

CHRISTMAS

AT THE

OLD FIRST CHURCH

OLD BENNINGTON, VERMONT

A CANDLELIGHT SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS
DECEMBER 10, 2023



*Vermont's Colonial Shrine: Welcoming all to share God's light,
and proclaiming God's embracing love since 1806*

CHRISTMAS
AT THE
OLD FIRST CHURCH

A Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols

December 10, 2023

7:00 p.m.

Kenneth A. Clarke, Minister
Readers from the Old First Church
The Bennington Children's Chorus

Gene Marie Callahan, Organist and
Children's Chorus Accompanist
Benjamin April, Chorus Director

ORGAN PRELUDE

Greensleeves (from Four Carol Preludes)

- Richard Purvis

LIGHTING OF THE MEETINGHOUSE CANDLES

I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

J. Baptiste Calkin

*** CHILDREN'S CHORUS AND CONGREGATIONAL CAROL** *Once in Royal David's City*

(Solo voices Vivienne Clark and Lanna DeAngelo sing the first stanza a capella. The Children's Chorus will sing the second stanza with the congregation seated. The congregation stands at the end of the second stanza and sings the remaining stanzas. This carol is the traditional processional for the Service of Lessons and Carols held each Christmas at King's College, Cambridge University, England.)

1. Once in royal David's city
stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a mother laid her baby
In a manger for his bed.
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little child.
2. He came down to earth from heaven
Who is God and Lord of all,
And His shelter was a stable,
And His cradle was a stall.
With the poor, oppressed, and lowly,
Lived on earth our Savior holy.
- *3. For He is our childhood's pattern,
Day by day like us He grew;
He was little, weak, and helpless,
Tears and smiles like us He knew;
And He feels for all our sadness,
And He shares in all our gladness.
4. And our eyes at last shall see Him
Through His own redeeming love,
For that child so dear and gentle
Is our Lord in heaven above;
And He leads His children on
To the place where He is gone.
5. Not in that poor lowly stable,
With the oxen standing by,
We shall see Him; but in heaven,
Set at God's right hand on high;
Where like stars His children crowned
All in white shall wait around.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES

Saige Myers, Skyla Myers, Pat and Larry Ross acolytes; Sandra Bechtel, Chair of Deacons, reader

OPENING PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER (seated, in unison)

In this ancient house we gather as darkness settles in. The weight of a long day eases. In expectation we take places in a shared space of love and hope. A word rings true. Family or neighbor, stranger or familiar friend, now fill this place with voices made strong with purpose and blessing. Here under ageless stars, under the dome of the heavens, though darkness lingers and cold holds fast, we make our prayer to you, O Lord, Creator of the universe.

May we be kind to all and live with humble thanks. May we feel the abiding love that keeps us. May wonder frame each day anew.

Into the silence of our spirit's longing for light, music now changes the dark of night. Soft voices of beauty call forth strong songs of joy. We sing of ancient truths and hear a calming melody. We repeat the words of Jesus' birth and let holy time enter our hearts. In simple goodness reborn, may we be reminded of what bright glory shall yet be. Light of life, grant this world, we pray, a sense of heavenly peace. And so we ask as Jesus taught us to say,

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.

THE FIRST LESSON

The Prophetic Vision

Isaiah 35:1-10
David Varker, Reader

* CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

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| 1. O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear. | 2. O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight. |
|--|--|

Refrain Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

Refrain

3. O come, Desire of nations, bind
All peoples in one heart and mind;
Bid envy, strife, and discord cease;
Fill the whole world with heaven's peace.

Refrain

THE SECOND LESSON

The Magnificat

Luke 1:39-55
Marie Guariniello, Reader

CHILDREN'S CHORUS

The Angel Gabriel

Basque carol, arr. John Raymond Howell

*** CONGREGATIONAL CAROL**

O Little Town of Bethlehem
(to the tune, *St. Louis*)

1. 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.
2. For Christ is born of Mary;
And gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together
Proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King,
And peace to all on earth.
3. How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him, still
The dear Christ enters in.
4. 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 Emmanuel!

THE THIRD LESSON

The Birth

Matthew 1:18-25
Anastasia Gauthier, Reader

CHILDREN'S CHORUS

Riu Riu Chiu

Spanish Renaissance villancico arr. Michael Neaum
Amy Reichardt, percussion

CHORUS: Riu Riu Chiu (the sound of the kingfisher)

The river bank is protected; as God kept the wolf from our ewe lamb.

The rabid wolf threatened to bite her, but God knew how to make her without sin. Even original sin could not touch the virgin.

The one who is born is the great monarch. Christ the Patriarch, clothed in flesh, has redeemed us all by making himself small. Though he was infinite he became finite.

Many prophecies foretold Him, and in our days we have seen them fulfilled. We see God made human on earth, and the man in Heaven, because He wanted it.

I saw a thousand angels who were singing and flying around, chanting in a thousand voices: "Glory in heaven and peace on earth, for Jesus is born!"

***CONGREGATIONAL CAROL**

O Come, All Ye Faithful

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!
Come and behold Him, born the King of angels!

Refrain

O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord!

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning,
Jesus, to thee be all glory given;
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing!

Refrain

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation!
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest!

Refrain

THE FOURTH LESSON

The Shepherds

Luke 2:8-20
Audrey Pietrucha, Reader

CHILDREN'S CHORUS

Patapan

Burgundian carol
Bernard de la Monnoye 1641-1728
Amy Reichardt, percussion

***CONGREGATIONAL CAROL**

Angels We Have Heard on High

1. Angels we have heard on high,
Sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains.

2. Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
Which inspire your heavenly song?

Refrain: Gloria in excelsis Deo;
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Refrain

3. Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee
Christ, the Lord, the newborn King.

Refrain

CHILDREN'S CHORUS

Carol of the Field Mice words: Kenneth Grahame 1859-1932
music: Brian W. Holmes 1946 -

*CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

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| <p>1. 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 the angelic host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"</p> | <p>2. Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail the incarnate Deity
Pleased in flesh with us to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.</p> |
|--|---|

Refrain

Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Refrain

3. 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

MEDITATION

All Sufficient

* CONGREGATIONAL CAROL

In the Bleak Midwinter

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| <p>1. In the bleak midwinter, Frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron, Water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, Snow on snow,
In the bleak midwinter, Long ago.</p> | <p>3. Angels and archangels, May have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim, Thronged the air;
But His mother only, In her maiden bliss,
Worshiped the beloved, With a kiss.</p> |
| <p>2. Our God, heaven cannot hold Him, Nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away, When He comes to reign:
In the bleak midwinter, A stable place sufficed
The Lord God incarnate, Jesus Christ.</p> | <p>4. What can I give Him, Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man, I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give Him: Give my heart.</p> |

CALL FOR OFFERING for the Greater Bennington Interfaith Council Emergency Needs Fund

OFFERTORY

O Holy Night

Adolphe Adam (1803 –1856)
Gene Marie Callahan, soloist

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

THE SIXTH LESSON

The Word Incarnate

John 1:1-5, 9-14, 16-18

Jim Pullman, Reader

CHILDREN'S CHORUS

We Wish You a Merry Christmas

English traditional carol arr. John Rutter 1945-

***CONGREGATIONAL CAROL**

Joy to the World!

1. Joy to the world! the Lord is come:
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven, and heaven and nature sing.
2. Joy to the world! the Savior reigns:
Let us our songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.
3. 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.
4. 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.

***SPOKEN BENEDICTION AND CHORAL RESPONSE**

God Bless the Master of This House

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

Female voices sing the first stanza, the male voices sing the second stanza and the congregation sings the remaining stanza.

FEMALE VOICES: God bless the Master of this house, with happiness beside,
Where e'er his body rides or walks, Lord Jesus be his guide, Lord Jesus be his guide.

MALE VOICES: God bless the mistress of this house, with gold chain round her breast,
Where e'er her body sleeps or wakes, Lord, send her soul to rest,
Lord, send her soul to rest.

ALL: God bless your house, your children too, your cattle and your store,

The Lord increase you day by day and send you more and more,
And send you more and more.

The Lord increase you day by day and send you more and more,
And send you more and more.

***ORGAN POSTLUDE**

Angels We Have Heard on High - Old French Carol

arr. Harold DeCou

*The congregation stands, as each is able

We welcome all of you to this annual Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols, a tradition we are proud to host here at Old First Church. We are glad you have made it part of your Advent/Christmas season this year and we hope this service of worship tonight both enriches your life and glorifies God. The “Old First” Congregational Church was first gathered on December 3, 1762, and is thus celebrating its 261st anniversary during this Advent season. The term, “gathered,” signified that the church was composed of all who chose to be part of its communion, regardless of where they lived. People still gather here from a wide area, including Bennington, North Bennington, Shaftsbury, Pownal, Hollis and Peterborough, New Hampshire, Hoosick Falls, Cambridge, White Creek, Melrose and Albany, New York. If you have no other church affiliation, we invite you to do the same. Livestream and later recorded content of our worship services--including the Christmas Eve Lessons and Carols--can be found and enjoyed at any time online by going to <http://oldfirstchurchbenn.org/worship/worship-here-and-now/> which brings you to our church website section entitled “Worship Here and Now”. From there look for the live stream link contained on that page.

Our annual Christmas Eve service is at 5:00 PM. We conclude this special service by singing *Silent Night* on the outside steps of the church with lighted candles. Please come and join us for Christmas Eve as well!

Tonight, we look for ways to be of service to others as Jesus did. One of the ways is through our offerings. The proceeds of tonight’s offering will benefit the Interfaith Council’s Emergency Needs Fund. Worshippers at last Candlelight Service gave \$540 and we would very much like to increase that amount this year. The need is great so please give generously.

Tonight’s ushers are: Jim Dilley, Peter and Monique Geannelis, Vicky Printz, David and Marsha Pilachowski (head ushers), Jane Radocchia, Tom and Wendy Schmitt, and Doris Shaw.

We welcome back the Bennington Children’s Chorus under the direction of Kerry Ryer-Parke; Benjamin April, Piano; Ruth Bailey-Fogarty, Rehearsal Assistant; Deborah Teller, Production Manager; Lauren Gotlieb, Graphics & IT. Special thanks to Joe Tucker for his ongoing support. Please check <http://www.benningtonchildrenschorus.com> for more information about the Chorus.

Tonight’s members of the Bennington Children’s Chorus are:

Senior Ensemble

Luke Bradley	Ruby Schlatter
Vivien Rodriguez-Meola	Linus Tucker
Mariam Poling	Noel Tucker

Junior Ensemble

Edyn Clark	Lanna DeAngelo
Vivienne Clark	Kendall Harris

God’s grace to all this Advent-Christmas season!

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH (OLD FIRST CHURCH)

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