Welcome! How wonderful it is to worship together. In keeping with guidance from the Fairfield Department of Public Health, please wear a mask and practice social distancing. Hymns will be sung by a soloist or small group. These simple steps will help keep us all safe!

All the People of God (that’s you!) speak the text in boldface.
Worship leaders speak the text in regular type.
Italic Text provides explanation or instruction.

We Gather to Hear God’s Word

Welcome & Announcements
We seek to extend the extravagant welcome of God to all people, all the time. Regardless of your race, class, ancestry, gender identity, marital status, ability, age, immigration status, or sexual orientation, you are always welcome at First Church. We affirm your inherent dignity as a child of God. God created you just as you are and loves you just as you are. We do, too!
Prelude

*Call to Worship

Hymn

What Child Is This

What Child is this, who, laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?[Refrain]

Why lies He in such low estate,
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear: for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading. [Refrain]

So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh,
Come peasant, king to own Him;
The King of kings salvation brings,
Let loving hearts enthrone Him. [Refrain]

Refrain:

This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary!

*Prayer of Invocation and The 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Candle of Witness

Thanksgiving for Healthcare Workers
Musical Response

¡Gloria, Gloria, Gloria!

Pablo Sosa

Scripture


Sermon “Simeon and Anna: The Power of Waiting”

The Reverend David W. Spollett

Hymn

The First Noel

The first Noel the angel did say
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
on a cold winter’s night that was so deep.[Refrain]

They looked above and saw a star
shining in the east, beyond them far;
And to the earth it gave great light,
and so it continued both day and night. [Refrain]

Then entered in those magi three,
and bending low upon their knee,
They offered there, in great reverence,
their gold and myrrh and frankincense. [Refrain]

And by the light of that same star
three sages came from country far,
To seek for a king was their intent,
and to follow the star wherever it went. [Refrain]

This star shone bright in the northwest,
o’er Bethlehem it took its rest,
And there it did both stop and stay,
right over the place where Jesus lay. [Refrain]

Refrain:
Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell,
born in a manger, Emmanuel.
Joys and Concerns

Prayers of the People

Invitation to the Offering

Offertory

Doxology and Prayer of Dedication

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.
Praise God all creatures here below.
Praise God for all that love has done.

Communion Hymn  
_In the Bleak Midwinter_

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.

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.

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 sovereign God almighty, Jesus Christ.

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; 
but what I can I offer: all my heart.

The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper

Silent Prayer of Preparation

Invitation

Come, for the Table of the Lord is prepared.
We come at Christ’s invitation, to eat at his Table.

Come, to know the love of God in Jesus Christ.
We come at Christ’s invitation, to share in his love.

Come, to be healed by God’s gracious mercy.
We come at Christ’s invitation, to be healed of all our afflictions
Come, with grateful hearts for all God’s blessings.
We come at Christ’s invitation, to give thanks to God.

Come, to share in a foretaste of the heavenly banquet.
We come to share in the hope, peace, joy, and love of our Advent journey.

Prayer of Consecration

We have set these elements aside to be a Sacrament. Together, let us ask God’s blessing upon them as we join our voices in prayer:

God of Creation, Gracious Redeemer, and Spirit of Life and Love, bless with your presence each table where your children gather. Grant that this Bread, broken for us all, and that this Cup, poured out for us all, may be the Body and Blood of Christ, the Bread of Heaven and the Cup of Blessing.

Words of Institution

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

We give you thanks, Almighty God, that you have renewed us at your table by granting us the presence of Jesus Christ. Strengthen our faith in you, increase our love for one another, and send us forth into the world in courage and peace, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hymn

Brightest and Best of the Star of the Morning

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid;
Star of the East, the horizon adorning,
Guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

Cold on his cradle the dewdrops are shining,
Low lies his head with the beasts of the stall;
Angels adore him in slumber reclining,
Maker and Monarch and Savior of all.

Shall we not yield him in costly devotion,
Odors of Eden, and offerings divine,
Gems of the mountain, and pearls of the ocean,
Myrrh from the forest, and gold from the mine?

Vainly we offer each ample oblation,
Vainly with gifts would his favor secure;
Richer by far is the heart’s adoration,
Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.
Benediction and Sung Response

Light Dawns on a Weary World

The trees shall clap their hands; the dry lands, gush with springs;
the hills and moun-tains shall break forth with sing-ing!
We shall go out in joy, and be led forth in peace,
as all the world in won-der echo-es sha-lom.

Postlude

Leading Us in Worship
The Reverend David W. Spollett
Alexis Zingale, Pianist
David McKinnis, Technical Support

Permissions


Please Hold in your Prayers

Disciples at First Church: Chris Bernd, Sandy Bromer; Pertrinea Cash; Ken and Betsy Dalling; Fernando Destruge; Gayle Hand; Joyce Hutchings; Carl Franquet; Sonia Gutierrez and Henry Hernandez; Christy Jefremow; Cathy Kane, her brother Scott and great niece Amelia; Adelaide Kitchen; Alice and Jerry Krenke; Lillian Klein; Beth McKinnis; Gerry O’Donovan; Connie Sargent; Donna Schmidt; Joe and Lauren Strickland’s five grandsons in Libya; Penny Stevens; Arlene Studer; Joann Van Esselstyn; Elinor Wilber; and Edith Zambo.

Serving in the military: James Classy, Sam Classy, Trevor Dawson, David Elmore, Sean Lomnitzer, Kelcy McKenzie and Christopher Muschett.
Family and Friends: Connie Accomando (Jim’s mom); Cecelia Barr (Sue O’Donovan’s mother); Diana Bilotto (Patty’s sister-in-law); The Broderick Family (friends of Frank Martignetti); Kevin Butler (Heidi’s father); Bob Brutell (Diana Fitzgerald’s father); Marina Caclio (Sonia’s sister’s mother-in-law); Elizabeth Clark (friend of the Gindek family); Bryan Cunningham (friend of Amiee Guerrero); Olivia DeCarli (granddaughter of Laura and Doug Koch); Brandon Deedon (Petrinea Cash’s son); Don Collins (David McFadden’s brother-in-law) and his wife Edith; Linda Drew (friend of Poppy Bonuomo); Tom Dwyer (Phil’s brother); William Fensterer (Julie Traum’s father); Nat Ferrante (Paul’s father); Sharon Friedlander (Connie Sargent’s cousin); Greg and Laura Feigo; Linda Goldstein (friend of Poppy Bonuomo); Greenawalt and Darnall Families (Gindek family); Jose Gutierrez (Sonia’s Dad); Christina Holms (Connie and Bill Sargent’s niece); Norma Jenkins and Family (friends of the Gindek family); Nancy and Paul King; Martha Krollman; Bill Lucas (Nancy Szwejkowski’s brother); Tim Marble (Charlotte Dyslin’s brother); MaKayla and John McGovern (friends of Donna Kersten); Family of Amanda O’Brien (Friend’s of Julie Traum); Amadeu Pereira (Maria Ferrante’s Uncle); Artie Quinn; Levi Schmidt (friend of Penny Stevens); Darlene and Bobby Scaia (Pat Bilotto’s cousins); Dorothy Steinman; Seth Sullivan (Jacque Paige’s nephew); Hayder, Nada, Ali, and Leith Tawfiq (friends of First Church); and Danielle Taal and her five sons (Lauren and Joe Strickland’s daughter and grandsons).

The Needs of God’s Beloved World: Refugees and migrants; people afflicted by COVID-19 and other physical and mental illnesses; those who are hungry and homeless; victims of war, violence, racism, genocide, and social injustice; those suffering from climate change and natural disasters; and our community partners and all who work for justice and peace.

Announcements 1-2-2021

This Week:

Sunday, Jan. 2
9:15am Bible Study on Zoom
10:15 am Worship, Online

Wednesday, Jan. 5
10:00 am Bible Study on Zoom

Thursday, Jan. 6
12:00 pm Pastoral Team Meeting

Friday, Jan. 7
4:00pm The Loft

Sunday, Jan. 9
9:15am Bible Study on Zoom
10:15 am Worship, Online
6:00 pm High Road
ABCCONN’s Mission and Stewardship Dept

For our 2nd Annual Warm Hearts, Warm Souls Drive, ABCCONN’s Mission and Stewardship Department is pleased to offer a drop off location in your area for warm and fuzzy donations:

First Baptist Church of Stratford

Please join us in collecting these much-needed items for our neighbors in the lower Fairfield County area.

Here is the contact information: Sister Letha Williams, Chair Senior Missionaries

(203) 556-3440 (cell)

Please drop off by JANUARY 9, 2021 or call Missionary Letha for additional information or pickup. Monetary donations will also be accepted. Make checks out to First Baptist Church of Stratford, reference: ABCCONN Warm Hearts, Warm Souls.