



THE VOICE

Listening
to
God



Finding
Our
Voice

December 22, 2024

***Fourth Sunday
In Advent***

ADVENT 2024



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
SALEM OREGON
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

***We are an Open and Affirming
and Just Peace Congregation***

***No matter who you are,
Or where you are on your life's journey,
You are welcome here!***

Welcome to First Congregational United Church of Christ. Whether you come here every Sunday or are here for the first time, know that you are welcome!

Please take a moment during the **welcome** to sign our **Friendship Pad** at the end of the pew. If you are new, we'd love to get your contact info so we can reach out during the week. Let us know if you would like to get on our mailing list so we can share our weekly newsletter with you.

We Love Kids and Families!

We have created a space in the back of the sanctuary for families and children.

It is a space designed for kids to have quiet activities during worship—art projects, legos, reading, etc—and we have Busy bags as well to help the “*smallers*” share this time with us. If you find the quiet activities are distracting to you we invite you to sit in the main part of the sanctuary. Help us support our intergenerational community by sitting where you can get your needs met.

Thank you for sharing your time and spirit with us this morning!

When you see an asterisk, () please stand in body or spirit as you are able.*

NCH = New Century Hymnal, Black Hardbound Cover

PRELUDES

Coventry Carol

English carol/arr. Purifoy

What Child is This

Trad. English/arr. Hayes

WELCOME ALL

WELCOMING ALL

RINGING THE BOWL

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE LAND

We offer the following acknowledgment of the communities of Indigenous People who first lived in the land we call the Willamette Valley. These are the tribes with whom we are walking together even today: the Kalapuya , tribes that include Tualatin (Atfalati), Yamhill (Yamel), Ahantchuyuk (Pudding River), Luckiamute, Santiam, Chepenefa (Mary's River), Chemapho (Muddy Creek), Tsankupi (Calapooia River), Mohawk (Mohawk River, OR; unrelated to the Mohawks of NY), Chafan (near Eugene), Chelamela (Long Tom River), Winefelly (Mohawk, McKenzie and Coast Forks of the Willamette River), and the Yoncalla peoples.

PREPARE TO WORSHIP

***CALLING IN THE SPIRIT**

One: The journey through Advent has carried us far: from hope that breaks through despair, to peace that reconciles us, to joy that rises up in unexpected places.

Many: Now we arrive at love, the heart of God’s promise, a love that turns the world upside down.

One: Micah speaks of a ruler from Bethlehem, one who will shepherd the people in peace. Mary’s Magnificat sings of a world transformed: the mighty brought low, the humble lifted high.

Many: We lift our voices for tomorrow, proclaiming God’s justice, God’s love that breaks into the world anew.

One: Come, let us worship the God of hope, peace, joy, and love.

Many: We come, ready to be God’s voice for tomorrow—to live as bearers of light in a world longing for love.

***SONG OF GATHERING** *Of the Parent’s Heart Begotten* **NCH118, vs. 1, 2, 4**

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE OF LOVE The Bearden Family

ADVENT CANDLE SONG *In This Time of Waiting* David MacGregor

*In this time of waiting, we will sing of love,
Love that breaks through fear and hate with grace.
In our expectation, we will sing of peace;
Hearts wide open, we will live God’s love.*

PRAYER FOR GOING DEEPER

One: Loving God, you call us to embody your upside-down kingdom: to speak words of hope, to act as makers of peace, to live joyfully, and to love boldly. But we confess that we fall short.

Many: We have let fear keep us silent. We have let apathy hold us back. We have turned away from your call to justice and mercy.

One: In a world longing for transformation, we have clung to what is easy and comfortable. When others needed our love, we have been slow to act and quick to judge.

Many: Forgive us, God. Open our hearts to your love. Renew us with your Spirit, that we might live as your voice for tomorrow.

(Silence is kept for personal reflection.)

One: Beloved, hear the good news: The God who scattered the proud, lifted the lowly, and fed the hungry, is the same God who loves you with an everlasting love.

God's promises remain steadfast: you are forgiven, you are made new, and you are called to embody love.

Many: Thanks be to God! We are forgiven, loved, and free. Let us live as bearers of God's love. Amen.

***SHARING THE PEACE**

One: May the Peace of Christ be with you.

Many: And also with you.

(You are invited to stand in body or spirit as you are able and join in the actions as we share the peace.)

LISTEN TO THE SPIRIT

READINGS Micah 5:2-5a, Luke 1:46b-55

REFLECTION Our Voice for Tomorrow

MUSIC FOR MEDITATION *The Golden Carol* Trad. English/arr. Held

(During this time, if you have prayers that you would like to share, please write them on the prayer cards found in your pew and hand it to the center aisle to be collected.)

RESPOND WITH LOVE

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE PRAYER OF JESUS

Please note that we use many version of the prayer Jesus taught his followers to pray. Please feel free to use the words that you feel most connected to as we pray together today.

One: God of Love, we lift our prayers to you, trusting in your promise to hear us, bringing before you the needs of the world, our wider community, and those we hold close.

Keeper of all nations, we pray for places torn apart by conflict and war: For Ukraine and Gaza, for Sudan and Yemen, and for all regions where violence overshadows peace.

Many: May your love bring healing and hope to those who suffer.

One: We pray for creation groaning under the weight of climate change. For communities recovering from floods, fires, and droughts. For the leaders and advocates working for environmental justice.

Many: May your love inspire bold action to restore and heal the earth.

One: Creator of Justice, we lift up our local community and the challenges we face together. For those experiencing homelessness and hunger, those struggling with addiction, and those seeking safety and shelter.

Many: May your love move us to act with compassion and generosity.

One: We pray for those in our schools, hospitals, and service organizations—the teachers, caregivers, first responders, and essential workers who labor tirelessly to support others.

Many: May your love sustain and strengthen them.

One: Giver of Comfort, we bring before you the names and faces of those we hold dear: For the sick and the grieving, for the lonely and the anxious, and for all who need your healing presence.

We pray especially for...

Many: May your love surround and uphold them.

One: And we bring the prayers of our hearts that are too deep for words...

(sharing the silence)

One: We pray for ourselves that we might live as bearers of your love in our relationships and daily lives. Help us to speak words of kindness, offer acts of mercy, and embody your justice wherever we go.

Many: May your love guide us in all we do.

One: Holy One, receive these prayers we lift to you in hope and love, and hear us as we join together, as one community, and raise our voices in the spirit of the prayer that Jesus taught us, saying:

**Our Creator, who is in heaven and among us,
Sacred is your name.**

May your way of love come,

May your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today the bread we need for life,

And forgive us when we fall short,

As we forgive those who harm us.

Lead us away from the temptations of fear and apathy,

And deliver us from all that seeks to destroy.

For yours is the commonwealth of love,

The power of justice, and the glory of hope, now and forever. Amen.

SHARING OUR ABUNDANCE

You are invited to share from your abundance if you are able. No matter the amount, all gifts are a pledge to God for the vision of our mission in Salem and the world.



If you wish to make a one-time donation, you may

- ◆ Text the amount of your donation to **(833) 367-9224**
- ◆ Use the QR code to the right:
- ◆ Give online at www.uccsaalem.org by simply clicking on **Donate** button
- ◆ Or you can always leave a check or cash or mail a check to our physical address: First Congregational Church UCC, 700 Marion Street NE, Salem, OR 97301

OFFERTORY MUSIC *O Little Town of Bethlehem* arr. Held

***DEDICATION CHORUS** *What Does the Lord Require of Us?* **NCH BACK COVER**

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

INTO THE WORLD

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please read the announcements printed on the insert and in the entryway video. If you have something to share that is not in the bulletin, please come to the microphone at the front or raise your hand and someone will bring the microphone to you.

Please remember to fill in your name and contact info in the Friendship Pads.

***HYMN** *Hark! the Herald Angels Sing* **NCH 144**

*BENEDICTION AND BLESSING

One: Go forth into the world with hearts full of hope, hands ready to build peace, voices lifted in joy, and lives transformed by love. Be God's voice for tomorrow.

Many: **We go, carrying the light of Christ into the world.**
Love has come and is coming again. Love will lead the way.
Amen.

POSTLUDE *Masters in This Hall* Traditional French/arr. Smith

You are welcome to stay and quietly listen to the postlude. Feel free to leave as well.



With Thanks to:

Ushers/ Greeters : **Peggy Farr and Janet Lee**
Liturgist: **Diane Corner**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ella Curran Food Bank -- is collecting donations of winter coats, hats, gloves, scarves, and heavy sweatshirts, as well as blankets for the month of December. Specific needs for December are: toilet paper, feminine pads, diapers sized 3-6, and winter clothing. Questions? Contact Rebecca Ralston.

SAVE THE DATE

- ◆ **December 24—Christmas Eve Worship**, 7 PM
- ◆ **Holiday Office Closures**—The office will be closed **December 25-26** and **January 1-2**. We are always closed on Fridays and we hope this gives our staff a nice holiday break!

2025 Dates to Save

- ◆ **January 5—Covenant Relations Ministry Listening Session**: The CRM invite you to a table conversation after worship to hear your thoughts, concerns, dreams, and fears as we move into this new Resurrecting season. Their focus is on how this season is impacting our sense of community and interpersonal relationships.
- ◆ **January 5—Remembering the Saints, 2 PM**: A service of remembrance for the beloveds who passed into God's hands in 2024—Wes Peterson, Russ Fowler, Nancy Henderlite, Melvin Stewart. This will be a special opportunity for us to say goodbye, celebrate, share stories, and remember our saints, who from their labors now rest.

CORRECTION! Ruth Monette is very much alive. We apologize for the erroneous information previous given.

- ◆ **January 12—From Page to Pulpit: Mastering Liturgical Delivery**—this one- hour workshop is open to ANYONE who wants to learn more about how to read scripture and other texts during worship that bring the listeners into the story with curiosity and wonder.
- ◆ **Office Closed January 20th**
- ◆ **January 26—Annual Meeting**: Pot Luck Luncheon & meeting after worship.
- ◆ **January 31-February 1—Leadership Retreat**: This is our annual retreat for Council and other Circle and Team leaders. We will begin on Friday evening with Dinner and end Saturday late afternoon. All incoming Council members are encouraged to plan to attend this important retreat. More information and specifics about what portion is Council only and what is open for all leaders coming soon.

WE ARE A JUST PEACE AND OPEN & AFFIRMING CONGREGATION OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST.

THIS CHURCH WELCOMES EVERYONE WITHOUT REGARD TO RACE, GENDER, AGE, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, ETHNICITY, ECONOMIC CLASS, MARITAL STATUS, OR PHYSICAL/ MENTAL ABILITIES AND ENCOURAGES ALL TO SHARE IN THE FULL LIFE AND LEADERSHIP OF THIS CONGREGATION.

PASTOR ROBIN'S OFFICE HOURS

- ♦ Monday and Tuesday - 1 PM to 4 PM
- ♦ *Wednesday at IKE Box - 10 AM*
- ♦ Thursday - 9 AM to 1 PM
- ♦ Other times by appointment

Want to explore your questions and share something of your journey? Pastor Robin welcomes your calls and visits. You may contact her via cell (971)666-3442, at the church (503-363-3660) or email: pastor@uccsalem.org.

If you prefer to meet outside, she is always up for a walk and talk!

Friday and Saturday are Pastor Robin's Sabbath days.

GET CONNECTED: The **Weekly Word**, our email newsletter which comes out every Thursday will keep you up to date on all that is happening at FCCUCC. Links to the livestreaming worship as well as the bulletin are included. To subscribe, find the link on our webpage www.uccsalem.org, or email the office—office@uccsalem.org.

Our phone number is **503-363-3660**

webpage QR



CHURCH STAFF

DESIGNATED TERM PASTOR	Rev. Robin Lunn, ext. 312
ORGANIST	Dr. Marcia Hauff
CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR	Lily Walker, ext. 310
SOUND TECHNICIANS	Zanne D'Anna, Jim Mankins, Kim Colantino, Elijah Gores, Amy Knowles
CUSTODIAN	Joe Martin

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Prayer in Three Breaths

For the World we pray.....

- That wars would cease, particularly the conflicts in Ukraine and Russia; Palestine, Lebanon, and Israel; the Sudan; Congo and DRC; Myanmar; Syria; Haiti.
- For places devastated by weather and climate change related disasters.
- For women and girls in countries where they are seen as property.
- For plant and animal species that have gone extinct in the wild in 2024 and the people trying to save them.
- For all systems that are both life giving and life threatening and our ability to see the consequences of our choices more fully.
- For the victims at the Abundant Life Christian School in Madison, WI, for the 15 year old shooter who took her own life, and for all communities struggling with mass shootings and gun violence.
- For the community of Beth Tikvah Shul in Montreal, QB, and all faith communities who are the target of hate crimes.

For Our Community we pray....

- Prayers for the Teens and Young Adults at Church of the Park who face the holidays without supportive families.
- For the SKSD as they face another massive budget cut.
- For those living outside during this very cold and wet time of the year.
- For Trans people and their families who are facing the hard choices of staying or leaving their homes to remain safe and have access to gender affirming care.
- For those who have different languages for their prayers, that we would hold them as tenderly as we hold our spoken and written prayers.

For Our Beloveds We pray....

- For Gloria and her mom Joan. For Jackie, Kim, Christine, Bhavik -- and for Miracles and Blessings for Brian and his friend.
- For Elizabeth Wyatt as she faces cancer treatment over the next several months.
- For our children and families that we would find ways to support them as important members of our community.
- For the future of this congregation and the people whose lives will be blessed because of the work we do in 2025.
- Today we pray for St. John's UCC in Payette, Idaho.

Holy One, we gather all of the names, all of the places, all of the concerns into you and ask that they be held, healed, transformed, and loved into the fullness of their calling as part of your blessed Creation. May we hold them with you in tenderness and grace. In the name of the Christ who shines in you. Amen

Do you have a special need for prayer and support? If you would like to be on our weekly prayer list, please contact the church office: office@uccsaalem.org

- ♦ **February 2-March 2**—Pastor Robin will be away on a combined **vacation and sabbatical**. This is part of her call agreement as well as the Resurrecting process. More information coming soon.
- ♦ **March 5—Ash Wednesday**

Annual Team and Circle Reports Due January 6th—please send your reports into the office by the 6th so we can get the **2025 Annual Report** published by **January 16th**. Reports should be no more than one page single spaced 12 pt font.

Reflection Questions:

- Who in your circle of influence needs to experience God’s love through you?
- How are we actively building God’s “Commonwealth of Love”?