

Start, Again: Hope Is Worth the Risk December 22, 2024



first congregational
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
timeless worship + modern faith

Vision Statement:

We Are a Nurturing, Beloved Community.
We Are Growing Authentic Christian Faith.
We Are Living Christ-Inspired Action.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 22, 2024

10:00 am

Advent is an irrational commitment to a better future. Advent is a protest demand. Advent is still believing that we are loved even when we have forgotten what love feels like. The scriptures cannot promise us smooth pathways nor can they entitle us to happiness. Instead, we are given recipes for the audacity to await our collective salvation even from the brink of death.

~ Casey Overton, enfleshed

PRELUDE

Mia Kelly, Cello & Judy Widrig, Piano

WELCOME

Sharon Benton

We love children in worship—their noises and wiggles are welcome, too. There are pillows and a coloring, book, and play area in the front and in the corner near the windows.

Younger kids may enjoy the Narthex play area. Their movements back and forth are a joy for us as they participate fully.

RINGING THE BELL

WE ARE A NURTURING, BELOVED COMMUNITY

WELCOME SONG

“While We Are Waiting, Come”

WAITING

Sing through twice

1 While we are wait - ing, come;

while we are wait - ing, come.

Je - sus, our Lord, Em - man - u - el,

while we are wait - ing, come.

TEXT: Claire Cloninger, 1986
MUSIC: Don Cason, 1986
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WAITING (Cason)
SM

*Rise in body or spirit

THE STORY

Sharon Benton

TIME WITH CHILDREN

Mark Schofield

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH¹

Jordan, Gavrie, Kinsey, and Isa

One Voice: In a weary and worn world, how do we start again?
Where do we begin?

All Voices: Let us begin with tenderness.
Let us begin with our hearts on our sleeve.
Let us begin from a place of vulnerability and hope.
Let us begin with love.

One Voice: Yes, let us start with love.
Today we light the candles of hope, peace, joy, and love.

All Voices: May the warmth of these lights be our cornerstone.
May the truth in these lights help us begin again.

One Voice: May love flow forth from here. Amen!

*Children may go with Josh to church school in the social hall
or remain in the sanctuary as they choose.*

*HYMN

“Wisdom from on High Is Dawning”

PICARDY



1 Wis - dom from on high is dawn - ing. E - ven now a
2 In her heart the joy of heav - en, in her hands the
3 All cre - a - tion stands in won - der as her glo - ry



gold - en ray shines in - to a world of shad - ows
poor of earth, on her back all hu - man sor - row,
fills the sky. Down in ad - o - ra - tion fall - ing,



from the realms of end - less day. Hid - den womb who birthed the
in her laugh all hu - man mirth. God most hu - man, God most
we her chil - dren raise the cry: She who is and was and



heav - ens in the womb now hides a - way.
ho - ly, God in - car - nate comes to birth.
ev - er - more shall be, al - le - lu - ia! God most high!

Text: Adam Michael Wood (USA), rev. 2017, © 2010 Adam Michael Wood
Music: French traditional, *Chansons populaires des provinces de France*, 1860

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***COMMUNITY PRAYER**

Kris Johnson

One Voice: Let's join our voices in communal prayer:
All Voices: Gracious God, you paint pictures of what could be,
but we declare those visions impossible.
You speak of the lion lying down with the lamb,
but we spout skepticism and uncertainty.
You dream of a more just day,
but we poke holes in the plan, unable to fathom that horizon.
Help keep us from losing sight of hope.
Help keep us from assuming that what we see is all there is.
Open up our hearts to see the world as you see it.
Open up our hearts to risk hope, to dream dreams,
and to not be afraid of either.
With gratitude we pray, amen.

SUNG PRAYER

"Come, Come, Emmanuel"

COME, COME EMMANUEL

The image shows two staves of musical notation for the hymn "Come, Come, Emmanuel". The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/4 time signature. The melody starts with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The notes are: quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5, quarter note B4, quarter note A4, quarter note G4. The lyrics "Come, come Em - man - u - el." are written below the notes. The second staff continues the melody with notes: quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5, quarter note B4, quarter note A4, quarter note G4. The lyrics "Come, Em - man - u - el." are written below. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

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PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Davi Weasley

The Prayer of Jesus

*We invite you to use the language for God that is most comfortable for you:
"Our Creator," "Our Father" or "Our Mother."*

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 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.*

*If you have a prayer request you'd like to share confidentially with our pastors,
have added to the confidential prayer list, or spoken aloud in worship,
go to www.fccb.net/contact-us/ to send a message or call the church to talk with a pastor.*

WE ARE GROWING AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN FAITH.

A READING FROM SCRIPTURE

Matthew 1:18-25

Kris Johnson

New Revised Standard Version

SCRIPTURE RESPONSE

Kris Johnson

One: For the Word of God in scripture,
for the Word of God among us,
for the Word of God within us:

All: **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON

“Start, Again: Hope Is Worth the Risk”

Sharon Benton

A GIFT OF MUSIC

“Waiting”

One Accord

by Pepper Choplin

WE ARE LIVING CHRIST-INSPIRED ACTION.

A READING FROM THE POETS

“Mumkin”

John Green

After Linda Pastan

At the Church of the Nativity,
where Joseph and Mary found shelter below,
in what was then a cave, I sat on a boulder,
sweat dripping down my temples, admiring
the smooth set of steps that sagged in the center
from the continual lines of loyal believers.

I wondered about their journey from Nazareth
through what is now an occupied territory where
Israeli Defense Forces blockade roads with multiple
checkpoints. Possibly, they walked through
the Judaeen hillside where Bedouin shepherds
still roam the land today, herding sheep and goats.

I watched a pilgrim go to her hands
and knees to kiss the sacred star where,
they say, perhaps, Jesus was born. I tried
to think of the Arabic word for maybe.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & OFFERING

Davi Weasley

You may make an offering either in the plates at the door or online.

Your generosity allows the work of this place nurture beloved community, grow authentic Christian faith, and live Christ-inspired action. Thank you!

There are several ways to give: 1) Give at our website, <https://fccb.net/giving/>.

2) Mail checks to First Congregational Church, 2401 Cornwall Avenue, Bellingham, WA 98225.

3) Use the Breeze app. Download from your app store, set up an account, and give!

4) Give by text. Text a dollar amount to (360) 205-1297, and set up your account.

5) Scan the QR code below or on the back cover of the bulletin.



MUSICAL OFFERING

“Emmanuel”

One Accord

by Tim Manion/ arr. Dan Schutte, S.J.

***HYMN 202** (red hymnal)

“People Look East”

BESANÇON

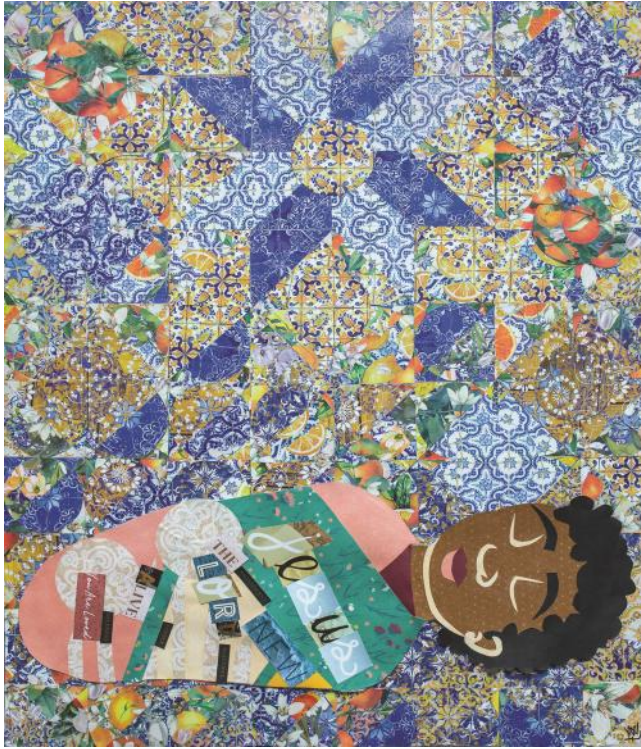
***BENEDICTION & PASSING THE PEACE**

Davi Weasley

POSTLUDE

Judy Widrig

Please share the Peace of Christ with one another as we depart.



Christmas Eve Worship
Tuesday, December 24
5:00 pm & 11:00 pm



COVER ART "Joseph's Dream" by Lauren Wright Pittman, inspired by Matthew 1:18-25
Hand-carved block printed with oil-based ink on patterned paper. *The angel holds Joseph as his dream unfolds in quilted vignettes. At the top, Mary gazes ahead, pondering her role in welcoming the Son of God into the world. Below, a squishy baby Jesus peacefully rests as his glory shines on a longing world eager to soak up the light of Emmanuel.*

Open and Affirming (ONA): As an Open and Affirming congregation believing in a loving God, all people are welcome in this church without regard to gender, race, ethnicity, economic or social status, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

We Try To Use Language which will help people feel included in our worship. Since not everyone is comfortable with the same language, we invite you to amend the words of the service as we sing and pray if they do not adequately express your faith. We invite you to assist us in creating new expressions of our common faith and life together.

Technical Support: If you need help streaming our worship services or connecting in other ways, please let us know.

APPOINTMENTS WITH PASTORAL STAFF

Pastoral staff are available by appointment virtually or in person. Contact them by email or call the pastoral care line, 360-733-4255.

Sharon **sharon@fccb.net**
Davi: **davi@fccb.net**

Davi's office hours will be on
Sunday, Monday, & Tuesday

You can also email our Office Manager
Cydne at **office@fccb.net**
and she'll pass your message on.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH United Church of Christ

An Open & Affirming Congregation

2401 Cornwall Avenue, Bellingham, WA 98225

Church Office: 360-734-3720

24/7 Emergency Pastoral Care: 360-733-4255

office@fccb.net • www.fccb.net

Facebook: facebook.com/fccbucc

Office Hours: 10:00 am-4:30 pm

LEAD PASTOR: Sharon Benton, she/her

PASTOR: Davi Weasley, they/them

CHURCH SCHOOL COORDINATOR:

Josh Marchand, they/them

ORGANIST: Judy Widrig, she/her

OFFICE MANAGER: Cydne Cochran, she/her

CUSTODIAN/MAINTENANCE:

Kurt Aagard, he/him

BOOKKEEPER: Eric Bowen, he/him

INTERIM MUSIC COORDINATOR:

Dallas Geil, he/him (music@fccb.net)

WORSHIP MEDIA COORDINATOR:

Georgia Drost, she/they

MODERATOR: Scott Ward, he/him

VICE MODERATOR:

Diane Cooper-Schick, she/her

PAST MODERATOR: Mark Schofield

CLERK: Janet Malley, she/her

TREASURER: Craig Jennings

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