



On the Way to Bethlehem

Advent 4: Bethlehem - A Humble Place December 22, 2024

**Welcome to the First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
A progressive community of faith seeking to
Follow the teachings of Jesus, pursue justice and live God's love.**

***No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here.***

**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST** 

A Note for Families / Folks of All Ages: We begin worship together. After the Time for All God's Children, young people grades K-8 are invited to follow teachers Craig Patton and Sandra Kochy upstairs to our one-room classroom. This week's theme: The Christmas Story.

Also, there are clipboards with paper and coloring pages at the back of the sanctuary, for worshippers of any age to use during the service.

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PRELUDE Two versions of *Away in A Manger* Kirkpatrick and Murray
Handchime Choir

WELCOME TO WORSHIP Revs. Alison J. B. Patton and Stephen Savage

LIGHT FOR THE JOURNEY

THE FOURTH ADVENT CANDLE IS LIT - LOVE* Gina and Wayne Tapp

One: The journey continues, and this candle will help to light our way.

All: We are on our way to more love.

One: How many of us are in search of grace, love and belonging?

All: We are a people who can share the Good News.

One: Acts of compassion are signs of God's love in our midst.

All: God's light goes before us; we are not alone.

***SUNG RESPONSE:** *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.

*Please rise, on your feet or in your hearts.

OPENING PRAYER

One: Holy and Living God, we pray for hearts and minds
to open wide to merciful acts in your name.

**All: Often, we clench our fists in fear that what we have
will not be enough for us.
Give us the humility to make more room.
Call us to a “generosity of grace.”
Call us to be generous—not to a fault—but to a future
where all have a place and a home where they are deeply loved.**

One: We pray this in the name of your Son,
Jesus, the Christ, your Love Incarnate. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

One: The peace of Christ be with you.

All: And also with you.

*OPENING HYMN

Hail to the Lord’s Anointed

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TIME FOR ALL GOD’S CHILDREN

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Tom Hamerski

One: Spirit of God, as a lantern casts its light along the path,

**All: So shed light on your holy Word, kindle in us a holy curiosity and illuminate the way to
more faithful living, we pray. Amen.**

SCRIPTURE

Ruth 1:1-8, 16, 22 *and* Luke 2:1-7

SERMON

Bethlehem: A Humble Place

Rev. Alison J. Buttrick Patton

ANTHEM

Coventry Carol

English Carol

GUIDED BY PRAYER

The Lord’s Prayer:

**Our Father-Mother 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. Amen.**

SUNG RESPONSE:

Lead, Kindly Light

**Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom, lead thou me on;
The night is dark, and I am far from home; lead thou me on!**

GIFTS ALONG THE WAY [†]

You can make a secure online gift by using the QR code, going to fccucc.org/donate, or by adding your contribution to the box at the back of the sanctuary. Thank you!



MUSICAL INTERLUDE

The Friendly Beasts

French Carol

PRAYER OF BLESSING

WE SET OFF: A PROCLAMATION FOR THE CONTINUED JOURNEY

*CLOSING HYMN

People Look East

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen

Traditional English Carol

WORSHIP NOTES

****This morning's words for worship** are adapted from content created as part of our series, *On the Way to Bethlehem*, by the Worship Design Studio. Used by permission.

[†]Split Plate Offering, this morning, December 22: This morning's offering will be divided between the church and State Street Family Winter Shelter, as designated by our Mission and Social Witness Team.

Thank you to this morning's ushers: Team B, Peggy Murray, Captain.

Today, the church steeple has been lit in loving memory of Elsebeth Tripler by her family.

Dedicate a Christmas poinsettia in memory or in honor of a loved one on Christmas Eve. See the order form in this bulletin.

Live Stream: Thank you to Alex Ratta for managing our livestream this and every Sunday.

Advent Candle Lighters: This Advent we have invited a mix of recent arrivals and long-time FCC UCC participants to lead our candle lighting. Thanks to Darcy Halvorsen and Karen Westerberg (week 1), Karen Hessel and Marvin Ellison (week 2), Skyler Keiter-Massefski and Sarah Lupien (week 3), and Gina and Wayne Tapp (today). Please take a moment after worship to introduce yourself to those you have not yet met.

TODAY - Short Story Discussion, 11:30 am - 12:30 pm in Davidson Lounge. We will be reading "Chivalry," by Neil Gaimon. This is the lighthearted story of finding the Holy Grail on the shelves of a local thrift shop. You can find the story at <https://nowcomment.com/documents/210411> or contact Pastor Steve at steve@fccucc.org.

MISSION CORNER

Volunteer for Preble Street Food Hub: On the last Friday of each month, we prepare meals at the Food Hub, 75 Darling Avenue, South Portland, for delivery to Preble Street satellite sites. Please join us! To learn more about how to volunteer, see the Weekly Word or contact Danna Wiggins at dannawig2@gmail.com

CLYNK Bags are available in the Narthex: Did you know that you can collect your returnable cans and bottles to support our mission and outreach efforts? Save up your bottles and cans to turn in at participating grocery stores. Scan the code on the bags and the refunds will automatically be donated to our FCC mission team. It's easy!

CHRISTMAS GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

THANK YOU:

- **From Community Crisis Ministries - Gifts for Families:** Thanks to your contributions, we have given gifts to 15 children and gift cards totaling \$1,025 to local families, to help them celebrate this Christmas.
- **Re: Long Creek Gift Cards:** We collected 97 gift cards totaling \$1,935, for young people at Long Creek. This is more than double the amount we often collect!

Hats and Mitten Tree: Hang hats, scarves and mittens on the Christmas Tree through Epiphany, January 6, to be donated to neighbors who need a little warmth this season. Questions? Contact Jess Proctor, jessdeeproctor@gmail.com or 207-671-1366.

Christmas Fund for Retired Clergy - 5 pm and 8 pm Christmas Eve Services: This fund cares for active and retired clergy and lay employees in financial crisis. Use the blue envelopes in the pews (put envelopes in the box at the back of the sanctuary), or give online at fccucc.org, select the category "other" and enter "Christmas Fund".

WHAT'S UP? Want to stay in the loop? Make sure you are on our email list! **UPDATE or ADD your contact info!** Go to fccucc.org - "Contact Us" - "Contact Info Update Form."



Also, look for us on Facebook: facebook.com/fccucc



On Instagram: instagram.com/fccucc_s.portland



And on our YouTube channel: youtube.com/@FCCUCCSouthPort

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2025 - SAVE THE DATES!

Fellowship Club, Tuesday, January 7, 6:15 pm: Dinner and entertainment in Guptill Hall. Watch for details re: January's guest presenter. The evening will feature a performance by classically trained violinist Madeline Mayo.

Fire Exit Book Discussion, Sunday, January 12, 11:30 am - 1 pm in Davidson Lounge: FCC's Wabanaki Allies working group invites you to participate in a book discussion of Penobscot author Morgan Talty's *Fire Exit* a novel described as "remarkable" by NPR and as "spellbinding" by TIME magazine. For more information, contact Judy Kimball (judyk53@me.com) or Leslie Gatcombe-Hynes (lesliegatcombe@gmail.com).

➔ Purchase *Fire Exit* at a discount at Nonesuch Books by identifying yourself as an FCCUCC book discussion participant.

Sound Bath - Tuesday, January 14, 6:30 - 8 pm, 5th Floor Community Room: Join us for an evening of relaxation and stress reduction with an immersive sound bath. Let the vibrations, tones and frequencies of bowls, gongs, drums, chimes and other instruments bring about a change in the body and mind. Come as you are. You may choose to be seated in a chair or laying on a mat/beach towel. Feel free to bring pillows, blankets, comfy socks or other items for your comfort.

Led by Doris Hall - Certified Sound Healer, Reiki Master, Practitioner and Yoga Teacher.
Hosted by Judith Borelli – FCC UCC member.

Celebrating Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Songs and Wisdom for our Times – Sunday, January 19, 2 pm: Join us for this second annual gathering to honor the legacy of Dr. King and reflect on the work yet to be done, with guest community chorus, the Sea Change Chorale, Deirdre McClure directing. Sponsored by the Greater Portland Multi-faith Group.

CHRISTMAS SEASON WORSHIP

Tuesday, December 24: Christmas Eve

5 pm: All-Ages Christmas Pageant - We will gather and tell the story together

8 pm: Christmas Eve Worship with lessons and carols

Sunday, December 29: Worship led by members of Spiritual Life and Worship. A Christmas carol sing-along, special music and reflections on the turning of the year. No church school; children are welcome to stay in worship.

Sunday, January 5: Epiphany: A creative, All-Ages Worship featuring the story of the Magi. No church school; children are welcome to stay in worship.

Church Offices will be closed December 25, 2024 - January 1, 2025.

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First Congregational Church, UCC Staff

Tom Conlon, Building Manager

Terry Foster, Co-Director of Music, organist/pianist

Deirdre McClure, Co-Director of Music, Choir Director

Alison J. Buttrick Patton, Senior Pastor

Bethany Porter, Community Engagement Manager

Sharon Potter, Handbell Choir Director

Kathy Sahrbeck, Community Crisis Ministries Director

Steve Savage, Associate Pastor

Lynn Sprinkle, Interim Business Manager

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2ND ANNUAL **DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.** **CELEBRATION**



Artwork by Emma Wolfsohn

SONGS AND WISDOM FOR OUR TIMES
FEATURING THE SEA CHANGE CHORALE

SUNDAY, JANUARY 19, 2025
2:00 - 3:30 PM
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC
301 COTTAGE ROAD
SOUTH PORTLAND, ME

Free admission

Sponsored by the Greater Portland Multifaith Group

Dedicate a Poinsettia on Christmas Eve

Remember your loved ones and help decorate the Sanctuary with beautiful Christmas Poinsettias. The poinsettias this year are in six-inch pots, and are available in white, pink and red. The cost is \$15.00 for each plant.

A list of the names for Memorial and Celebration Poinsettias will be included in the worship bulletin for both Christmas Eve services.

Please turn in this form to Rev. Steve Savage by 1:00 pm TODAY, Sunday, December 22.

Number of poinsettias ordering (\$15.00 each) _____

Name(s) of those in Memory of and/or in Celebration of

Who the poinsettias are from (Name and Contact Information)

Indicate whether you will pick up the poinsettia(s) on Christmas Eve or if you will leave the poinsettia(s) as a gift to friends at home.

Payment:

1. Make a check payable to FCC UCC with "poinsettias" in the memo field
2. Make an online payment by going to fccucc.org/donate - choose the category "other" and write "poinsettias" in the memo. At check-out, please opt in to cover the fee. *Thank you!*

