



WELCOME to WORSHIP

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
Menomonie, Wisconsin

Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 21, 2025

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude/Candle Lighting "Gentle Mary Laid Her Child"
(arr. M. Hayes) Oxana Khramova

Ringing of the Bell

*Call to Worship / Advent Wreath Lighting (*Stand as you are able)

One: We gather together in this place:
All: **prophets and dreamers, singers and poets,**
One: we who dare to imagine a world renewed;
All: **we who dare to dream God's dream.**
One: We speak out with Zechariah.
All: **God's name be blessed forever!**
One: For God has remembered us in mercy,
All: **and remained faithful to us in love.**
One: Because of God's tender compassion,
All: **the dawn from on high will rise over us.**
One: Come and worship, all you who dream and wait.
All: **We have come to wonder and praise.**

The Advent Candles are lit.

*Opening Prayer (in unison)

God of liberation, your love reaches beyond all boundaries of prejudice and fear. Your tenderness is offered not only to the powerful or deserving, but to all people, according to your infinite compassion. Teach us to love widely and boldly, honoring the dignity of all and trusting your promise that the way of love is the way of life, Amen.

*Opening Hymn "People, Look East" Hymnal #12

Readings

Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26; Luke 1:57-80

Sarah Martinek

Contemporary Reading, "Affirmation of Love" from Illustrated Ministry's "The Will to Dream" Advent series

Anthem "Glow" Chancel Choir
(Ed. Esch, E. Whitacre, arr. L. Edwards)

Message "The Will to Dream: Merciful Love" Pastor René Mehlberg

Transitional Hymn "Gentle Mary Laid Her Child" Hymnal #27

Prayers of the People

Lord's Prayer

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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Offertory "Reflection" Oxana Khramova
(M. Hayes)

***Doxology**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God all creatures here below;
Praise God above ye heavenly host;
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

***Prayer of Dedication (in unison)**

Holy God, we bring our gifts and offerings to you because the voices of the prophets remind us of something bigger, something greater than any system this world offers us. We believe when we trust you with our resources, the kin(g)dom of God comes much closer to reality on earth. Help us steward these gifts to create abundant life and love. Amen.

Closing Hymn "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear" Hymnal #38

***Benediction**

***Sung Benediction (unison)**

God be with you till we meet again;
Loving counsels guide, uphold you,
With a Shepherd's care enfold you:
God be with you till we meet again.

Postlude "They'll Know We Are Christians By Our Love" Oxana Khramova
(P. Scholtes, arr. M. Hayes)

The flowers today are from Kathy Colvin to celebrate her grandson's, Isaac Ellingson's, birthday on 12/30.

Credits

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This Week

Wednesday, December 24, 5pm: Christmas Eve Service. Merry Christmas!

Thursday December 25: Office is closed.

Link to the full church calendar: <https://www.menomonieucc.org/monthlycalendar>

Mission Statement of First Congregational United Church of Christ in Menomonie, WI

We are called together:

To celebrate God's presence.

To help each person to grow in his or her relationship with God;

To create a welcoming and supportive community of all God's people, affirming the diversity of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender expression, and identity, social and economic status, and the differently abled;

To observe and share life's passages and our faith traditions;

To reach out in love seeking justice and peace;

And to tell the old story of Jesus and His love.

Land Acknowledgement

Here we congregate on Ojibwe, Dakota, Menominee, Potawatomi, and Ho Chunk land. Generations of Indigenous people occupied and provided careful stewardship of this land long before Europeans arrived on these shores. The traumatic dispossession of this land by European immigrants and the displacement of countless individuals produced collective suffering that has repercussions for our Indigenous neighbors today. The original inhabitants of this land—known to some Indigenous peoples as Turtle Island—took seriously the Creator's call to be stewards of air, land, water, and creatures. With gratitude, we acknowledge the lessons we continue to learn from our Indigenous neighbors as we seek to be good stewards and pray for guidance in learning how to make reparations.

ONA Covenant

We covenant as a congregation to welcome, celebrate, and include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning people and their families into the full life of our church. We take this stance publicly and proudly, knowing that silence is inadequate to confront the violent theology that is widespread throughout the Christian church. We covenant to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning people and their families with our prayers, words, and actions.

People, Look East

12

Eleanor Farjeon (1881–1965)
As in *Oxford Book of Carols*, 1964

BESANÇON 8.7.9.8.8.7

French folk melody
Harm. Martin Shaw (1875–1958)

1. Peo - ple, look east. The time is near Of the crown-ing of the
 2. Fur - rows, be glad. Though earth is bare, One more seed is plant-ed
 3. Birds, though you long have ceased to build, Guard the nest that must be
 4. Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim One more light the bowl shall

year. Make your house fair as you are a - ble, Trim the
 there: Give up your strength the seed to nour - ish, That in
 filled. E - ven the hour when wings are fro - zen God for
 brim, Shin - ing be - yond the frost - y weath - er, Bright as

Peo-ple, look east and sing to - day:
 hearth and set the ta - ble. Peo-ple, look east:
 course the flower may flour - ish.
 fledg - ing time has cho - sen.
 sun and moon to - geth - er. Peo-ple, look east:
 Love the guest is on the way.
 Love the rose is on the way.
 Love the bird is on the way.
 Love the star is on the way.
 Love is on the way.

5. Angels, announce with shouts of mirth
 Christ who brings new life to earth.
 Set every peak and valley humming

With the word, the Lord is coming.
 People, look east and sing today:
 Love the Lord is on the way.

Gentle Mary Laid Her Child

27

TEMPUS ADEST FLORIDUM 7.6.7.6 D

Joseph Simpson Cook, 1919

Piae Cantiones, 1582
Arr. Ernest C. MacMillan, 1930

1. Gen-tle Ma-ry laid her child Low-ly in a man-ger;
2. An-gels sang a-bout His birth, Wise men sought and found Him;
3. Gen-tle Ma-ry laid her child Low-ly in a man-ger;

There He lay, the un-de-filed, To the world a stran-ger.
Heav-en's star shone bright-ly forth, Glo-ry all a-round Him.
He is still the un-de-filed, But no more a stran-ger.

Such a babe in such a place, Can He be the Sav-ior?
Shep-herds saw the won-drous sight, Heard the an-gels sing-ing;
Son of God, of hum-ble birth, Beau-ti-ful the sto-ry;

Ask the saved of all the race Who have found His fa-vor.
All the plains were lit that night, All the hills were ring-ing.
Praise His name in all the earth, Hail the King of glo-ry!

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

38

CAROL CMD

Edmund Hamilton Sears, 1849

Richard Storrs Willis, 1850

1. It came up-on the mid-night clear, That glo - rious song of old,
 2. Still through the clo - ven skies they come, With peace-ful wings un - furled,
 3. And ye, be-neath life's crush-ing load, Whose forms are bend-ing low,
 4. For lo, the days are has-tening on, By proph-et bards fore - told,

From an - gels bend - ing near the earth, To touch their harps of gold:
 And still their heavenly mu - sic floats O'er all the wea - ry world:
 Who toil a - long the climb-ing way With pain - ful steps and slow,
 When with the ev - er - cir - cling years Comes round the age of gold;

"Peace on the earth, good will to all, From heaven's all - gra - cious King":
 A - bove its sad and low - ly plains They bend on hov - ering wing,
 Look now! for glad and gold-en hours Come swift - ly on the wing:
 When peace shall o - ver all the earth Its an - cient splen-dors fling,

The world in sol - emn still-ness lay, To hear the an - gels sing.
 And ev - er o'er its Ba - bel sounds The blessed an - gels sing.
 O rest be - side the wea - ry road, And hear the an - gels sing.
 And the whole world give back the song Which now the an - gels sing.