

United Church of Christ  
**Groton Congregational**  
Church

Founded in 1702



*Fourth Sunday in Advent-- JOY*  
*Groton Congregational Church*  
*December 20, 2020*



*- We Gather in Community as God's People-*



*Prelude "He Is Born" Handbell Choir*

**Announcements:** We are happy to say that our Christmas Eve Service will be live this year via Zoom. Please join us at 7pm on December 24<sup>th</sup>! All Members and Friends of the Church should have received their e-mailed invitations for this worship service. If you did not receive yours please check your spam/junk e-mail folder before contacting the office.

**Community Meals** is looking for volunteers to help out with this much needed program. If you have just one or two hours a week of your time to donate to helping out those in need in our community please contact Ellen Kerr or the office.

Our regular After Worship Coffee Hour is scheduled for 11:30am on December 20<sup>th</sup>. We hope you will join us.

Our regular Wednesday Prayer Meeting is scheduled for 5:30pm on December 23<sup>rd</sup>.

The Book Study centering on "Listening for the Heartbeat of God" will meet next on December 30<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm. There is no Book Study this week.

Our Pledge Drive is still going on. If you have not received your Pledge Card, please contact the office.



*Call to Worship :*

**One:** Rejoice! The spirit of God is sending us:

**People:** To bring good news to the oppressed,  
to comfort the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
to proclaim the year of favor among God's people.

**One:** Rejoice! The work of the Spirit is calling us:

**People:** To rebuild ancient relationships ruined by injustice,  
To repair the cities as places of hope,  
To restore land devastated across generations.  
To proclaim the year of favor among God's people.

**One:** To cast off any faint spirit  
and put on the mantle of praise,  
To take root as the plantings of the HOLY ONE,  
to display God's glory.

**All:** Come, let us worship in Joy!

*Prayer of Invocation:* Holy One, Builder who delights in making spaces of safety and beauty, Matchmaker who rejoices in presenting new spouses with a future of hope, fill us today with the gifts we need to join you in your life-sustaining, hope-giving work in the world; let us share your joyful vision of beauty and justice in this world you have created and loved. In the name of the One who is coming,

**Amen**



*Opening Hymn "O Little Town of Bethlehem" (CH #144, all verses)*

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

For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,  
while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wond'ring love.  
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth!  
And praises sing—let "Glory!" ring with peace to all on earth!

How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is giv'n!  
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of the heav'ns.  
No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,  
where meek souls will receive him still the dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray,  
cast out our sin, 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.

*Lighting of the Advent Candle- JOY*  
*Ellen Kerr*

*Light four candles:*

O Holy One, we light this fourth candle,  
And delight in the sparkle of its outrageous reminder  
to "rejoice"! Let its flame cast light into shadowy places  
and show where work is to be done.  
Let a community of builders be formed in  
The Light of Joy.  
Let Joy find home in our hearts,  
And make space for your presence there,  
As we work for justice and peace in the service of Love.  
**People:** God be with us in this Light of Joy.



*Hymn: "One Candle is Lit" vs 3*

Come, festively sing while awaiting the birth,  
join angels in dancing from heaven to earth.  
Wave banners of good news, lift high thankful praise.  
One candle is lit for the joy of these days.

*Call To Offering:* In struggle and in joy, God is faithful to us. We bring forth our offerings  
– our tithes, our treasures, our least coins – to demonstrate our faithfulness to God.

*Anthem "Sing We Noel"*

*Prayer of Dedication:* O Faithful One, accept these gifts of our hearts and as the  
living presence of Christ in the world. **Amen.**

*- Joys & Concerns Prayers of the People -*

## *Pastoral Prayer & Lord's Prayer*

*Hymn: "Angels We Have Heard on High" (CH#155 all verses)*

Angels we have heard on high sweetly singing o'er the plains,  
and the mountains in reply echoing their joyous strains.

**Refrain:**

**Gloria, in excelsis Deo!**

**Gloria, in excelsis Deo!**

Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?  
What the gladsome tidings be, Which inspire your heavenly song? **[Refrain]**

Come to Bethlehem and see Christ, who comes in lowly birth.  
Come, adore on bended knee Jesus, joy of heav'n and earth. **[Refrain]**

See within a manger laid, Christ, whom choirs of angels praise;  
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid, while our hearts in love we raise. **[Refrain]**

*Scripture: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Luke 1:46-55*

*Sermon: "The Good News"*

*Closing Hymn "Joy to the World"*

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive its king;  
let ev'ry heart prepare him room, and heav'n and nature sing,  
and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ  
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains, repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground.  
He comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found,  
far as the curse is found, far as, far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove  
the glories of his righteousness, and wonders of his love,  
and wonders of his love, and wonders, wonders of his love.

*Benediction*

Go forth confident that God is faithful:  
Those who have sowed in sorrow will return with shouts of joy,  
bearing the harvest of God's work.  
Rejoice always—the Lord is near.

*Benediction Sung Response*

**"Go Now in Peace" by Besig**  
Go now in peace. Never be afraid.  
God will go with you each hour of every day.  
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true.  
Know He will guide you in all you do.  
Go now in love, and show you believe.  
Reach out to others so all the world can see.

God will be there watching from above.  
Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.

**Participants:**

**Reverend Lee Ireland**

**Ellen Kerr**

**Organist: Sue Stottlemyer**

**Videographer: Richard Stottlemyer**

**Video Editor: Lisa Gorman**

**The Groton Congregational Choir & Handbell Choir**