

Greetings members and friends of the First Congregational Church of Shelburne,

I know that many will be missing friends and family come Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. I know that we will be finding ways to have them with us through Zoom, Facebook, and phone calls. As difficult as this is, let us pray that our actions today will help to decrease the number of cases as we continue to pray for an end to this pandemic.

Wishing you a bright, safe, and healthy Christmas Day and New Years,

Pastor Rob

Welcome to Christmas Eve Worship

December 24, 2020

Good Morning to our members and friends at home,

It is Christmas Eve and back in March we could not imagine not being in our sanctuary, singing the carols, hearing the Christmas story and lighting our candles. As the hymn goes “new occasions teach new duties.” Or in this situation, unique and unexpected circumstances have moved us from our sanctuary to YouTube and Zoom. This worship resource is designed to go with the Christmas Eve video that was recorded in our sanctuary last week. You can access that video by the link on our web page, shelburnechurch.org.

On Christmas Eve there will also be service via Zoom for candle lighting at 7 PM. The invitation for that gathering will be sent through our email list no later than the day of Christmas Eve. To participate please sign into the gathering and have a candle ready to light.

And now, let us be in worship.

Lighting of the Christ Candle

Call to Worship (Responsive, L=Leader, P=People)) Isaiah 60

L Arise, Shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

**P For behold, darkness shall cover the earth
and thick darkness the peoples;**

L But the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.

**P Arise, Shine; for our light has come,
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon us!**

Opening Hymn: *O Come All Ye Faithful*

Unison Evening Prayer and Lord’s Prayer

Lord Jesus, how clearly, we see you on this night. Cradled by Mary, protected by Joseph, worshipped by shepherds, honored by kings, and loved by the world. Help us, O Lord, to look for you among the taxes of life, in the world’s stables and makeshift mangers. In our

joys and in our tears, help us to see you clearly and love you more dearly. For it is in the name of Jesus that we pray saying...*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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

Christmas Gospel: Luke 2:1-16 (Responsive)

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David.

He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them,

“Do not be afraid; for see - I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another,

“Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” So, they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.”

Here ends the Christmas story according to the Gospel of Luke.

Christmas Story: *The Best Christmas*

Lee Kingsman

The Sharing of the Light

If you are lighting candles at home, please be mindful of the open flame. When our candles are lit, we will sing Silent Night. Please remember to snuff you candles at the close of worship.

Hymn: *Silent Night*

Prayers of Christmas Based on the first chapter prayer by Frederick Buechner, *The Hungering Dark*

Lord Jesus Christ, child of the Most High, Prince of Peace, be born again into our world. Wherever there is war, wherever nation still lifts sword against nation, come, thou long expected one with healing in your wings.

Wherever there is loneliness, wherever there is despair, wherever hopelessness twists the body and darkens the soul, come, thou long expected one with healing in your wings.

Holy child, whom the shepherds adored, be born again. Wherever there is dullness of sight, wherever there is fear of failure, wherever there is temptation too strong to resist, wherever there is bitterness of heart, come, thou blessed one with healing in thy wings.

Wonderful Counselor, born to set all people free, born that we might be healed, made whole, that we might be led by your hand into the light of God's love, come this night. Come to each who longs for you and your peace. Lord of Light, Lord of Peace, Hope, Joy and Love. Come Quickly. Amen.

Hymn: *Joy to the World* First Verse

Benediction: Isaiah 9:5-6

The Blessing of the Lord are upon us,
For the people who have walked in darkness have seen a great light,
For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder
and his name shall be called:
"Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."
The zeal of the Lord of Hosts has done this. Amen.

On behalf of everyone at First Congregational Church, we wish you a safe and bright Christmas Day and Christmas Tide.

We are grateful to all those who have participated in creating our Advent Sunday services and this Christmas Eve service; Roland Giguere, Lora Plasse-Graves, Tim Graves, Linda and Joseph Judd, Roland Giguere, Sherry and John Taylor, and Diantha Wholey.