



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH “Center Church”



United Church of Christ - ONA
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We, the congregation of the First Congregational Church of South Hadley, MA, UCC, also known as Center Church, declare ourselves to be Open and Affirming. Our congregation is welcoming to all, embracing those of differing sexual orientation, transgender/gender identity and expression, marital status, age, mental and physical health and ability, racial and cultural background/identity, and educational/socioeconomic status. We are open to all to share in Christ's bountiful love through life, leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities, blessings, and joys. In the spirit of Paul in Galatians, we celebrate the diversity in which God has created us!



**** The two center sections of the sanctuary are equipped with a hearing loop.
Turn on the T-coil in your hearing aid and sit in one of these sections
for better hearing**

November 30, 2025

First Sunday of Advent



The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision.

– Helen Keller

PRELUDE

Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme BWV 645

J.S. Bach

Rejoice, rejoice

M. Sedio

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

L. Smith

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PASSING OF THE PEACE

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE

(Following the lighting of the candles) **Unison**

Gracious God, As the Advent season begins, we cry out to you. We come to you looking for hope. When everything else we rely on fails us, our only hope is in you. When we do not understand what has happened, we hope in you. We can hope for better days because we trust you. We know you and we know you are here with us no matter what we are facing. Some of us see only darkness this time of year. Some of us find life overwhelming. Some of us are filled with Advent joy. Wherever we find ourselves today, Loving God, remind us that our hope is in you. Be with us on this journey. Amen

INTROIT

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: O how shall we receive you, how meet you on your way.

People: **Blessed hope of every people, my soul's delight and stay?**

Leader: O Jesus, Jesus give me now by your pure delight.

People: **To know what e'er is pleasing and welcome in your sight.**

***HYMN**

Oh How Shall I Receive You

black # 102

At the conclusion of the hymn, the children will leave to go to "The Promised Land " as the congregation sings the first verse of On River Jordan's Banks I Stand.

*On River Jordan's banks I stand, and cast a wishful eye,
Upon the fair and happy land where my possessions lie;
I am bound for the promised land, I am bound for the promised land,
Oh, who will come and go with me? I am bound for the promised land.*

JOYS AND CONCERNS OF THE PEOPLE

MORNING PRAYERS

Prayer of Confession

God, we come before as children caught up in the frenzy of Christmas preparations. We forget to prepare our hearts. Forgive us when we get caught up in the world's celebration that we forget the real reason for the season.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Hear the good news: We are forgiven, renewed, and restored in Jesus' name. Amen

Pastoral Prayer

Silence

Lord's Prayer (debts)

Our Creator/Father/Mother, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your Kingdom come; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

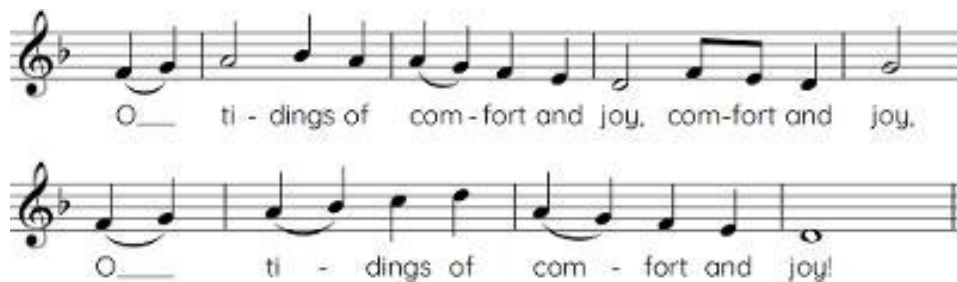
Give us this day our daily bread;

and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen

Congregational Response



READING FROM THE SCRIPTURES

Romans 13:11-14

¹¹ Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is already the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; ¹² the night is far gone; the day is near. Let us then throw off^[a] the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; ¹³ let us walk decently as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in illicit sex and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

SERMON

DAY IS DRAWING NEARER WITH A NEW VISION

*HYMN

eep Awake, Be Always Ready

black # 112

OFFERING

Invitation

Offertory

*Doxology

Brightest and Best

Shawn Kirchner

***Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Christ the Word in flesh born low,
Praise Holy Spirit evermore,
One God triune whom we adore. Amen***

Prayer of Dedication

*HYMN

Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn black #101

*BENEDICTION

*BENEDICTION RESPONSE *Threefold Amen*

POSTLUDE

Valet will ich dir geben

R.G. te Velde

We invite you to remain quietly and celebrate the conclusion of worship in the postlude.

The Deacons are asking you to refrain from clapping. If moved by the postlude or worship, please shout out "AMEN!" We are implementing this to move away from worship being a performance, to sharing a sentiment of having been filled by worship/music.

**Please stand if you are comfortable.*



We hope that you find your worship experience meaningful.

If you are new to the community, we invite you to make this your church home.

*Please stay after worship for refreshments and fellowship
downstairs in the Fellowship Hall.*

In our Service Today

Preacher:

Rev. Lori J. Souder

Advent Candle Lighting:

Amanda and Bobbie Loughrey

Scripture Reader:

Sharyn Kovalesky

Organist:

Larry Schipull

Pianist:

Cynthia J. Morrell

Choir Director:

Ben Coakley

Deacon:

Rachel Alldis



If you are visiting with us today, **WELCOME**. At the close of the service, please take a small welcome gift found in the baskets located at the sanctuary narthex and crossway doors.

It is our token of saying "thank you for sharing worship with us, we truly feel blessed and we hope to see you again soon."

PLEASE KEEP THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE IN YOUR PRAYERS

Continual:

Barbara Blank, on Hospice at Reeds Landing
 Joan Duffy
 Martha Guild's mother, June
 Eileen Halkyard
 Tom Hazen
 Eunice Howes
 Leila Mulder, attending boarding school
 Fay Paquette
 Nikki Wolf, Linda's granddaughter
 Those struggling with addiction
 Those struggling with cancer



If you have submitted one of these requests for prayer, please let us know when it is time to remove someone's name from the list.

Situational:

Cynthia Baker
 Dennis Banks, friend of Karen and Estelle Anderson, with cancer
 Robin Glossner, undergoing chemo
 Audrey Heaphy, recovering from a fall
 Elisa Morrison's step-mother Sandy, and brother Carl, with heart issues
 Elisa's young friend Elija, for addiction recovery
 Mary Nelsons father, Dave, with cancer
 Katy (Daniels) Bobel's brother-in-law, Gary Nicolls, severely injured in a car accident
 Nancy Perman's cousin Katherine, in rehab
 Kendall Johnson-Smith, Preston Smith's daughter, with cancer
 Vicki Scherer's grandfather, with cancer

This Week at Center Church

Tuesday	Church Council 7pm
Thursday	AA 1:30pm Dance Lessons
Saturday	Vigil 10am
Sunday	Worship 10am Second Sunday of Advent



Please sign up to read Scripture during Sunday worship. There is a sign-up sheet on the table in the Bock Crossway. Also, please consider being a greeter as folks come into the Sanctuary - signup sheet also in the Crossway



Breakfast Conversation: Join us for a light breakfast and conversation
December 10 from 8-9am in Fellowship Hall

On Jul 8, 2025, "In a break with decades of tradition, the Internal Revenue Service said it will allow houses of worship to endorse candidates for political office without losing their tax-exempt status." Pick up an article on the topic of "Church and State" from the table at the Church Street entrance. Come with opinions.

Come with respect. Come for a light breakfast.



Reminder that there is **no Promise Land (Sunday School) or nursery care on December 24th, or on Sunday December 28th.**

Center Church Announcements

Reminder: There are pillow cushions and afghans available in bins at the back of the Sanctuary for your comfort and warmth. Please use them!



Bible Study: December 11 and 18 from 11am-noon in the Conference Room at Loomis. **ALL OUR WELCOME.** **December 11:** The prophets Isaiah (Isaiah 2:1-5) and Joseph (Matthew 1: 18-25). **December 18:** Zechariah, Elizabeth and John (Luke 1:18-25) and John the Baptist (Matthew 3:1-12). Scriptures will be provided to “regulars” and will be available on the table in the Church Street entrance.



Calling all children, youth (and even adults): On **December 14th**, during the Message For All, we will have an **impromptu Christmas Pageant**. Always wanted to be an angel? Mary? or what about a royalty? We have your small speaking or sound part. It will be full of the Holy Spirit. Minimal costumes will be provided.



It is time to harvest our generosity to Center Church! If you have made your financial pledge to Center Church for 2026, Thank You! If you have not made your pledge to support our ministries, there is still time! Please fill put your pledge card and drop it in the offering plate or mail to the church office. Need a pledge card? There are blank pledge cards in the pews, in the crossway to the Promised Land, & in the narthex. If you would like more information about making a financial pledge, please contact Pastor Lori or the church office. Thank you for your generosity



On October 28th, Hurricane Melissa made landfall in Jamaica as a Category 5 storm, one of the most powerful and destructive Category 5 storms on record in the Caribbean. Its devastation also impacted Haiti and Cuba.

Through ACT Alliance and Church World Service, the UCC is working to get resources for those who need them. Through Global Ministries, we are also in contact with our partners in Jamaica, Cuba, and Haiti and are working quickly to accompany and support their response efforts.

Please consider making a gift today. Thank you for your past support of disaster relief efforts that have rebuilt communities around the world. We do this work through your generosity. Make checks payable to Center Church with “disaster relief” in the memo.



CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

Once again, our sanctuary will be decorated with poinsettias for Christmas.
The deadline for placing your order will be December 8th.

Number of plants you wish to order 6 " pots \$ 10 each
_____ red # _____ white
_____ Total payment enclosed.

Please make checks payable to: "First Congregational Church"
and note "Christmas Poinsettias" on the memo line.

Please forward your completed order and check to the church office **on or before December 8th**.

In Loving Memory of _____

In Honor of _____

GIVEN BY _____



Please check one of the following:

_____ I will pick up after church on Christmas Eve _____ I will not be taking my plant(s).

NAME _____



THE MINISTRY AT CENTER CHURCH

Ministers: All Church Members
Senior Minister: Rev. Lori J. Souder

Christian Education Program

Children: Vicki Scherer, Coordinator - Emily Mulder, Teacher
Youth Coordinator: Kenneth Mulder
Nursery Caregiver: Annabelle Burke



Music

Organist: Larry Schipull
Choir Director: Ben Coakley
Associate in Music: Cynthia Morrell
Office Administrator: Cynthia Jubinville
Sexton: Robert Farman





SOUTH HADLEY PD TOY DRIVE

HOLIDAY *Toy Drive*

NOV. 20TH – DEC. 20TH

**SOUTH HADLEY PD IS ACCEPTING
NEW, UNWRAPPED TOYS AND
GIFTCARDS FOR FAMILIES IN NEED IN
OUR COMMUNITY. ALL COLLECTED
ITEMS WILL BE BROUGHT TO
NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS FOR
DISTRIBUTION. DROP YOUR
DONATIONS OFF AT OUR STATION!**

Thank you !

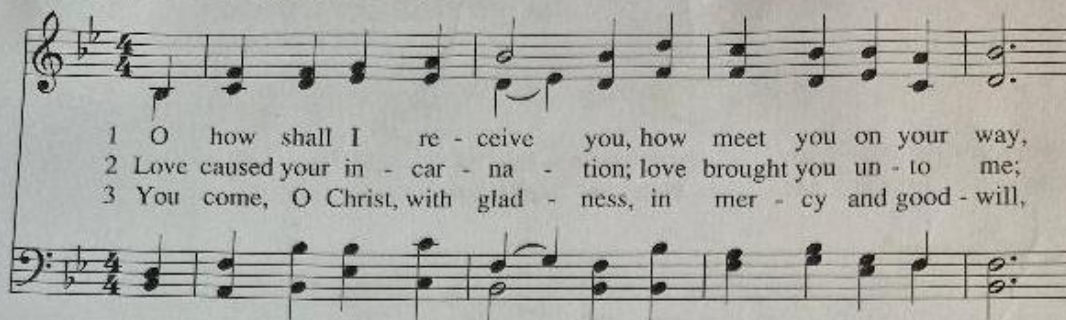
This toy drive is to collect toys for the children of Neighbors Helping Neighbors Food Pantry, that we help in the Secret Santa Program. You could also bring toys or gift cards to Sharyn Kovalesky at church on Sundays.

O How Shall I Receive You

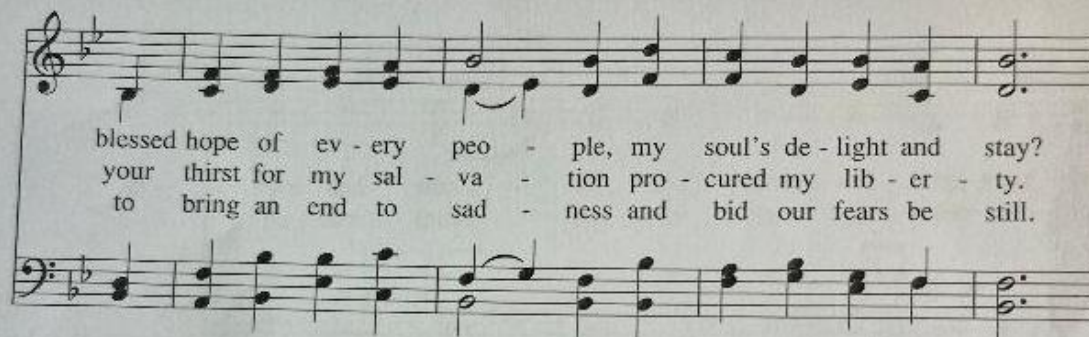
102

Paul Gerhardt, 1653

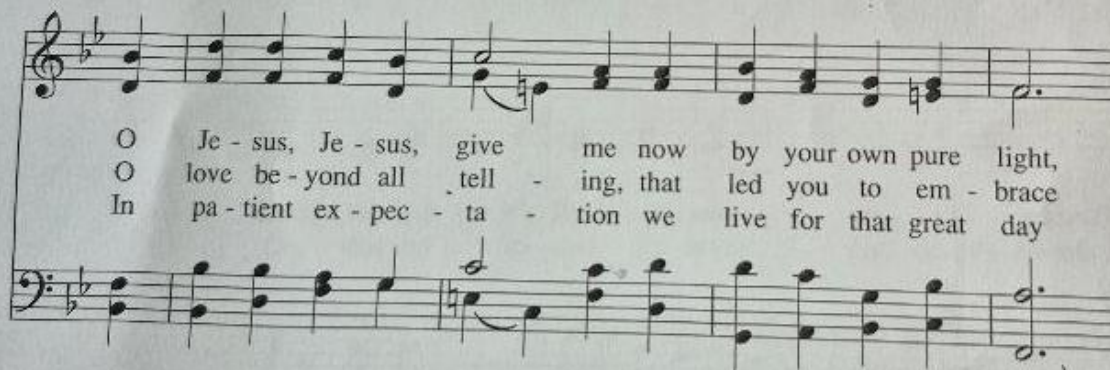
Transl. Catherine Winkworth, 1863, and others; alt.



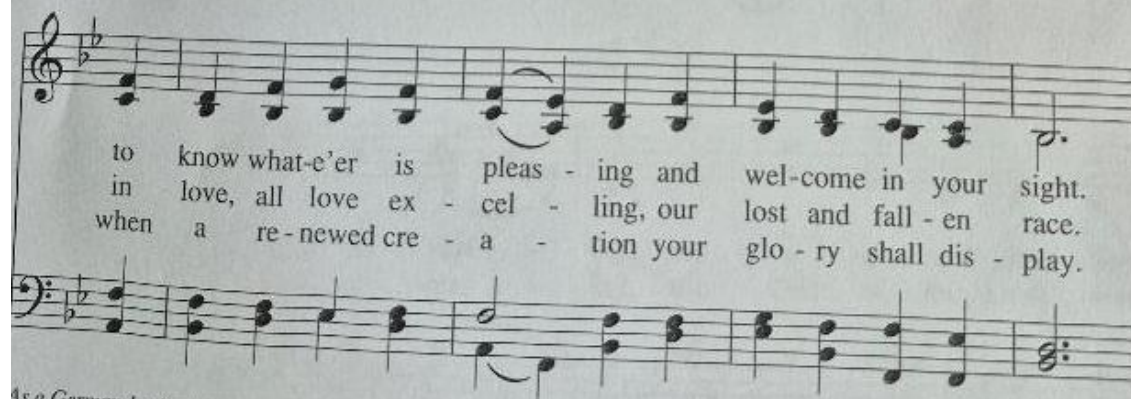
1 O how shall I re - ceive you, how meet you on your way,
 2 Love caused your in - car - na - tion; love brought you un - to me;
 3 You come, O Christ, with glad - ness, in mer - cy and good - will,



blessed hope of ev - ery peo - ple, my soul's de - light and stay?
 your thirst for my sal - va - tion pro - cured my lib - er - ty.
 to bring an end to sad - ness and bid our fears be still.



O Je - sus, Je - sus, give me now by your own pure light,
 O love be - yond all tell - ing, that led you to em - brace
 In pa - tient ex - pec - ta - tion we live for that great day



to know what-e'er is pleas - ing and wel - come in your sight.
 in love, all love ex - cel - ling, our lost and fall - en race.
 when a re - newed cre - a - tion your glo - ry shall dis - play.

As a German Lutheran pastor serving during the Thirty Years' War, Paul Gerhardt's trials were legion. In the midst of it all, he composed more than a hundred hymns, among them some of the next and most beloved in Christian hymnody.

Tune: ST. THEODULPH 7.6.7.6.D.
 (VALET WILL ICH DIR GEBEN)
 Melchior Teschner, 1615

Keep Awake, Be Always Ready

*Isa. 2:1-5; 60:1-3; 64:1-9; Matt. 24:36-44;
Rom. 13:11-14; 1 Cor. 1:3-9; 1 Thess. 3:9-13*

Arthur G. Clyde, 1993

1 Keep a-wake, be al - ways rea - dy, God's time ap - proach-es
2 Rise and shine for One is com - ing whose love will quench all

sure and stea - dy, God's strength will keep your heart from blame.
na - ture's thirst - ing to be made whole for - ev - er more.

Clouds, the Spir - it's light con - ceal - ing, dis - perse, God's pur - est
On that day to end all weep - ing, death's swords trans - formed to

light re - veal - ing; cre - a - tion will its Sov-ereign name. Dry
tools of reap - ing, the God of might will mer - cy pour. In -

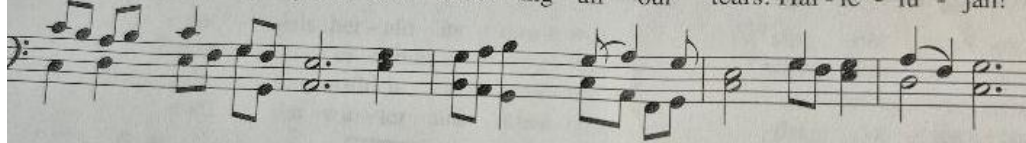
This new text, written to reflect the readings for the first Sunday in Advent, is set to a traditional tune of the season by sixteenth-century Lutheran pastor Philipp Nicolai.

Tune: WACHET AUF 8.9.8.8.9.8.6.6.4.8.8.
Philipp Nicolai 1600

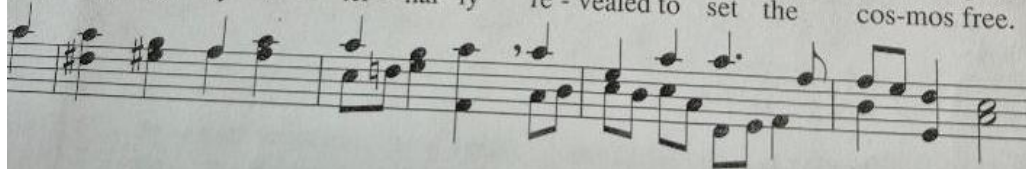
ADVENT



branch - es burst forth green, God's ad - vent signs are seen: Hal - le - lu - jah!
 car - nate, God ap - pears em - brac - ing all our tears: Hal - le - lu - jah!



Christ's judg - ment won, God's will be done; God's new do - min - ion thus be - gun.
 God's maj - es - ty e - ter - nal - ly re - vealed to set the cos - mos free.



Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn

Marty Haugen, 1983; rev. 1993

Isa. 12:6; 26:9; 35:6; Matt. 11:5

1 A - wake! a - wake, and greet the new morn, for
 2 To us, to all in sor - row and fear, Em -
 3 In deep - est night Christ's com - ing shall be, when
 4 Re - joice, re - joice, take heart in the night, though

an - gels her - ald its dawn - ing, sing out your joy, for
 man - u - el comes a - sing - ing, whose hum - ble song is
 all the world is de - spair - ing, as morn - ing light so
 cold the win - ter and cheer - less, the ris - ing sun shall

Je - sus is born, be - hold! the Child of our long - ing.
 qui - et and near, yet fills the earth with its ring - ing.
 qui - et and free, so warm and gen - tle and car - ing.
 crown you with light, be strong and lov - ing and fear - less;

Liturgical composer Marty Haugen wrote both words and music for this Advent hymn with the twofold aim of providing an easy congregational chorale and utilizing the images of the Isaiah passages.

Tune: REJOICE, REJOICE 9.8.9.8.8.7.8.9.
 Marty Haugen, 1983

Chords: D, D/F#, G, D, Em, Am, D

Come as a ba - by weak and poor, to bring all hearts to -
 Mu - sic to heal the bro - ken soul and hymns of lov - ing
 One with - out voice breaks forth in song, a lame one leaps in
 Love be our song and love our prayer, and love, our end - less

Chords: Em, D7, G, C, B7, Em

geth - er, to o - pen wide the heaven - ly door, and
 kind - ness, the thun - der of the an - thems roll to
 won - der, the weak are raised a - bove the strong, and
 sto - ry, may God fill ev - ery day we share, and

Chords: Am7, D7, G, G/B, C, G/B, C, G

lives now in-side us for ev - er. . . .
 shat - ter all hate and in - jus - tice. . . .
 weap-ons are bro-ken a - sun - der. . . .
 bring us at last in - to glo - ry. . . .

Chords: G, F, C, F, C, F