

Wonder of Arrival

What If God Looked
Back at Us with
Wonder?

ADVENT 4

December 21, 2025
Fourth Sunday in Advent

**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!*



First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Salem, Oregon

**Welcome to First Congregational United Church of Christ in Salem, Oregon.
Whether you come every Sunday or this is your first time,
know that you are belong here!**

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 do quiet activates 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 sit in the back and 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

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.

PRELUDES

<i>What Child is This</i>	arr. Macdonald
<i>Angels We Have Heard On High</i>	arr. Tornquist

WELCOMING ALL

CENTERING BELLS	<i>Fanfare on Adeste Fideles</i>	Douglas E. Wagner
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LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

CALLING IN THE SPIRIT

One:	In the deep winter sky, light appears where we do not expect it.
Many:	We come, drawn by wonder.
One:	Like the northern lights stretching across darkness, God's presence arrives quietly, unpredictably, beyond what we can control or explain.

Many: We come, learning to watch and wait.

One: This is the wonder of arrival—not certainty, but presence; not power, but nearness.

Many: We come, opening our eyes and our hearts.

One: Come, let us worship the God who comes close.

Many: Let us worship together.

SINGING TOGETHER

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

NCH 116

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

Peace

Jack Simmons, David Whittenberg & Becky Harrison

One: We have invited the light of hope, peace and joy into this holy place the last three weeks. Today, we acknowledge the love of God in the birth of Jesus, the light of the world. We meet Joseph in a place of fear, his hope of having a normal life being dashed by the discovery of Mary being pregnant. In the dark, an angel lights hope in his heart, promising that this child will bring peace and joy to the people living under empire, and that this child was conceived by the Holy Spirit, God among humanity.

Many: We wonder at the arrival of Immanuel. God with us, in us, among us. Thank you for being with us in surprising ways, opening our hearts to the love that is beyond all understanding.

One: May you see the face of God with us in all those you encounter, remembering that Christmas is the celebration of the age of God becoming vulnerable, naked, finite and making their home with us. May you go with the love of God deep in your heart and the light of Christ shining forth from your eyes and all the lives you encounter this week. Go in hope, peace, joy, and love.

Candle Lighting Song

Light A Candle Bright and Tall

tune: DIX

Text: Copyright © 2012 by David Wood.

Light a candle bright and tall, for the Peace we wish to know.

Peace on Earth for great and small, God's Good News to us bestows.

Shine within our hearts today, come, O Peace, to us, we pray.

PRAYER FOR GOING DEEPER

One: God of quiet arrival, you come not in force, but in presence. You arrive in places we did not expect, in lives that are not fully prepared, in moments when certainty has already slipped away.

Many : We confess that wonder is at times difficult for us. We live braced for disappointment. We protect ourselves from surprise. We hold tightly to what we think we know. Like Joseph, we fear the cost of trust; what it might ask of our lives, our reputations, and our plans. Hear us as we bring our brokenness to you in silence.

(Silence)

One: And still, you come, Holy One. Not with condemnation, but with promise. Not with answers, but with presence. You look upon us, not with suspicion, but with wonder. In Jesus, you choose to dwell with us, to stay, to walk alongside us, to call us beloved even before we are ready to believe it.

Many: Thank you for receiving us as we are. Open our eyes to your arrival. Teach us to meet one another with the same eyes of wonder with which you look upon us.

***PASSING THE PEACE**

One: The peace of Christ be with you.

Many: And also with you.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Prayer Response

One: Holy One, in your mercy,

Many: Awaken our hearts with joy.

PRAYER SONG

Come and Find a Quiet Center, v. 1

**Come and find a quiet center in the crowded life we lead,
Find the room for hope to enter, find the frame where we are freed:
Clear the chaos and the clutter, clear our eyes that we can see
all the things that really matter, be at peace and simply be.**

PRAYER IN THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

Loving Creator, holy is your name.
May your joy take root in this world,
and may your healing rise among us as surely as blossoms in the desert.
Give us what we need for this day,
and forgive us when we harm one another
or turn away from your ways of compassion.
We release the debts we hold against others
and open our hearts to renewal. Lead us toward paths that bring life,
and guide us through every wilderness.
For your realm of justice and peace is unfolding,
and your glory is revealed in every act of love,
now and always. Amen.

PRAYER SONG *Come and Find a Quiet Center, v. 3*

In the Spirit let us travel, open to each other's pain,
Let our lives and fears unravel, celebrate the space we gain.
There's a place for deepest dreaming, there's a time for heart to care,
In the Spirit's lively scheming there is always room to spare.

STORY PAGES FOR KIDS

STORY PAGES FOR ADULTS Isaiah 7:10-16, Matthew 1:18-25

MESSAGE Wonder of Arrival: What If God Looked Back at Us with Wonder?

MEDITATION MUSIC *Still, Still, Still* Austrian Folk tune/arr. Götsch Chancel Choir

GATHERING OUR GIFTS

If you wish to make a financial donation today, 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



Thank you to everyone who has made a pledge and who gives through their bank or other electronic portals.

OFFERTORY *Sussex Carol* Trad. English carol/arr. Wood

***DEDICATION CHORUS** *What Does the Lord Require of Us?* **NCH Back Cover**

***DEDICATING OUR GIFTS**

LIFE IN COMMUNITY

Please read the announcements printed in the bulletin. If you have something to share that is not in the bulletin, please 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 and join us for fellowship downstairs.

***SINGING TOGETHER** *Gentle Joseph, Joseph Dear* **NCH 105**

***BENEDICTION AND BLESSING**

POSTLUDE *Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella* Trad. French/arr. Greer
During the Postlude, you are invited to leave or remain and quietly listen to the music.



With Thanks to:

Ushers/ Greeters:	Lee Coyne and Peggy Farr
Liturgist/Reader:	Deb Mandeville
Worship Team On Duty:	Judith Taussig
Finance Team On Duty:	

About today's keyboard organ music: The melody of the Sussex Carol originated as a folksong in the town of Monk's Gate in Sussex, and the text was published in 1684 in "A Small Garden of Pious and Godly Songs" by Irish bishop Luke Wadding. The words proclaim a message of peace and goodwill: "On Christmas night all Christians sing, to hear the news the angels bring." The tune for *Un flambeau, Jeanette, Isabelle* first appeared in the Provence region of France, not as Christmas music, but rather, as dance music for the French nobility. In 1688 it was published in a collection of Christmas carols with Provençal texts, and in 1672 set to a drinking song for a revival of Molière's play *Le Médecin malgré lui*. The carol begins "Bring a torch, Jeanette, Isabella, Bring a torch, to the cradle run! It is Jesus, good folk of the village."

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please take a look at the online calendar on the website for upcoming meetings, special events, and more. www.uccsalem.org

Christmas Caroling -- today, **Sunday, December 21st** we will bring holiday cheer to several church members who have difficulty leaving their homes. Meet at the church at **3:00 pm** to carpool. Sign up through the church; contact Shelley Wagener or Lori Ensign with questions.

Christmas Eve -- Worship service at 7 pm.

Prayer in Three Breaths

For the World, we pray...

- ♦ Prayers for patience as we wait for better days.
- ♦ Bless those who have lost their jobs, and those who struggle to feed their families. May they find abundance this season and always.
- ♦ Strength and Vitality for... The whirlwind of Love and care that pushes away the Darkness...
- ♦ That the Ukraine will not be forced into submission.

For the world we share—its pain, its beauty, its longing for justice—we breathe in hope and breathe out peace.

For Our Community, we pray...

- ♦ For Beth Pfeiffer as she is ordained at First Congregational UCC in Eugene.
- ♦ For all of the teachers, staff and students during the last busy week before break.
- ♦ For all of those traveling for the holidays.

For our community—its workers, its dreamers, its weary and its bold—we breathe in compassion and breathe out courage.

For Our Beloveds, we pray...

- ♦ For Dani Mar and family during the holiday season.
- ♦ For Erin Hull as she moves through the chemo process.
- ♦ For God's sustaining presence and healing love as Lori Ensign experiences an infection and kidney stone.
- ♦ For Rebecca's friend, Kelly, who is now on hospice.
- ♦ Prayers of comfort for Mahalie, whose grandpa passed last week.
- ♦ For Tammie and Gus and the family, May they have peace.
- ♦ For Kelly, who is struggling with severe health issues.
- ♦ For Sarah as she pedals her way...
- ♦ For beloved family members -- one recovering from a new hip surgery; and the other facing houselessness.
- ♦ For Saint John's United Church of Christ in Payette, Idaho.

For our beloveds—those near and those far, those with us and those we remember—we breathe in love and breathe out gratitude.

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@uccsalem.org

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 - 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
SEMINARY INTERN	Amy Tobey
ORGANIST	Dr. Marcia Hauff
CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR	Lily Walker, ext. 310
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CUSTODIAN	Joe Martin

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