FIRST SUNDAY AFTER ADVENT
DECEMBER 26, 2021

PRELUDE  “Sheep May Safely Graze”  Nenad Ivovic

WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS  Rev. Raquel Irizarry

CALL TO WORSHIP “We Have an Old Story to Tell”
by Gretchen Haley

Leader: Calling all who cannot wait any longer for joy, for hope and some good news (even a little).
All: The time has come, the waiting is over.
Leader: Here in this time we have an old story to tell:
one that has been shared over and over for thousands of years,
All: But still somehow it remains unheard; still radical and risky;
Breaking through into these days of darkness and cold, division and fear;
Leader: Interrupting the perpetual stories of violence and loss and the feelings of powerlessness.
All: Into the errands and errors of our everyday, the reminder of Christ’s birth arrives not only to comfort but to awaken;
Leader: to reassure and also to stir us up as a new life, a life of peace, and justice, and courageous love struggles to be born;
All: Wondering if we will yet be the ones who make room in our lives and in our world for the refugee, the poor, the plain and messy sweetness of a newborn baby;
Leader: If we will take the journey to Bethlehem;
All: If we will be changed by the presence of a love that meets us where we are in the fields wherever we lay
Leader: And calls us forth into a new journey: a braver and bolder life;
Believing that it is not too late for strong and gentle people to win
All: For compassion and truth to have the final say
Leader: For the bright light of hope to shine through
All: Come, let us celebrate the good news
And let us worship together.

INVOCATION PRAYER (read in unison)

The waiting is over, those moments of anticipation for the golden day when we are reminded that Christ had been born over two thousand years ago, and a bright light was brought into this world. A light to shine and guide our steps, inspire our dreams for creating a bit of heaven here on this earth, even as the cold knocks at our door we are comforted and warmed by this light. May it forever shine brightly within us and be a beacon for others, as we acknowledge and rejoice in our Holy connection to the Divine.
OPENING HYMN Black Hymnal #133 (Please stand)

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”

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

For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep the angels keep their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars together proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing, and voices ring with peace to all on earth.

How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given!
So, God imparts to human hearts the glorious love of heaven.
No one discerns God’s coming, but in this world of sin,
Where yearning souls long to be whole, the dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem descend to us we pray;
Cast out our sing and enter in; be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!

PASSING OF THE PEACE

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND PASTORAL PRAYER (Please be seated)

MUSICAL AMEN

Nenad Ivovic

DEDICATION OF THE OFFERING:

We are deeply conscious of the health and safety of our worshipping community, and so we will not be passing plates for the offering. Instead, we invite you to place your offering today in one of the plates located by the entrance doors of the Church, and we thank you for your generosity and support. And for those of you that are not able to come physically to the church please continue to send your generosity.

During this season we are ever mindful of those around us that are seeking homes, food, justice, and most of all a knowing that God is with them. May we be inspired to give, so that this church can do great works based in God’s abundant and everlasting Love, and we Bless these gifts in all Your Many Names and in Jesus Christ’s name Amen.

HYMN OF REFLECTION Black Hymnal #139 (Please stand)

“The First Nowell”

The First Nowell, 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.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, born in a manger, Emmanuel.
They looked up 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
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, born in a manger, Emmanuel.

And by the light of that same star, three sages came from a country far;
To seek for a King was their intent, and to follow the star wherever it went.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, born in a manger, Emmanuel.

This star shone bright to the north-west, o’er Bethlehem it seemed to rest,
And there it did both stop and stay, right over the place where Jesus lay.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, born in a manger, Emmanuel.

Then entered in those magi three, and bending low upon their knee,
They offered there, in great reverence, their gold and myrrh and frankincense.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, born in a manger, Emmanuel.

HEARING THE WORD OF  (Please be seated)
MUSICAL RESPONSE  Paul DeCoster
SERMON REFLECTION  “Connected Are We”  Rev. Raquel Irizarry
CLOSING HYMN Red Hymnal #110 (please stand)
“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”
O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death’s dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

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 thee, O Israel!

O come, Desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind;
Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease; fill the whole world with heaven’s peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel! Amen.

BENEDICTION  Rev. Raquel Irizarry
POSTLUDE  Nenad Ivovic
Reverend Raquel Irizarry, guest minister

Raquel is a graduate from Union Theological Seminary and Columbia School of Social Work, having received her Master’s in Divinity and Clinical Social Work. She is a social consciousness writer, and activist. Both she and her husband, Paul, for the past five years have been feeding the homeless and/or hungry at Port Authority in New York City. Currently she is the Council President for All Souls Bethlehem Church in Brooklyn. She also enjoys singing and doing photography.

Paul DeCoster, guest musician

Paul DeCoster is a classically trained guitarist who has found his musical calling in being a singer/songwriter with Progressive Rock influences. He writes about matters of the heart and spirit, and he is currently working on some new music for release this summer.

December 27 – Service of Remembrance
A service of remembrance for the life of Jerry Langeler will be held on Monday, December 27 at 2 pm. All are invited to a reception following the service at the home of his grandson, Garry Rogers, at 180 River Road, Hamden.

Guest Ministers Scheduled

| January 2 ~ Rev. Hiram Brett | January 23 ~ Rev. Janice Touloukian |
| January 9 ~ Rev. Walter Pitman | January 30 ~ Rev. Raquel Irizarry |
| January 16 ~Rev. Walter Pitman |

If you would like to donate flowers for the church on a particular Sunday, please call the church office at (203)389-2119.

Please sign up in the Parish hall to read Scripture and to host the coffee hour.

We need and appreciate your help!

Thank you to those hosting coffee this morning!

Coffee Hour

For those interested, boxes of offering envelopes for 2022 are available in the Parish House entry way.
We are grateful to everyone who contributed Poinsettia plants to decorate the church.

**Given by:**
- Tim Cowles
- Walt and Ethel Crosby
- Nancy Dickgiesser and Terry Ward
- Constance Cryer Ecklund
- Debra and Richard Forselius
- Matt, Andrea and Olive Hubbard
- Richard Jeynes
- Carole Kimnach
- Bill More
- Richard and Carole Prescott
- B. Joyce Simpson

**In Loving Memory or in Honor of:**
- Ray and Alice Cowles
- Our parents
- Our parents
- John E. Ecklund, Mary Ecklund, Jane Ecklund, Gilbert and Electra Cryer
- Our son, brothers, and parents
- Katherine and Winchester Hubbard, Robert and Rachel Conniff
- Hill, Angier, Eaton, Marvin, Langel, Fulton, Forselius, and Jeynes families
- Evelyn Jeynes, Mark Raleigh Jeynes and David Jeynes
- Wilson H. Kimnach
- Ginny Calistro and Wilson Kimnach
- Our parents
- Happy Christmases Past!!