



Advent
December 17, 2023

FIRST CHURCH IN CAMBRIDGE

Congregational 1633-1636
United Church of Christ
Garden and Mason Streets
Cambridge, Massachusetts

WELCOME TO FIRST CHURCH IN CAMBRIDGE...

Grounded in God • Growing in Community • Acting in Love

We're glad you are worshiping with us today! First Church is a vibrant, multi-generational, engaged, urban church. We care a lot about each other and what's happening in the world around us. Wherever you are on the journey of faith, you are welcome here.

FIRST CHURCH
IN CAMBRIDGE
CONGREGATIONAL
387 YEARS
ON THE WAY
1 6 3 6 – 2 0 2 3

December 17, 2023

Preaching Today	Carla Arevalo, <i>Pastoral Associate</i>
Liturgist	Valerie Blanc
Leading Worship	Kate Layzer, <i>Minister of Street Outreach</i>
	Lisa, John, Raven, and Colin McCarty, <i>Advent candle-lighting</i>
	Lee Prouty, <i>tech support</i>
	Dan Smith, <i>Senior Minister</i>
	Jennifer Velázquez, <i>guest musician</i>
Bulletin Cover Image	Freddie Funck, <i>First Church member</i>

Today's Programs and Events

9:30 a.m.	Confirmation Class for 8/9th graders, The Well
10:15 a.m.	Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary
11:00 a.m.	Hybrid Morning Worship, Sanctuary and via livestream
11:20 a.m.	Church School: Godly Play and Middler classes
12:15 p.m.	Christmas Cookie Swap, Margaret Jewett Hall
7:30 p.m.	Night Song, Sanctuary and via livestream

New to First Church?

Have you just begun joining us for worship? Consider filling out a visitor card found on the small clipboards or this "[virtual visitor card](#)" so that we might connect with you about our community.

Give to First Church

You can give online: www.firstchurchcambridge.org/give or by texting "\$_" to: 1-844-996-0982.

Contact a Pastor or Staff Member

Find [contact information](#) for our ministerial, program, and building staff on our website. For general information and inquiries: info@firstchurchcambridge.org

Minister On Call

If you have an urgent pastoral need, please call 617-547-2724 ext. 222. Your call will be routed to a First Church minister based on a rotating schedule that covers staff time off.

Have a church program or event to promote?
Complete the [First Church Communications Request](#) form.
Have an edit or update for our website? Complete the [FCC Website Changes](#) form

GATHERING

VOLUNTARY

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

The McCarty Family

L: Loving God, be with us now as we light the third candle of Advent
and kindle it with joy.

C: O Come, God of joy and healing!

L: Light our path, and guide us on our way.
The Light of Christ!

C: Thanks be to God!

*HYMN RESPONSE

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

alt. Kate Layzer

**O come, thou Wisdom from on high, and order all things, far and nigh;
to us the path of knowledge show, and cause us in her ways to go.**

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to us, in peace to dwell.

*GREETING

Valerie Blanc

L: O Come, beloved of God!
with all your yearning and all your heartbreak,
with all your wonder and all your love!

**C: O Come, all you faithful
with your struggles and your doubts.**

L: O Come, O Come!
For here Emmanuel, God-with-us,
comes to us and meets us, just as we are.

C: Then let us rejoice – and give God thanks and praise!

*HYMN 128

Wake, Awake for Night Is Flying

WORDS OF WELCOME

ANTHEM

O Virgo Virginum

Healy Willan

CONFESSING

INVITATION TO CONFESSION

SILENCE

**You are invited to stand. Hymns preceded by a "C" are found in the beginning section of the hymnal. This section contains hymns written and composed by current and past members of First Church in Cambridge.*

ADVENT PRAYER OF CONFESSION

L: Now let us ask for healing, pardon and peace.

**C: In your presence, God, and in each other's company,
we confess that our lives and the life of the world
are cast in shadow by what we do and by what we fail to do.
But we know a light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness does not overcome it.
Pardon our deliberate faults.
Heal our weaknesses and fears.
Give us strength to grow in the love we lack.
Illumine our souls with the first glimmers
of the Coming Light of Christ, our Comfort and Redeemer. Amen.**

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

*GREETING OF PEACE

Please turn to your immediate neighbors and offer a handshake, or a hug! Or if you prefer to maintain social distance, fold your hands or arms in a sign of peace. We want everyone to be comfortable; today let there be no spiritual distance between us.

*HYMN

Give Me Light in the Darkness

(see p. 4)

**Give me light in the darkness, light in the darkness,
light in the darkness to sing my soul awake.**

**Give me joy in the waiting, joy in the waiting,
joy in the waiting to sing my soul awake.**

Children up through 5th grade are now invited to Church School classes. Godly Play (PreK-4th grade), Middlers (5th grade) students can meet their teachers at the side door by the Children's Book Corner. Bible 101 (6/7th grade) students are invited to remain in worship for the special music. Caregivers can find the children in the Chapel after worship.

OPENING THE WORD

PRAYER FOR UNDERSTANDING

READING

Mary's Magnificat - Luke 1:46-55

ANTHEM

There Is No Rose of Such Virtue

Jessica Nelson

SERMON

Carla Arevalo

***HYMN 124**

My Heart Sings Out With Joyful Praise

SHARING OUR LIFE TOGETHER

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Kate Layzer

PRAYERS FOR THE CHURCH AND WORLD

Dan Smith

L: God be with you.

C: And also with you.

L: Let us pray... (*silence, intercessions, and the Lord's Prayer*)

THE LORD'S PRAYER

(Please pray this prayer in words most meaningful to your heart.)

All: 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 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.

INVITATION TO OFFERING

Our offering supports the many ministries of our church, with 10% for missions in the community and beyond. Please use our new [all-in-one link](#) for gifts for 2023 or 2024, from your bank account or by credit/debit card:



OFFERTORY

A Tender Shoot

Otto Goldschmidt

***ADVENT DOXOLOGY AND PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

**To God, all glorious heavenly Light,
to Christ revealed in earthly night,
to God the Spirit now we raise
our joyful songs of thankful praise. Amen.**

GOING FORTH

***HYMN 121**

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

***BENEDICTION**

VOLUNTARY

OPENING HYMN

128 Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying

1. Wake, a - wake, for night is fly - ing; the watch - men on the
 2. All who hear the watch - ers sing - ing, whose hearts with deep de -
 3. Now let all the heav'ns a - dore you, let saints and an - gels

heights are cry - ing, "A - wake, Je - ru - sa - lem, a - rise!"
 light are spring - ing, a - wake and rise up from your gloom.
 sing be - fore you, let harp and cym - bal now u - nite.

Mid - night hears the wel - come voic - es and at the thrill - ing
 Forth the Sav - ior comes, all glo - rious, in grace ar - rayed, in
 Of one pearl each shin - ing por - tal, where we shall join the

cry re - joic - es; Christ comes, O Church, lift up your eyes!
 truth vic - to - rious; our Star is risen, our Light is come!
 choir im - mor - tal in prais - es round your throne of light.

WORDS: Philipp Nicolai, 1599; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1858, alt.
 1600; Hans Jakob Sebastian Bach, 1731

WACHET AUF
 898.898.664.88

OPENING HYMN



Rise up, with will - ing feet go forth, the Sav - ior meet:
Now come, O bless - ed One, God's own be - lov - ed Son,
Our eyes be - hold the sight, our ears fill with de - light:



Al - le - lu - ia! Lo, great and small, we an - swer all;
Al - le - lu - ia! We haste a - long, an ea - ger throng,
Al - le - lu - ia! There - fore we sing, our hymns we bring,



we fol - low now with joy the call.
and glad - ly join the ad - vent song.
in praise to you our voi - ces ring.

SERMON HYMN

124 My Heart Sings Out with Joyful Praise
(Song of Mary)

1. My heart sings out with joy - ful praise to God who rais - es me,
2. The arm of God is strong and just to scat - ter all the proud.
3. The prom - ise made in a - ges past at last has come to be,

who came to me when I was low and changed my des - ti - ny.
The ty - rants tum - ble from their thrones and van - ish like a cloud.
for God has come in pow'r to save, to set all peo - ple free.

The Ho - ly One, the Liv - ing God, is al - ways full of grace
The hun - gry all are sat - is - fied; the rich are sent a - way.
Re - mem - b'ring those who wait to see sal - va - tion's dawn - ing day,

to those who seek their Mak - er's will in ev - 'ry time and place.
The poor of earth who suf - fer long will wel - come God's new day.
our Sav - ior comes to all who weep to wipe their tears a - way.

WORDS: Ruth Duck, 1981, 1985, 1992

MUSIC: Traditional English melody; coll. Lucy Broadwood;

KINGSFOLD
CMD

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

121



1. Come, thou long - ex - spect - ed Je - sus, born to set thy peo - ple free;
2. Is - rael's strength and con - so - la - tion, hope of all the earth thou art;
3. Born thy peo - ple to de - liv - er, born a child, and yet a king,
4. By thine own e - ter - nal Spir - it rule in all our hearts a - lone;



from our fears and sins re - lease us; let us find our rest in thee.
 dear de - sire of ev - ery na - tion, joy of ev - ery long - ing heart.
 born to reign in us for - ev - er, now thy gra - cious king - dom bring.
 by thine all - suf - fi - cient mer - it raise us to thy glo - rious throne.



WORDS: Charles Wesley, 1744, alt.

MUSIC: Melody attr. Christian F. Witt, (1660-1716), *Psalmodia Sacra*, Gotha, 1715

STUTTGART
87.87

ADVENT WORSHIP AT FIRST CHURCH

Our Advent Banners

We are happy to bring back our Advent banners, depicting images designed by Vermont artist Janet McKenzie. Thanks to a generous donation from Laurie Williams and Andrea Seek, the Deacons were pleased to support this project in 2020 as part of our ongoing efforts to lift up historically and Biblically underrepresented images and voices of women and persons of color. This week, This week, as we celebrate Mary's song in the Choir's singing of the Magnificat, we re-introduce McKenzie's **Holy Mother of the East**.

Give Me Light in the Darkness... Our Advent Song

Our Peace hymn is based on "Give Me Birds at the Dawning," written by Betsy Binstock and arranged by Peter & Mary Alice Amidon, from *Twenty-five Anthems for Interfaith and Community Choirs* ©2016, Amidon Music Publishing. The words have been adapted to fit the Advent season.

The image shows a musical score for a three-part setting of the hymn "Give Me Light in the Darkness...". It consists of two systems of three staves each (Soprano, Alto, and Bass clefs). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The lyrics are: "Give me light in the dark-ness, light in the dark-ness, Give me hope* in the wait-ing, hope* in the wait-ing, light in the dark-ness to sing my soul a - wake. hope* in the wait-ing to sing my soul a - wake." The asterisk indicates that the word "hope" can be replaced with "peace", "joy", or "love" on subsequent Sundays in Advent.

* replace "hope" with "peace," "joy," and "love" on the following Sundays in Advent

Do you want to follow the hyperlinks, but you're holding a paper bulletin in your hand?

Use your phone's camera to hover over the QR code marked "scan me;" this will take you to the Members & Friends page of our website, where you'll find the bulletin online, as well as links to news, events, and more.



COMMUNITY PRAYERS

Prayer for Israel and Palestine

We give thanks for the recent pause in fighting and exchange of hostages, even as we pray now for further breakthroughs, ceasefires, a return of all hostages, and an end to the war and ongoing heartache in Israel and Palestine. We pray for all hostages and their families; for those living in daily fear for their and their loved ones' safety; and for all who are grieving the thousands of deaths of Palestinians, Israelis, and others in Israel, Gaza, and around the world, including members of our congregation who have close ties with people who are currently in the area.

We decry the horrifically violent Hamas attacks against Israel on October 7. We decry violence against civilians, including deprivation of basic needs for people living and being evacuated inside of Gaza. We pray for redoubled diplomatic efforts to address the already devastating humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the ongoing occupation of Palestinian territories. We continue to pray for a just peace in Palestine and Israel and throughout the region. We also pray for Jews and Muslims, nearby and around the world, who are facing increased threats and acts of anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim discrimination, hatred, and violence.

We continue to pray for ourselves, that we will be faithful, compassionate, and open to God's love and leading, and to all whom we encounter through these tension-filled times. Across whatever division or disagreement, may our words and deeds seek to honor the humanity and God-given dignity of every human being.



Join Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP)

"Stand in the G.A.P." response: Give, Act, and Pray

We are grieved by the war between Israel and Hamas. There is still work to do for peace and justice. We believe that, working together, justice can prevail. Peace is possible. Since October 7, CMEP has issued [many public statements and letters](#). CMEP Executive Director Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon, who preached at First Church on October 15, has been making daily update videos, which [you can watch here](#) to stay updated on pressing news in Gaza, Israel, and the West Bank. Find links to prayer calls, briefings, and donation pages [here](#).

First Church Land Acknowledgment

We, gathered here, acknowledge that we are meeting on land which has been the traditional ancestral homeland of the Massachusett people. We acknowledge that this land is unceded and remains sacred to the Massachusett, and to their close neighbors and relatives, the Nipmuc and Wampanoag peoples.

You can find a longer version of this acknowledgment [here](#) or by scanning the QR code.



SCAN ME

COMMUNITY PRAYERS

- We pray for Peter Sykes, who was hospitalized this week for a cardiac catheterization.
- We pray for George Williams, who was hospitalized this week for a brain bleed and is recovering from surgery.
- We pray for the safety and wellbeing of all members of Harvard, MIT, UPenn, and other college campuses in the wake of this week's highly-charged congressional hearings on antisemitism. We pray especially for college Presidents, including Harvard's Claudine Gay, and for all campus and community leaders under pressure to address challenging and complex realities.
- We pray for a warm and safe arrival for Nuro and Idle, two Somali refugees who will be welcomed to Cambridge by the First Church & Friends Welcome Corps Team soon after the New Year. We also pray for the team's volunteers as they anticipate these first weeks of transition.
- We pray for Kathy Kopp, Leslie Pelton-Cairns's mother, who is recovering from emergency double bypass surgery.
- We pray for Brent and Poppy Coffin as Poppy experiences a significant decline in her struggle with Alzheimer's.
- We pray for Norm Bendroth, who is recovering from hip surgery.
- We pray for Jennifer Petrallia, who is suffering from debilitating anxiety and depression.
- We pray for all who are in treatment for cancer and other ongoing health challenges: Carol Wilson-Braun, who is managing ALS; Jim Rae, Ami Brenner's father; Ellen Smith, Devin Hansen's aunt; Judith Semmler, Alice Napoleon Jones's mother; Karen Anne Zee's daughter Becky Collet and her son-in-law Stewart Bailey; Beth and Polly, Ann McCann's sisters; and Michael, Ginny Harlan's son.
- We pray for the many families seeking emergency shelter in cities and towns across Massachusetts.
- We continue to pray for all impacted by and recovering from recent natural and climate-related disasters. We pray for our rapidly warming planet and for redoubled efforts to reduce fossil fuel emissions.
- We pray for all those impacted by the violence of war and political upheaval, including in Ukraine, Sudan, and Haiti. As we prepare to welcome two refugees through the Welcome Corps, we pray for all political and climate refugees and migrants who make often life-threatening border crossings over land and open water.
- We pray for the wellbeing and safety of our trans and gender non-conforming siblings as they face the impact of vitriolic public discourse and of state laws that restrict and criminalize transgender health care, personal expression, and wider LGBTQ+ education.
- We pray for those most affected by changes in reproductive rights: for all those struggling with the moral and political complexities of pregnancy and childbearing, and for patients and healthcare providers who are unable to give and receive care in their own states.

TODAY AT FIRST CHURCH

Confirmation Class for 8/9th graders

Today, 9:30 - 10:45 a.m., The Well

Our year-long Confirmation journey for 8th and 9th graders continues today with a session entitled "Forgiveness & Grace."



Christmas Cookie Swap

Today, 12:15 - 1:00 p.m., Margaret Jewett Hall

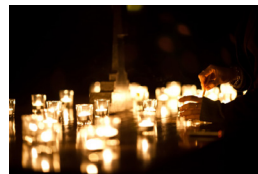
Join us after worship for First Church's annual Christmas cookie swap!

This is a great way to load your pantry with a creative selection of holiday treats for the coming week's festivities. Please bake or buy 6-10 dozen of your favorite holiday cookies, and then package them by the ½ dozen (6 cookies per bag). Label each bag with ingredients/allergy info before dropping them off in Margaret Jewett Hall before or just after Hybrid Worship. We'll organize them on tables and invite everyone to pick up treats during Coffee Hour. Help spread some sweet joy as we approach Christmas!

Night Song

Sunday evenings, 7:30 - 8:15 p.m., Sanctuary and [via livestream](#)

Night Song is a worship opportunity that offers stillness and sublime music in a darkened sanctuary for respite and reset... [Read more about Night Song.](#)



Stewardship Campaign Update

First Church has received \$461,022 in gifts and pledges, which is **64% of the way to our campaign goal** of \$726,000. . We are deeply grateful for these gifts and pledges. But dear friends, we need this trend of generosity to continue. We need your help, your comfort in taking a risk, your faith in this institution. As we wrap up our "A Future with Hope" season, we invite you, if you haven't already, to:

- [pledge your financial gift](#) and [time and talent commitments](#) for 2024.
- check on our progress toward our goal on our [campaign page](#).

Holiday Building Closures

The First Church building and office will be closed to observe the upcoming winter holidays. The building will be closed on Monday, December 25 (after 11:00 a.m. Christmas Day Worship) and on Monday, January 1. It will also be closed starting at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 31. During the week between Christmas and New Year's Day, the office will be open on a very limited basis. Most staff will work remotely, and will only check messages periodically. We wish everyone a restful holiday break!



ADVENT AT FIRST CHURCH



Aging with Grace Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, December 19, 3:00 - 4:15 p.m., Harter Room and [via Zoom](#)

Join Ginny Harlan, Martha Mueller Cook, and Dan Smith for a monthly support group where we offer each other companionship and spiritual resources as we grow into our elderhood. In this special season of our lives, let's explore together some of those Big Questions

as we let God's presence and this community hold us. We can become elders together as we seek dignity, courage, grace, hope, peace, and wisdom in the ending phase of our lives. We are using Joan Chittister's book *The Gift of Years* as a starting point to conversation and reflection, and our reading for this month is "Religion," pp. 101-105. You are welcome to join at any time; homework is not a requirement for participation!

Gift Card Donations for Welcome Corps Newcomers

First Church's Welcome Corps Team would like to empower our Somali newcomers to shop for themselves by providing them with gift cards. Your donation will truly be appreciated by them. [You can donate at this link](#) – please check the box labeled "Refugee Resettlement Fund." Also, we still need **boots** for the newcomers as well as **gloves and mittens**. Please bring these items to the bin found near the Sextons' office in Hasting Common. See all the details on ways you can help on our [Refugee Resettlement Ministry page](#) on the church website.



Thank You for Showing Up!

First Church's GBIO Core Team would like to share their immense gratitude to the many First Churchers who showed power-in-numbers at our recent In-District Meetings (IDM). We spoke truths and shared stories of affordable housing injustice to our Senators and Representatives! 30+ First Church members attended their respective IDMs alongside other GBIO congregations. If you live in Waltham, the western half of Lexington, Central Square, or East Cambridge, Brookline, or Newton YOU have a meeting in the new year! Find yours at:

[GBIO.org/idms](https://www.gbio.org/idms)

The fight continues, and we are proud to be in it together - THANK YOU! Mark your calendars for **GBIO's next BIG housing action on Sunday afternoon, March 3, 2024.**

2023 Year-End Information from Stewardship & Finance

As the end of 2023 approaches, please review important year-end income tax considerations for your 2023 contributions. For further information, find details in [this Latest News post on our website.](#)



CHRISTMAS AND EPIPHANY AT FIRST CHURCH

The First Church UnPageant Sunday, December 24 at 11:00 a.m. Sanctuary and via livestream

On the fourth Sunday of Advent, we'll gather for our untraditional take on the Christmas pageant!



The UnPageant is First Church's unrehearsed, low-stress, multigenerational telling of the story of Jesus' birth. This year, the UnPageant takes place on Christmas Eve morning, making it a very special final moment in the Advent season. Come hear the age-old texts and sing the cherished carols as we celebrate the wonder of God's love among us.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service Sunday, December 24, 6:00 - 7:00 p.m., Sanctuary and via livestream

Come, all ye faithful, and come, worship together on Christmas Eve! Join us in person or online for this festive, family-friendly, candlelit service of lessons and carols. In the warmth and light of our Sanctuary or by your Christmas tree at home, join us as we celebrate this holy night and sing out our joy to the world!

Christmas Day Worship Monday, December 25 at 11:00 a.m., Sanctuary and via livestream

Join us on Christmas morning for a joy-filled and bright service in which we will fill our Sanctuary with the sounds of Christmas—readings, prayers of thanksgiving and praise, and a very special harpsichord meditation by Peter Sykes of William Byrd's "The Bells." We will also celebrate Christmas Communion together.

Christmastide Morning Worship & Hymn Sing Sunday, December 31 at 11:00 a.m., Sanctuary and via livestream

Our Sunday worship during the season of Christmastide will include a Christmas Hymn Sing, which means you get to call out and choose which hymns we will sing together! Come and join the fun, and "come let us adore Him" together!

Epiphany Potluck and Service Saturday, January 6, 6:00 - 7:30 p.m., Margaret Jewett Hall and Sanctuary

Epiphany ("manifestation") is a Christian feast so ancient that it predates Christmas. We will begin with a potluck dinner, followed by a candlelight journey through the darkness until we arrive at the Sanctuary and circle it with light. Under the dome in the chancel, we will rejoice in the sacrament of baptism and renew our own baptismal promises, ending with a joyful "sprinkling" of all present. This event is for all ages, so gather up friends, neighbors, kids, and come share the light!



THIS WEEK

Looking ahead to this week's programs and events



Monday, December 18

- 4:30 p.m. Contemplative Practices Gathering, via Zoom
- 7:00 p.m. Deacons' Meeting, Harter Room and via Zoom

See our [Events Calendar](#) for Zoom links and details.

Sign up [here](#) to receive our weekly e-newsletter.

Tuesday, December 19

- 10:30 a.m. Communications Team Meeting, Harter Room
- 3:00 p.m. Aging with Grace Monthly Meeting, Harter Room and via Zoom
- 7:00 p.m. Shelter Oversight Committee, via Zoom

Wednesday, December 20

- 9:30 a.m. Staff Meeting, Harter Room and via Zoom

Thursday, December 21

- 6:00 p.m. Drop-In Bible Study, via Zoom

Friday, December 22

- 12:00 p.m. Friday Café, MJH

Sunday, December 24 - Fourth Sunday of Advent, Christmas Eve

- 9:30 a.m. Confirmation Class for 8/9th graders, The Well
- 10:15 a.m. Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary
- 11:00 a.m. Hybrid Morning Worship: The UnPageant, Sanctuary and via livestream
- 12:15 p.m. Refreshments in Margaret Jewett Hall
- 6:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, Sanctuary and via livestream

Monday, December 25 - Christmas Day

- 11:00 a.m. Christmas Day Worship, Sanctuary and via livestream

First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, UCC
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