking to God for answers? Do you see yourself in the picture? You are part of a church that is “striving to be a church that the world needs today.” It’s a place where, on any given Sunday, you’ll experience a palpable feeling of forward momentum. With compassion, inclusivity and generosity, we are moving forward together! If you make your pledge for 2025, you are investing in everything we will be doing together in the coming

year. **If you have not yet made your pledge, please do so soon!**
Thank you.

This Year's Giving Tree



Today and next Sunday, December 22, is the deadline.

This year, First Church is supporting a Christmas Dinner for the homeless community, and it will be served by Open Pantry on Christmas Day, at the Commerce High School, Springfield, Massachusetts.

Please donate a gift certificate to either Dunkin Donuts or McDonalds. We are asking for a donation of \$25.00 for each card to ensure that all dining guests receive the same amount. If you want to buy 2 or more, please do! There are colored envelopes in

the sanctuary for the gift cards, which can then be hung as ornaments on the tree.

A special message from Nicole at Open Pantry...

“I am so thankful that this tradition will continue to happen.

Last year, you all collected gift cards for the homeless.

At the Christmas meal, we handed them all out.

It was such a great feeling to be handing out a gift like that to someone who may be sleeping outside, sleeping on a floor, sleeping on a cot, or maybe really not sleeping much at all. They all have unique life stories, and they all need our help with whatever we can do.

I am GRATEFUL that you are all willing to do this again. It really means so much to me.”

Nicole Lussier, MSW. LCSW
Managing Director
Open Pantry Community Services, Inc.
287 State St.
Springfield, MA. 01104

We hope to distribute around 80 certificates, as that is the estimated number of Christmas dinner guests.
To date, we have 16 gift cards.

All gift certificates need to be brought to the church by Sunday, December 22.

Nicole from Open Pantry will attend the December 22 Service. At that time, she will gather the donated gift cards. Nicole personally distributes them

on Christmas Day during dinner!

(jthomas@epsims.com with any questions)

**Both
Services
will have
candlelight services
and the same music.**





CALENDAR TODAY

Worship, 10:00 am, Sanctuary
Children's Pageant Rehearsal, Sanctuary, 11:30 am- 1pm
Confirmation Class, Atwater Rm, 11:30
Youth Christmas Party, December 15, 1-3 pm
(Interskate 91 South, Boston Road, Wilbraham, MA)
Blue Christmas, Sanctuary, 4 pm

CALANDAR THIS WEEK

Thursday – Spirt Speaks, Study, 4:15 pm
Bell Choir Rehearsal, Choir Room, 6:15 pm – 7:15 pm.
Chancel Choir Rehearsal, Choir Room, 7:30 pm – 9 pm
Sunday - Children's Christmas Pageant and
Worship Service, Sanctuary, 10:00 am

Giving Tree collection from Open Pantry
(immediately after Worship in Sanctuary)

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Christmas Eve Services, December 24, Sanctuary
Candlelit Service for both 4 pm & 8 pm Service
(same music for both services)

