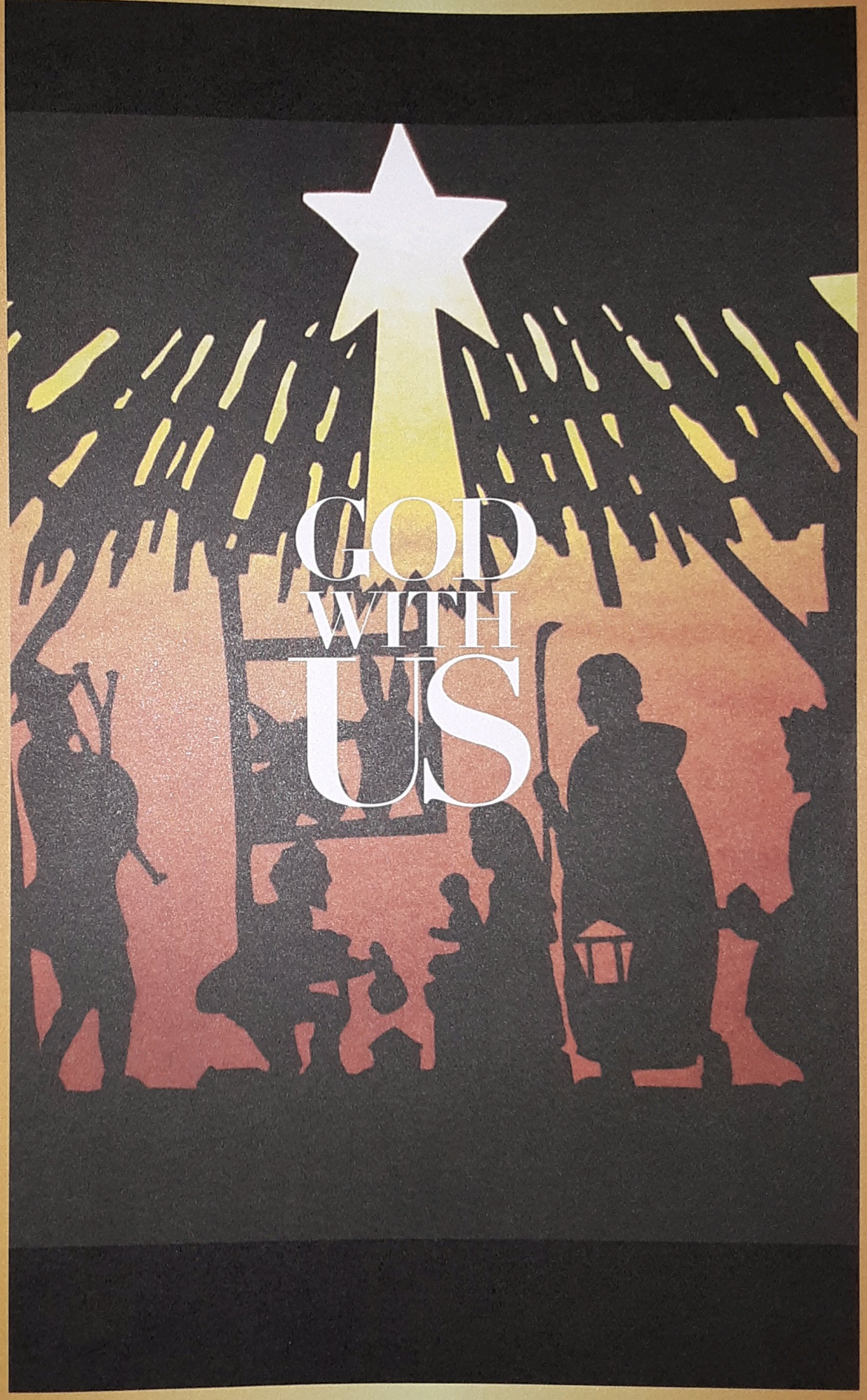


The Congregational Church of Laconia
United Church of Christ
18 Veterans Square
Laconia, NH 03246-3425

Rev. Neil H. Wilson, Senior Pastor
Rev. Paula B. Gile, Associate Pastor
K. Robert Bengtson, Director of Music
Church office: (603) 524-0668



Gathering for Worship

December 22, 2019

www.laconiaucc.org

Fourth Sunday of Advent

9:30 a.m.

+ * + * + * + * + * +
The Congregational Church of Laconia, United Church of Christ, is a welcoming Christian community with a scriptural foundation seeking Justice and peace for all.

Preparing

Meditative Thought *"One of the most glorious messes in the world is the mess created in the living room on Christmas Day. Don't clean it up too quickly."* – Andy Rooney

Organ Prelude

K. Robert Bengtson

Welcome & Announcements

Introit *"From Heaven Above to Earth I Come"*

Chancel Choir

Praising

Gathering Worship

*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.*

"Prepare Him Room: Peaceful Joy" An Advent Drama

Advent Prayer Response

Congregation & Choir

Christ be our Light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the darkness.

Christ be our light! Shine in your church gathered today

Lighting of the Advent Candles Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace

Opening Prayer (Responsively)

Holy God, we await again the arrival of Your son, the Prince of Peace.

We long for the Peaceful waters of joy that run deep and wide underneath all of life.

When we feel the chaos of life bearing down on us,

help us to remember that it doesn't have to be this way.

Help us to step into a slower rhythm that is you Peaceful Joy.

Let truth and grace rule in our hearts this day.

Let truth and grace rule in our church this day.

Let truth and grace rule the world this day...

In the name of Peace. Amen.

Let us rise for our opening hymn!

***Opening Hymn** *"It Came Upon a Midnight Clear"* # 131
A Moment with Our Children Rev. Paula Gile

***Passing of the Peace & the Gloria**
*Halle, Halle, Halle-lu-jah, Halle, Halle, Halle-lu-jah, Halle,
Halle, Hall-lu-jah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah*

Musical Offering *"Sing, O Sing, This Blessed Morn"* Chancel Choir

Reflecting & Praying

Scripture Reading Matthew 1:18-25 Pew Bible p. 877

Sermon *"The Perfect Christmas"* Rev. Neil Wilson

Meditative Moment

Prayer Preparation *"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (v. 7)* Congregation & Choir
*O Come, Desire of Nations, bind all people in one heart and mind;
Make envy strife and quarrels cease; fill the whole world with heaven's peace.
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel Shall come to thee O Israel!*

Pastoral Prayer (Yellow prayer cards may be placed in the offering plate. Also, you may go to the Church's website and click on Prayer Wall and post your requests there www.laconiaucc.org)

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.

Prayer Response *"Brightest and Best"* Chancel Choir

Committing

Invitation to Stewardship The Christmas Fund Offering Donna Wilson

Offertory *"Creation Will Be At Peace"* Chancel Choir

Doxology

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God, all creatures here below:
Praise God for all that love has done; Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One. Amen.*

***Prayer of Consecration/Dedication** (Unison)

Use these gifts and us, O God, to do the work of ushering in your reign of peace. Peace in our homes, peace in our communities, peace in our nation and world but may in begin in the hearts of every person for without it there it cannot be experienced in any of these others. Amen.

Going to Serve

*Closing Hymn

"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

144

Pastoral Benediction

Benediction Response

"He Is Born"

Chancel Choir

Organ Postlude

***You may stand as able.**

This Week's Committee Meetings and Gatherings

| | | |
|---------------------|------------|------------------------------|
| Today Dec 22- | 9:30 a.m. | Sunday Worship |
| | 11:45 a.m. | Hand-Bell Practice |
| | 4:00 p.m. | Channel 25 Worship Broadcast |
| | 9:30 p.m. | Channel 25 Worship Broadcast |
| | 5:00 a.m. | Channel 25 Worship Broadcast |
| Wednesday Dec 24- | 5:00 p.m. | Christmas Eve Family Service |
| | 10:30 p.m. | Carols and Worship |
| Next Sunday Dec 29- | 9:30 a.m. | Sunday Worship |

Some Announcements

Office updates

- ◆ **Pastor Neil and Donna** will be on vacation from Christmas Day until Thursday, January 2.
- ◆ **The church office** will be closing at noon on Christmas Eve and reopening on Friday, December 27.

Special request Our medical supply lending closet is in dire need of replenishing. If you have any of the following that are not in use we would be happy to take them off your hands: walkers, rollators, commodes, wheelchairs, toilet booster seats, canes. Please call Camille or Carolyn in the office 524.0668. After the holidays, drop off times will be Tuesday through Friday 9:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Hallelujah Toffee Time!

The biggest fund raiser of the year for OneLife Africa is selling Hallelujah Toffee. This is only available once a year. The proceeds enable the kids to continue their studies in search for a better life. The toffee is available to purchase after church services at Fellowship Time in December. One pound is priced at \$20 and ½ pound is \$12.50.

Welcome & Information

Welcome to our service of worship! Please introduce yourself to those sitting near you & use a pew rack card to inform us of requests.

Wireless hearing assistance devices, back cushions, large print bulletins and children's activity bags are available; please ask an usher.

Nursery & Child Care Children younger than 1st grade are welcome in the Nursery before the service begins or following the Moment with our Children. Please escort your child to the Nursery room across The Bridge and pick them up after the service. Visitors are always welcome!

Faith Formation The concept of "the beloved community" is seen throughout the Bible and in literature from around the world. The African term "Ubuntu" refers to this and is translated from a longer phrase to mean "I am because you are". As you consider this phrase, also consider donating your spare coins this year to the Faith Formation offering. It will be given to our local family homeless shelter, Belknap House. Take one of our small plastic containers (distributed at Coffee Hour) and be a part of our Faith Formation community!

Our Service is video recorded and published. Please speak to one of our ushers if you have any concerns.

Our Greeters today are Sue and Dave Smith

Today's Ushers are Diane Lockwood and Charlotte Landow

The Altar flowers are "*In loving memory of Katharine H. Gauthier*" given by John E. Gauthier, daughter JoAnne Whitticom, granddaughter, Jessica Dade, and great granddaughter, Anne Dade

Join us for a time of fellowship downstairs following the service for refreshments served by the Property and Finance Committee. Fair Trade coffee is served in biodegradable cups.

Did you know? Your CL21 team wants you to know that you can have conflict without growth, but you can't have growth without conflict. But conflict can be managed!

Important notice: A special News Blast will be going out prior to the New Year. It will contain our By-Laws with proposed changes for everyone's review for the annual meeting scheduled for January 26.

December 22, 2019

Matthew 1:18-25

God with Us *Christmas Fund Offering*

Joseph is certainly one of the unsung heroes of the Bible. Engaged to be married to Mary, he learns that she is carrying a child. Joseph knows that he is not the biological father of this child. The usual punishment for such so-called "crimes," in Joseph's time and culture vary, but all would have ended in death for the young mother. Instead, Joseph conceives a plan to send Mary away quietly. But then he has a dream. And, instead of the expectations of his culture, he decides to follow his dream, which he recognizes as the voice of God. He marries his pregnant girlfriend.

Joseph's dream compels him to follow God on an unlikely path, one that is far from the expectations of his time and culture. He had been told how to get ahead, how to succeed, and he went another direction. Many of our clergy and church workers have done the same. Looking at what success means to the world, they have chosen instead a path of service and sacrifice.

We help impoverished retired and clergy, as well as those in difficult circumstances with the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund.

The Christmas Fund, as it is known, is a Special Mission Offering that congregations have been supporting for over 100 years. The offering is administered through the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance, the charitable arm of the Pension Boards. Funds provide direct financial support to those who serve the church and are facing financial difficulties. Active and retired clergy, lay employees, and their surviving spouses may be eligible for the Supplementation of Small Annuities, Supplementation of Health Premiums, Emergency Grants, and/or Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks. You can find out more about the Christmas Fund and how it is used here: <https://www.pbucc.org/index.php/christmas-fund-home/how-the-funds-are-used>.

4th Sunday of Advent - Prayer for Love

O come, O come Emmanuel!

In a world in which others turn their backs,

You call us to love.

Save us from hatred, and from its more virulent cousin, indifference.

Remind us that you are Love, and that you call us first of all to love.

Show us all the ways that

we can be your love in the world today and all days. Amen.

