FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST
CHRISTMAS EVE
DECEMBER 24, 2021

PRELUDE “Impromptu Op. No. 3” by F. Schubert

RINGING OF THE CHURCH BELL

WELCOME

CAROL  Red Hymnal #132 (please stand)

_O Come, All Ye Faithful_”

_O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant, O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him, born the King of angels;
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
Christ, the Lord!_

_Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation, sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest;
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
Christ, the Lord!_

_Child, for us sinners poor and in the manger, we would embrace thee, with love and awe;
Who would not love thee, loving us so dearly?
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
Christ, the Lord!_

_Yea, Lord, we great thee, born this happy morning, Jesus, to thee be all glory given;
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing;
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
Christ, the Lord! Amen_

THE LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE (please be seated)

Leader: Good Evening! On this Christmas Eve we gather as God’s people to celebrate again what Christ’s coming means to the world.

People: We join with Christians all over the world who are celebrating this night.

_Isaiah: 9:6; Luke 2:10; Romans 5:5_

Leader: Tonight we relight the four Advent candles and recall what the good news means:

(We light the first four candles: The Candle of Hope, The Candle of Peace, The Candle of Love and the Candle of Joy)
Leader: Jesus Christ is the Greatest gift who makes the other gifts possible. So this night we light the Christ Candle, as we think about what Christ’s coming means to each one of us.

(The Christ Candle is lit)

Leader: Let us pray together:

All: We thank you God for the gift of Jesus Christ to the entire world. We thank you that Christ’s coming makes hope, peace, love and joy possible for every person in every nation. Encourage us to do our part to bring goodwill and peace to our families, our churches, our neighborhoods, and the world. Now let your Spirit put us in touch with you, the Living God, through the words and music we hear tonight. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen

CAROL 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.

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

We come before you in awe, O God, freshly aware of your glory and you love embodied in the midst of this world. Here amid dirt and straw, amid noise of cattle and labor of birth, we perceive your work. We dare to believe that it is you, God, coming to be among us in Jesus, and so we praise you with songs of joy. Glory be to you, O God now and forever. Amen

PASSING OF THE PEACE OF CHRIST
CAROL Red Hymnal #137 (Please stand)

“Away In a Manger”

Away in a manger, no crib for his bed, the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay, the little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes, but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky, and stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

SCRIPITURE READINGS:

God’s Promise: Isaiah 9:2-7  
God’s Promise Fulfilled: Luke 2:1-20

MEDITATION

CAROL Red Hymnal #128 (Please stand)

“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.

Our God, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain; heaven and earth shall flee away,
When he comes to reign; in the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed,
The Lord God almighty, Jesus Christ.

Angels and archangels may have gathered there, cherubim and seraphim
Thronged the air; but his mother only, in her maiden bliss,
Worshipped the beloved with a kiss.

What can I give him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man, I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give him, give my heart.

SHARING OF THE GIFTS OF GOD

DOXOLOGY

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

All good gifts around us come from you, O God. You have given us life and new life
in Christ As you have given us gifts, so we offer our gifts that we may be gifts to one
another, eve as Jesus so taught and lived. Amen

SCRIPTURE READING: John 1:1-5, 14-16  

Al Jarvis
Jesse Hubbard
Reverend Walter Pitman
Kit Engstrom
CAROL  Red Hymnal #138 (Please stand.)  

“Silent Night, Holy Night”

Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright round yon virgin mother and child. 
Holy infant so tender and mild, sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night, shepherds quake at the sight, glories stream from heaven afar, 
Heavenly hosts sing alleluia; Christ the Savior is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!

Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love’s pure light radiant beams from thy holy face, 
With the dawn of redeeming grace, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at the birth.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Nenad Ivovic

We are blessed to have Reverend Walter Pitman with us this evening! 
Rev. Pitman grew up in Newtown, CT. He graduated from Western Connecticut State University in 1974 and from Andover Newton Theological School in 1979. He has served in churches in East Longmeadow, MA, Darien, CT, Chatham, MA and Southbury, CT. The reverend retired in 2019 and presently lives in Sharon, CT.