

# First Congregational Church of Rowley

Order of Worship Service Sunday, December 12, 2021

Reverend Tom Bentley



Welcome and Announcements

Rev. Tom Bentley

Call to Worship

Sue Hazen

Leader: In the times of darkness and fear, God is ever near to love and guide us.

**People: Come, Loving God, fill our hearts singing the love of God**

Leader: In the times of joy and dancing, God is ever near in celebration.

**P: Come, Loving God, fill our hearts singing in harmony, with God**

L: At all times and in all places, God is always with us, sustaining, healing, loving.

**P: Come, Loving God, fill our hearts with Joy singing your song of Love over and over again.**

Opening Prayer (In unison)

led by Sue Hazen

Lord, we have come to this place from a world of demands and schedules. We have sought hope and peace and have found them here. Now we seek the inner joy that only your presence can bring to our lives. Open our hearts and our spirits to your love. For we ask this in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

Lighting the Advent Candle

Missions/CE

**Reader 1:** Today we light three candles- the first Candle is called HOPE and it is a reminder that God's promises are true.

**Reader 2:** The second Candle is called PEACE, God's gentle loving peace for our lives.

**Reader 3:** The third Candle is called JOY, because of God's absolute presence in our lives.

**Reader 4:** Come, all is ready. Let the light of this these candles, called HOPE, PEACE, and JOY, bring brightness to your spirits.

*[The first, second and third Advent Candles are lit]*

Prayer of Confession (unison)

led by Sue Hazen

It is getting more and more difficult, Lord, for us to keep our attention on the holy things. Our lives are caught up in the planning, parties, gifts, and other such things. We get side-tracked too easily and exhausted, we fall into restless sleep. The cries of those in need abound and we are overwhelmed by the need. Too often we turn a deaf ear because we feel we just can't meet all the needs that are presented to us. Heal our hearts and spirits, Lord. Help us understand that you do not ask us to heal everything but rather to find a simple way in which we might lighten someone else's burden, as you have lightened our lives. You have brought hope and peace to us. Now cause us to rejoice in the wondrous things that you have done.

Teach us to use our gifts for the common good, and that in helping, we find great and abundant joy. In Jesus' Name, we pray. AMEN.

**Words of Assurance**

**Rev. Tom Bentley**

The messenger has been sent to you, proclaiming that there is One who is Coming who will heal and lead you. Know that this is a great gift from God, who has always and will always love you. AMEN.

**Opening Song Angels We Have Heard on High**

**Old Testament Reading**

**Sue Hazen**

**Zephaniah 3:14-20      *The Message***

So sing, daughter Zion.  
Raise your voices, Israel!  
Daughter Jerusalem,  
be happy! celebrate!  
God has reversed his judgments against you  
and sent your enemies off chasing their tails.  
From now on, God is Israel's king,  
in charge at the center.  
There's nothing to fear from evil  
ever again!  
Jerusalem will be told:  
"Don't be afraid.  
Dear Zion,  
don't despair.  
Your God is present among you,  
a strong Warrior there to save you.  
Happy to have you back, he'll calm you with his love  
and delight you with his songs.

\* \* \*

"The accumulated sorrows of your exile  
will dissipate.  
I, your God, will get rid of them for you.  
You've carried those burdens long enough.  
At the same time, I'll get rid of all those  
who've made your life miserable.

I'll heal the maimed;  
I'll bring home the homeless.  
In the very countries where they were hated  
they will be venerated.  
On Judgment Day  
I'll bring you back home—a great family gathering!  
You'll be famous and honored  
all over the world.  
You'll see it with your own eyes—  
all those painful partings turned into reunions!"  
God's Promise.

### **Call to Offering**

**Moment of Music: People, Look East** *sung by the choir*

### **Doxology**

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow  
Praise Him, all creatures here below  
Praise Him above the Heavenly host  
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.  
Amen*

### **Prayer of Dedication**

**Joys and Concerns** *(prayer requests can be texted to 978-973-2362)*

### **Pastoral Prayer**

### **The Lord's Prayer** *(in unison)*

**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 sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, Amen.**

### **Gospel Reading**

**Sue Hazen**

**Luke 3: 7-18** *The Message*

When crowds of people came out for baptism because it was the popular thing to do, John exploded: "Brood of snakes! What do you think you're doing slithering down here to the river? Do you think a little water on your snakeskins is going to deflect God's judgment? It's your *life* that must change, not your skin. And don't think you can pull rank by claiming Abraham as 'father.' Being a child of Abraham is neither here nor there—children of

Abraham are a dime a dozen. God can make children from stones if he wants. What counts is your life. Is it green and flourishing? Because if it's deadwood, it goes on the fire."

The crowd asked him, "Then what are we supposed to do?"

"If you have two coats, give one away," he said. "Do the same with your food."

Tax men also came to be baptized and said, "Teacher, what should we do?"

He told them, "No more extortion—collect only what is required by law."

Soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?"

He told them, "No harassment, no blackmail—and be content with your rations."

The interest of the people by now was building. They were all beginning to wonder, "Could this John be the Messiah?"

But John intervened: "I'm baptizing you here in the river. The main character in this drama, to whom I'm a mere stagehand, will ignite the kingdom life, a fire, the Holy Spirit within you, changing you from the inside out. He's going to clean house—make a clean sweep of your lives. He'll place everything true in its proper place before God; everything false he'll put out with the trash to be burned."

There was a lot more of this—words that gave strength to the people, words that put heart in them. The Message! But Herod, the ruler, stung by John's rebuke in the matter of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, capped his long string of evil deeds with this outrage: He put John in jail.

**Message: "The Truth Has a Habit of Getting Out"**

**Closing Song: "What Child is This, Who, Laid to Rest"**

**Benediction**

**Rev. Tom Bentley**

Choir led by Karl Schmuck  
Lay Reader Sue Hazen  
Deacons Nicola Pyburn and Ken Sanford  
AV Eric Fila and Angie Estevez

Flowers on the Communion Table today are given by  
Susan and Charles Hazen in celebration of their families

*Red and White Carnations on December 5<sup>th</sup>*  
In Memory of Hazel and Edward Stolp, Marguerite and Leo Manning parents  
of Ellie & Billy Manning

## Angels We Have Heard on High

#124 New Century Hymnal

1 Angels we have heard on high  
sweetly singing o'er the plain  
and the mountains in reply,  
echo back their joyous strains.

Refrain:

Gloria in excelsis Deo.  
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

2 Shepherds, why this jubilee?  
Why your joyous strains prolong?  
Say what may the tidings be,  
which inspire your heavenly song.

Refrain:

Gloria in excelsis Deo.  
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

3 Come to Bethlehem and see  
Christ whose birth the angels sing;  
Come adore on bended knee,  
God, our world now entering.

Refrain:

Gloria in excelsis Deo.  
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

4 See the babe in manger laid  
whom the choirs of angels praise;  
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid,  
while our hearts in love we raise.

Refrain:

Gloria in excelsis Deo.  
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

## What Child is This, Who, Laid to Rest

#140 Pilgrim Hymnal

1 What Child is this, who, laid to rest,  
On Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,  
While shepherds watch are keeping?

Chorus:

This, this is Christ, the King,  
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:  
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,  
The Babe, the Son of Mary!

2 Why lies He in such mean estate,  
Where ox and ass are feeding?  
Good Christian, fear: for sinners here  
The silent Word is pleading.

Chorus:

This, this is Christ, the King,  
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:  
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,  
The Babe, the Son of Mary!

3 So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh,  
Come, peasant, king to own Him.  
The King of kings salvation brings;  
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.

Chorus:

This, this is Christ, the King,  
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:  
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,  
The Babe, the Son of Mary!



I walked into church on Sunday just as you all were singing "let there be Peace on Earth" and it was BEAUTIFUL.

*I hope that you all will join in our Caroling event after church on December 19th so that we can celebrate the season with our near neighbors!*

Your voices are needed, your spirit is needed!

**Please plan to join us on December 19th!**

**Our yearly collection of Mittens, Hats, Scarves and Gloves is underway, please remember to bring to the church this week, so we can deliver them early.**

Triton school families are still in need. If you are able to, please donate \$10 Market Basket Gift Cards and put them right in the offering basket.

*Thank you,*

*Danby*

Missions Chair

**There will be a Cabinet Meeting on Tuesday, December 14 at 7pm in the Parish Hall.**

**Executive Meeting on Tuesday, December 14 at 7pm.**

**Diaconate Meeting on Wednesday, December 15 at 7pm**

**Which country started the tradition of putting up a Christmas tree?**

- a. England
- b. Holland
- c. Germany

**How many gifts in total were given in "The Twelve Days of Christmas" Song?**

- a. 365
- b. 364
- c. 325

**What was Frosty the Snowman's nose made of?**

- a. Carrot
- b. Button
- c. Stick

**What does the letter "X" in Xmas stand for?**

- a. Joy
- b. Bright
- c. Christ

**What does the name Emmanuel mean?**

- a. God never fails
- b. God with us
- c. God is love

**What was the first Christmas song that was performed in space?**

- a. O Holy Night
- b. Jingle Bells
- c. O Christmas Tree

Answer: 1c, 2b, 3b, 4c, 5b, 6b