

**Christmas Pageant
December 20, 2020**

**"I Believe in the Light: Illuminating Peace"
The Extravagant Christmas Pageant**



Original Art by Jeanushka Fishell

“For a day, just for one day, talk about that which disturbs no one and bring some peace into your beautiful eyes.” - Hafiz

"We look forward to the time when the Power of Love will replace the Love of Power. Then will our world know the blessings of peace." - William E. Gladstone, 19th century

“You have peace," the old woman said, "when you make it with yourself.” - Mitch Albom

“If we have no peace it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.” - Mother Teresa

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” - John 14:27 New International Version (NIV)

WE GATHER

Introit: “Villagers All” Music by Andy Davis. Words by Kenneth Grahame from “The Wind in the Willows” *Andy, Robin and Emma Davis; Arthur Davis and Emma Schneider. Andy Davis, Piano and accordion Andy Davis*

WELCOME

Good morning and welcome! My name is Elisa Lucozzi and I am pastor to the beloved community that is Guilford Community Church. We're so glad you have joined us this morning for our final Sunday of Advent, a celebration of peace and the joy of our annual Christmas pageant!

With the rise in cases of COVID, we continue to gather online because we love and care about our congregation and our community, because we want to maintain physical distancing in a way that helps us to feel connected but also keeps us all safe. Although it is hard to be physically distant from one another especially at this time of year, we also know that it can't keep our hearts from connecting and we know it is indeed the best way of caring for one another right now. Let us keep creating new ways of being church because we know that being church has nothing to do with a building and everything to do with loving each other. Let us gather to be the church in a new way with a welcome wide enough for all.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Christmas Eve Lessons and Carols Service - Broadcast on Brattleboro Community Television at 4:00 pm, 8:00 pm & 11:00 pm and streamed to YouTube at 8 pm

So, as we begin today let us acknowledge and honor this land we occupy by honoring and acknowledging those First Nation people to whom this land belongs:

We gather here on the bank of the Broad Brook
In the shadow of the great Mount Wantastiquet
In the valley of the rushing Connecticut
to worship and discern together the call of God
to the United Church of Christ for these days,
let us know that we do so on the hunting grounds
and homelands of the Mahican and Penacook people,
as well as the southernmost members of the Abenaki
Tribe.

These people used this land since time immemorial
and are still among us in the present.
We offer them our gratitude and respect,
Our repentance and hope in solidarity with them...

It is a Holy Communion we share of life on earth,
of past and present, of pain and reconciliation,
of mystery and majesty...let us begin.

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

The "great light" prophesied by Isaiah in today's text is echoed in the first strains of John's Gospel good news: the light that brings peace, that saves the people from all that would

extinguish it, has been there from the beginning. The Word is made flesh and dwells among us. This reign is now... will we believe it? Will we continue to put flesh on it, embodying the peace meant for all humanity?

I believe in the light, I believe in the light
that has come, that has come, and is coming.

I believe in the light, I believe in the light
that has come, that has come, and is coming.

We see the star rising.
We hear the glad tidings.
We know we are not alone.

PRAYER

Holy One,
we thank you for the glimpses we catch
of your gift of peace on earth.
Even in the midst of fear,
of challenge, of struggle—
even when we aren't sure that
goodwill among us can be found,
ignite the flame of peace within us,
that we might glow with its brilliance
from the inside out.

I believe in the light,
I believe in the light,
that has come... that has come...
and is coming.

Help us face the pain of life
and embrace the assurance that light is already here, and always coming.
Amen.

Fourth Advent Candle lit by Nancy Marsh

What Christmas Means To Me: *Al Franklin tells his story to Terry Sylvester*

PREULDE: "March of the Toys" from Tchaikovsky's ballet "The Nutcracker" *Kachina Lee Autenreith, piano*

Creche Scenes at Home: Nathan Woodberry and Connie Woodberry, with music : "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas", by Hugh Martin and Ralph Blaine *Rosanne Hebert, piano*

What Christmas Means To Me:

Willow tells her story to Ellen Peters

Arthur, Desmond and Vera tell their story to Peter and Mary Alice Amidon

ANTHEM: “Carol of the Drums” by Katharine Davis, *Mariam Diallo, Cara Fisher, Finn Breismeister, June Breismeister, Lila Tadlock, and Genevieve Redmond*

Rumi says, “There is a Light in us that has nothing to do with night and day.”

Since the beginning of history, this time of year has been one which celebrates the earth’s return to a closer orbit with the sun, after long days of when there is less daylight. We know this as the solstice. Virtually all religious and spiritual traditions honor the solstice this time of year – Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, Lama Tsongkpa Day and of course the Solstice itself.

During Christmas, specifically, we have Advent candles, the star of Bethlehem and Jesus himself, who is referred to as “the light of the world,” love incarnate and who modeled for us how we are to let our own little light and love fill the world.

SCENES from CHRISTMAS PAST

PROPHETS: *Emma Davis, Katharine Breunig, Josh Blaushild, and Evan Cross*

“When angels visit us, we do not hear the rustle of wings, nor feel the feathery touch of the breast of a dove; but we know their presence by the love they create in our hearts. Oh, may you feel *this* touch, - it is not the clasping of hands, nor a loved person present; it is more than this: it is a spiritual idea that lights your path!” - Mary Baker Eddy

The Christmas Dove by [Joseph Palmateer](#)

Once upon every year,
there is a day filled with joy and cheer.
And on this day so long ago,
it came down from above the clouds of snow.
It descended with an olive leaf in its beak,
to bring to a child so pure and meek.
It flew into an old wooden shed,
where a child slept on a straw padded bed.
It perched itself high upon a beam,
where by the child it could be seen.
And as the olive leaf fell to the child from above,
the bird began to harp its song of love.
Then it flew back from whence it came,
We call this bird the dove by name.

SCENES from CHRISTMAS PAST

PRELUDE: Emma Davis

DANCE: Robin Davis, 2019

HYMN: “The First Noel” Traditional English Carol, *Performed by the GCC Virtual Choir, Patty Meyer, organ; Connie Green, flute*

GOSPEL READING

Luke 1:26-33

In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary.

The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.

But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

SPIRITUAL READING

“If You Want” by St. John of the Cross

If you want

the Virgin will come walking down the road

pregnant with the Holy,

and say,

“I need shelter for the night, please take me inside your heart,
my time is so close.”

Then, under the roof of your soul, you will witness the sublime
intimacy, the divine, the Christ taking birth forever,
as she grasps your hand for help, for each of us
is the midwife of God, each of us.

Yet there, under the dome of your being does creation
come into existence eternally, through your womb, dear pilgrim—
the sacred womb in your soul,
as God grasps our arms for help;
for each of us is God’s beloved servant never far.

If you want, the Virgin will come walking
down the street pregnant
with Light and sing ...

SCENES from CHRISTMAS PAST

PRELUDE: Katharine Breunig

DANCE: Genevieve Redmond & Kaya Sullivan, 2017

HYMN: “What Child is This” Traditional Carol, *GCC Virtual Choir; Robin Davis, soloist*

GOSPEL READING:

Luke 2:1-6

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, everyone into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

SCENES from CHRISTMAS PAST

PRELUDE: Terry Sylvester, Ellen Peters, and Fred Ashworth

PROCESSIONAL: Tim Ellis, John Gurney, Ellen Peters, Molly Gurney, Andre Silberman, Terry Sylvester, Robin Davis, Katharine Breunig, Lila Tadlock, Wynona Meyer, Atticus Rankin, Jyn Rankin, and more people from pageants 2010, 2017, 2018, 2019

HYMN: “Watt’s Cradle Hymn” Words by Isaac Watts. Music learned from Ruth Crawford Seeger.

Performed by the GCC Virtual Choir, Patty Meyer on the organ and soloist, Mariam Diallo.

GOSPEL READING

Luke 2:8-17

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child,

SCENES from CHRISTMAS PAST

PRELUDE: Ellen & Molly Peters, Lily Quintero, Fred Ashworth, Lucy Spahr-Blazej

DANCE: Angels from 2010, 2017, 2018, 2019 GCC

HYMN: “Angels We Have Heard On High” traditional Carol, *GCC Virtual Choir*;

What Christmas Means to Me: Tom Ragle

SCENES from CHRISTMAS PAST

PRELUDE: Stennie Nelson & her Sheep, Ben; Sue & Kenny Owings, with Lakota and Nevaeh Sheldon, and Lucy Spahr-Blazej

DANCE: Shepherds from 2010, 2017, 2018, 2019 GCC

HYMN: “Silent Night” Words by Joseph Mohr (1818). Music by Franz Grüber (1818).

Performed by the GCC Virtual Choir with Patty Meyer on the organ

GOSPEL READING

Matthew 2:1-2, 10-11

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying,

“Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.”

When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

SCENES from CHRISTMAS PAST

PRELUDE: Sara, Rhys & Bob Glennon,

DANCE: Moses Jaensen, Rhys Glennon and Jesse Gurney, 2019

HYMN: “We Three Kings” Traditional Carol, *GCC Virtual Choir*

OFFERTORY

The wisemen brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh but they also brought something that is priceless: their time, their presence, their faith and hope. Let us do the same.

Supporting the church and the mission of the church is more important than ever. You can still send in your weekly offerings to the church via US mail 38 Church Dr. Guilford, VT 05301 or consider using our online "offering plate" by going to the church's website and clicking the

PayPal donation button on the home page. So now let us gather up all these offerings as well as the offering of our time and talents and dedicate them to continuing the work of creating a more peaceful world.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

God of peace and possibility, we offer these gifts so that they may be transformed into your good news for the sake of the world. Amen.

DOXOLOGY

“First Coming” by Madeleine L’Engle

He did not wait till the world was ready,
till men and nations were at peace.
He came when the Heavens were unsteady,
and prisoners cried out for release.
He did not wait for the perfect time.
He came when the need was deep and great.
He dined with sinners in all their grime,
turned water into wine.

He did not wait till hearts were pure.
In joy he came to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.
To a world like ours, of anguished shame
he came, and his Light would not go out.

He came to a world which did not mesh,
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.
In the mystery of the Word made Flesh
the Maker of the stars was born.

We cannot wait till the world is sane
to raise our songs with joyful voice,
for to share our grief, to touch our pain,
He came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!

SCENES from CHRISTMAS PAST

Stories with Elders: Tom Ragle, Nancy Ragle, and Sylvia Morse

PROCESSIONAL: Elders from 2017

HYMN: “God Bid your Servant Go In Peace” Traditional American carol

Mary Alice Amidon, vocals; Peter Amidon, vocals & harp

SCENES from CHRISTMAS PAST

CLOSING HYMN MEDLEY:

“Are You Ready” as sung by James Cleveland and the Metro Mass Choir. Arr. Andy Davis, “*By the People For the People*” Choir, Patty Meyer piano, Ron Kelley alto saxophone, Steve Rice percussion

“Shout for Joy” traditional African American spiritual, *GCC Virtual Choir, Mary Alice Amidon and Robin Davis soloists*

“Magnificat” by Peter Amidon, *GCC Virtual Choir, Patty Meyer piano*

“Joy to the World” words Isaac Watts, music traditional, *GCC Virtual Wind Band & Choir, Patty Meyer, organ*

What Christmas Means to Me: Larry Crockett

BENEDICTION

In this season of waiting know this...

We wait for justice
but we do not wait to work for change;

We wait for restored health
but we do not wait to work to heal;

We wait for wholeness
but we do not wait to work at binding brokenness.

We wait for peace
but we do not wait to work to eliminate hatred.

And so, my friends, like bells ringing out the news
that the light has dawned and shines on all people,
fill those places of sadness with messages of peace.
Go into your lives humming the tunes that keep that peace alive in you
and that spur you on in your work of justice and reconciliation.

Raise your voices and repeat after me...

“do not be afraid!”

“do not be afraid!”

Amen!

Resources for further prayer and reflection:

[Reba McEntire - Pray For Peace](#)

[Christmas According to Kids - Southland Christian Church](#)

Family movie of the week: A Muppets Christmas
Available from the Brooks Memorial Library

Adult/Youth film of the week: Sweet Honey In The Rock: Raise Your Voice!
Rent the documentary for \$1.99 on [Amazon Video](#).