

Welcome to the First Congregational Church

Blue Christmas Service
Monday December 1 at 2:30 PM
(In-Person and on Zoom)



Rest on the Flight into Egypt
By [Luc Olivier Merson](#) (French, 1846–1920)
1879

Sometimes the holiday season can feel overwhelming. Whether or not this is the case for you, we invite you to join us for our Blue Christmas service—a gentle, reflective time of music, prayer, and comfort. Come find a quiet space for peace, healing, and shared hope.

Service for Monday, December 1st 2025 - Blue Christmas
[This service of worship was created by Rev. Emilia Halstead using ChaptGPT]

PRELUDE Soft instrumental music (contemplative, instrumental carols?)

WORDS OF INVITATION

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR WORSHIP

Call to Worship:

In the beginning was the Word—

And the Word became flesh, choosing weakness and wonder.

In the depths of our shadowed hearts, God whispers, "Do not be afraid."

Yet fear remains real, and we do not leave it outside these doors.

Jesus came among us not in power, but in vulnerability.

And so we come as we are—frayed, fragile, beloved.

In this hour we seek light that does not deny darkness,

And strength that does not require us to be strong to receive it.

Let us worship the God who meets us in the paradox—

In the tender power and the brave vulnerability of Christ.

Bringing Ourselves into God's Presence:

Holy One, in this season that feels long and maybe even garish to our hurting hearts and spirits, we bring our whole selves before you—

the parts that smile easily and the parts that ache for breath.

We are grateful that you do not ask us to pretend. We remember that You came as a child, teaching us that your glory is wrapped in weakness, your power born in smallness, your hope often arriving quietly in the dark.

Be present in our raw edges and fragile places this season. Cradle us with compassion.

Shine your gentle light upon our grief, and kindle in us a strength we do not have to manufacture—a strength that flows from your vulnerable love. Amen.

OFFERING OUR MOMENTS OF BEAUTY

Song: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (Adapted by Pastor Emilia)

1 O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And fill my aching heart with peace
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appears.

Refrain:

Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
shall come to you, O wounded Soul.

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5 O come, O Key of David, come
and open wide your heavenly home.
Make safe for us the heavenward road
and bar the way to sin's abode. **Refrain**

6 O come, O Bright and Morning Star,
and bring us comfort from afar!
Dispel the shadows of the night
and turn our sorrow into light. **Refrain**

7 O come, Desire of nations, bind
All people's in one heart and mind.
Make envy, strife, and oppression cease
Fill the whole world with heaven's peace. **Refrain**

A Litany of Honesty: Naming Our Pain and Seeking God's Tender Strength
God of Advent, we bring you what hurts.

Hold us in the strength of Christ's vulnerability.

In the grief that sits heavy in the chest—

Hold us.

In the relationships changed or broken—

Hold us.

In the health struggles, diagnoses, and daily uncertainties—

Hold us.

In the depression, anxiety, or numbness—

Hold us.

In the memories that sting and hopes that feel too faint—

Hold us.

In all that we cannot name, but you already know—

Hold us in your tender strength, O God.

Hear now from the Hebrew Scriptures...

Hebrew Scriptures Isaiah 9:2-7 (The Voice)

The people who had been living in darkness
have seen a great light.

The light of life has shined on those who dwelt
in the shadowy darkness of death.

And You, God, will make it happen. You bolstered the nation,
making it great again. You have saturated it with joy.

Everyone in it is full of delight in Your presence,
like the joy they experience at the harvest,
like the thrill of dividing up the spoils of war.

For as You did back in the day when Midian oppressed us,
You will shatter the yoke that burdens them,
You will lift the load that weighs them down,
You will break the rod of their oppressor.

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It's true. All the fabric of war will go up in flames:

the troops' heavy boots that stamped us down and their blood-soaked garb
Will all be burned beyond recognition or use.

There will be a new time, a fresh start.

Hope of all hopes, dream of our dreams,

a child is born, sweet-breathed; a son is given to us: a living gift.

And even now, with tiny features and dewy hair, He is great.

The power of leadership, and the weight of authority, will rest on His shoulders.

His name? His name we'll know in many ways—

He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Dear Father everlasting, ever-present never-failing,

Master of Wholeness, Prince of Peace.

His leadership will bring such prosperity as you've never seen before—
sustainable peace for all time.

This child: God's promise to David—a throne forever, among us,

to restore sound leadership that cannot be perverted or shaken.

He will ensure justice without fail and absolute equity. Always.

The intense passion of the Eternal, Commander of heavenly armies,
will carry this to completion.

Here ends the Lesson.

Amen.

Hear now from the Psalms...

Psalter Lesson Psalm 34:17-18 (The Voice)

When the upright need help and cry to the Eternal, God hears their cries and
rescues them from all of their troubles.

When someone is hurting or brokenhearted, the Eternal moves in close and
relieves them of their pain.

Here ends the Lesson.

Amen.

Hear now from the Gospel of Luke...

Gospel Lesson Luke 2:1-7 (The Voice)

Around the time of Elizabeth's amazing pregnancy and John's birth, the emperor in
Rome, Caesar Augustus, required everyone in the Roman Empire to participate in
a massive census—the first census since Quirinius had become governor of Syria.
Each person had to go to his or her ancestral city to be counted.

*This political background isn't incidental: it is crucial to the story. Conquering
nations then and now choose to maintain dominance and power in various ways.
Some brutally destroy and plunder the nations they conquer. Some dehumanize
people by enslaving them. Other empires, like the ancient Roman empire, allow
the people to remain in their land and work as before, but with one major change:
the conquered people have to pay taxes to their rulers. The purpose of a census
like the one Luke describes is to be sure that everyone is appropriately taxed and
knows who is in charge.*

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Mary's fiancé Joseph, from Nazareth in Galilee, had to participate in the census in the same way everyone else did. Because he was a descendant of King David, his ancestral city was Bethlehem, David's birthplace. Mary, who was now late in her pregnancy that the messenger Gabriel had predicted, accompanied Joseph. While in Bethlehem, she went into labor and gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped the baby in a blanket and laid Him in a feeding trough because the inn had no room for them.

Here ends the Gospel Lesson.

Amen.

SERMON

"The Advent Paradox" by The Work of the People,
featuring Peter Traben Haas

PAUSE FOR QUIET REFLECTION

Song:

I Wonder As I Wander (Used with Permission)

1 I wonder as I wander, out under the sky,
how Jesus the Savior did come for to die
for poor ordinary people like you and like I;
I wonder as I wander, out under the sky.

2 When Mary birthed Jesus, 'twas in a cow's stall
with wise men and farmers and shepherds and all.
but high from God's heaven a star's light did fall,
and the promise of ages it did then recall.

3 If Jesus had wanted for any wee thing,
a star in the sky, or a bird on the wing,
or all of God's angels in heaven for to sing,
he surely could have it, 'cause he was the King.

4 I wonder as I wander, out under the sky,
how Jesus the Savior did come for to die
for poor ordinary people like you and like I;
I wonder as I wander, out under the sky.

CANDLE LIGHTING RITUAL

Tonight we light candles not to chase the dark away, but to companion us within it. We light them as signs of God's vulnerable strength made known to us in Christ.

Candle 1: For Grief

God of Comfort, meet us in our sorrow.

Candle 2: For Fear

Christ child, whose first breath was a cry, hold our trembling hearts.

Candle 3: For Pain

Healing Spirit, fill us with your peace.

Candle 4: For Anger

Righteous One, guide the flames of our hearts and minds to bring illumination rather than destruction.

Candle 5: For Frustration and Unanswered Questions

Spirit of Truth, receive what is too heavy to carry alone.

Candle 6: For Lost Hope and Gentle, Growing Hope

Living God, kindle in us a hope that does not demand certainty but grows quietly, persistently, like light in the night.

Community Candle / Christ Candle: For the Strength of Jesus' Vulnerability

Here is the paradox of Advent:

A fragile child becomes our shelter.

A vulnerable Savior becomes our strength.

A quiet night becomes our courage.

Christ, Light of the World, meet us now.

SONG:

In the Bleak Midwinter

1 In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone:
snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
in the bleak midwinter, long ago.

2 Our God transcends all heaven, Earth and its domain;
heaven and earth shall flee away, when Christ comes to reign:
in the bleak midwinter, a stable place sufficed
the Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

3 Angels and archangels, may have gathered there,
cherubim and seraphim, thronged the midnight air,
but his mother only, in her maiden bliss,
worshiped the Beloved with a kiss.

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4 What can I offer, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb,
if I were a wise one I would do my part,
yet what I can I offer, All of my heart.

Prayers of the People

(Response to each prayer:)

God who holds us,

Receive our prayers.

PASTORAL PRAYER

Lord's Prayer:

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.

CLOSING SONG:

"Gentle Assurance"
(to the tune of "Blessed Assurance")

1 Gentle assurance, Christ is my light—
born in the shadows, close in the night.
Hope in a manger, small and yet strong,
holding the broken, guiding us all.

Refrain:

This is my story, this is my song:
finding my Savior when the nights feel long.
This is my story, this is my song:
finding my Savior when the nights feel long.

2 Healing compassion, quiet and deep,
whispers of mercy for those who weep.
Angels of comfort gather above,
bending to bless us with tender love. **Refrain.**
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3 Rest in the waiting, peace in the pain;
Christ walks beside us again and again.
Strength in our weakness, hope from above,
held in God's goodness, wrapped in God's love. **Refrain.**

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR THE NEXT MOMENT

BENEDICTION & SENDING

[You are invited to stay at the close of worship for quiet reflection.]