

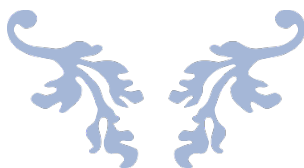


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# CHRISTMAS EVE 2021

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First Congregational Church of Rowley



90.3 FM

DECEMBER 24, 2021  
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF ROWLEY  
175 Main Street, Rowley, MA 01969

[FirstChurchRowley.org](http://FirstChurchRowley.org)



# First Congregational Church of Rowley

## Order of Worship Service Christmas Eve 2021

Reverend Tom Bentley

### WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### AN ADVENT CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Come, all who are faithful and all who seek joy in your lives. It is the season to sing praises to God for the Christ Child is near.

**Pastor: The symbols of hope, peace, love, and joy shine brightly in our hearts.**

Leader: May they remain with us throughout the year.

**Pastor: We now share a promise that was fulfilled by God:**

**Leader and Pastor: Let us celebrate together that our beloved Christ Child is born and calls us now to new lives of love, joy, and faith in action. Amen.**

#### BIDDING PRAYER *(offered by the Pastor, Rev. Tom Bentley)*

*Loving One, we offer you our hearts, that we may celebrate your love for us. We offer our lives, that you may use them to fulfill your purpose. We offer you our praise, that in our commemoration of the birth of your Son we may know again that you have come to us and shared our common lot with its fears and sufferings. We ask you in the name of Jesus that the things which came to pass so long ago may become in our time the healing of the entire world in which we presently live, move, and have our being. Amen*

#### LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLES

**Reader: Through Jesus we know that God is among us. Tonight, we light the four candles on our Advent Wreath. These are the candles of Hope, Peace, Love and Joy.**

**Hope is the bedrock of our faith in our Divine Creator. Peace is God's gift to us, if we follow our call to serve with open hearts. Love is the blessing we can offer in faith to our suffering world; and Joy is that moment when we can stand with Jesus Christ, whose birth we celebrate this evening.**

*(The four candles on the outer circle of the Advent Wreath are lit.)*

#### LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

**Pastor: On this Christmas Eve, we are gathered to celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Christ, and to consider with the faithful all over the globe what His coming means to the world. As we light this Candle in his name, may its light of Grace be the healing of our entire human family and all the life that dwells with us on this planet.**

*(The Christ Candle in the center of the Advent Wreath is lit.)*

### **Opening Hymn “Hark the Herald Angels Sing”**

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King:  
peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"  
Joyful, all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies;  
with angelic hosts proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

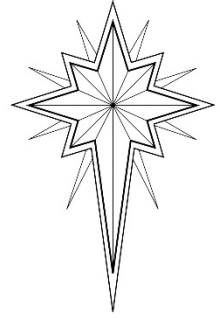
Refrain:

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King"  
Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord,  
late in time behold him come, offspring of the Virgin's womb:  
veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail th'incarnate Deity,  
pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel.

[Refrain]

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.  
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,  
born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.

[Refrain]



### **THE FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 40:1-5**

**“Comfort, oh comfort my people,”  
says your God.  
“Speak softly and tenderly to Jerusalem,  
but also make it very clear  
That she has served her sentence,  
that her sin is taken care of—forgiven!  
She’s been punished enough and more than enough,  
and now it’s over and done with.”  
Thunder in the desert!  
“Prepare for God’s arrival!  
Make the road straight and smooth,  
a highway fit for our God.  
Fill in the valleys,  
level off the hills,  
Smooth out the ruts,  
clear out the rocks.  
Then God’s bright glory will shine  
and everyone will see it.  
Yes. Just as God has said.”**

**Second Carol: “Angels We Have Heard on High”**

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 heav'nly song?  
[Refrain]

Come to Bethlehem and see, him whose birth the angels sing;  
come, adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord, the newborn King.  
[Refrain]

**THE SECOND LESSON Luke 1:26-38**

**Luke 1:26-38 The Message**

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to the Galilean village of Nazareth to a virgin engaged to be married to a man descended from David. His name was Joseph, and the virgin's name, Mary. Upon entering, Gabriel greeted her:

Good morning!  
You're beautiful with God's beauty,  
Beautiful inside and out!  
God be with you.

She was thoroughly shaken, wondering what was behind a greeting like that. But the angel assured her, “Mary, you have nothing to fear. God has a surprise for you: You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and call his name Jesus.

He will be great,  
be called ‘Son of the Highest.’  
The Lord God will give him  
the throne of his father David;  
He will rule Jacob's house forever—  
no end, ever, to his kingdom.”

Mary said to the angel, “But how? I've never slept with a man.”

The angel answered,

The Holy Spirit will come upon you,  
the power of the Highest hover over you;  
Therefore, the child you bring to birth  
will be called Holy, Son of God.

“And did you know that your cousin Elizabeth conceived a son, old as she is? Everyone called her barren, and here she is six months pregnant! Nothing, you see, is impossible with God.”

And Mary said,

Yes, I see it all now:

I’m the Lord’s maid, ready to serve.

Let it be with me

just as you say.

Then the angel left her.

### Third Carol: *“O Little Town of Bethlehem”*

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 to God the King and peace to all the earth.

How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is giv’n!  
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heav’n.  
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 Immanuel!



## THE THIRD LESSON Luke 2: 1-20

### Luke 2: 1-20 The Message

About that time Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Empire. This was the first census when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone had to travel to his own ancestral hometown to be accounted for. So, Joseph went from the Galilean town of Nazareth up to Bethlehem in Judah, David's town, for the census. As a descendant of David, he had to go there. He went with Mary, his fiancée, who was pregnant.

While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. She gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the hostel.

There were shepherds camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger."

at once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises:

Glory to God in the heavenly heights,  
Peace to all men and women on earth who please him.

As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherds talked it over. "Let's get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us." They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child. All who heard the shepherds were impressed.

Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within herself. The shepherds returned and let loose, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen. It turned out exactly the way they'd been told!

Christmas Eve Reflection: *"Yet More Light"* Rev Tom. Bentley

Christmas Prayer Rev Tom. Bentley

### **Lighting of the Candles**

Please "light" your candles and hold them out of your car windows - if the weather is too cold to allow this, please keep them in your vehicle with the windows up

**Fourth Carol: "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, heav'nly 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 thy birth.

**Benediction**

**Rev. Tom Bentley**

**[Please put on your vehicle lights after the benediction when the final hymn begins]**

**Closing Carol: "Joy to the World"**

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!  
Let earth receive her 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.

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.

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

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.

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*Offering Gifts: As vehicles depart through the rear exit in the parking lot, two deacons will be standing holding a basket for receiving offering gifts. Our prayer for this Christmas and the coming year is the ministry of The First Congregational Church of Rowley can continue to shine its beacon of love through out the region and even the whole world. The challenges of these years of Covid encourage us all to consider deeply God's call for generous love in our time of such great need*



## **Poinsettias In Memory and Celebration**

Mr. & Mrs. Frank Todd

*Given in memory of our parents, given for our family*

Ellie and Billy Manning

*Given in memory of Loved Ones*

Donna and David Irving

*In celebration of our Loved Ones*

Nicola & Glen Pyburn

*Our beautiful grandchildren: Joe, Jaylynn, May and Gunner*

*May be picked up after the service.*

*Thank you to all our Deacons who are helping with this quick change of service plan. They are the folks helping direct traffic, park cars, doing the readings, collecting the offering and supporting Reverend Tom with the service.*

*Thank you to Eric, for setting up the FM Broadcast system*

*Thank you for worshiping with us tonight, we hope that your Christmas is meaningful and full of the light of Christ.*

*Next Drive-In Service: Sunday, January 2, 2022!*