



The _____
First Congregational Church
of Woodstock _____

*Declaring, "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today,
and forever." Hebrews 13:8*

November 26th, 2023

The Congregation may be seated after the Benediction for silent prayer.

Postlude

*~~ Organist: Jonathan Denham ~~
~~ Please ensure cell phones are off ~~*

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**Save the Date!**

**Today! Sunday, November 26** — Sue Houlberg Memorial Service at 2:00 pm

**Friday, December 8-Saturday, December 9** — Wassail Weekend

Friday, 4:30 & 5:30 pm — FCCW Building & History Tours

Friday, 5:00 pm — Organ Concert

Saturday, 11:00 am-2:00 pm — Hot Wassail and DIY s'mores on the lawn

Saturday, 2:00 pm — Wassail Parade Watch Party

Saturday, 3:00 pm — The Ten of NYC Concert

**Sunday, December 24** — 5:00 pm Candlelight Christmas Eve Service

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Sue Houlberg Memorial Service

There will be a memorial service for Sue Houlberg **this afternoon** at 2:00 pm, with a reception following. Please join Sue's family in thanking God for her life and ministry.

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**Wassail Weekend**

If you'd like to help with Wassail drinks and s'mores on the FCCW front lawn on Saturday, Dec 9th from 11am-2pm or with handing out tickets for The Ten concert at 3:00 please contact Keri Bristow at [kerilynbristow@gmail.com](mailto:kerilynbristow@gmail.com) or (603) 359-3948.

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There will be no Young Adult Fellowship Group this week.

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## Christmas Poinsettias

Poinsettias always add to the festive color of Christmas and can be given as a memorial to a loved one and taken home after the Christmas Eve Service. To order a 6" red or white Poinsettia, contact Christine Morton or Alison Briggs before December 14, 2023. The cost for each Poinsettia will be \$10. Please remember to make your check out to FCCW.

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## Advent and Christmas Eve Services

Next Sunday marks the beginning of the Advent season, which will culminate with our traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight Service on Sunday, December 24 at 5:00 pm. Invite your friends and family to join you as we celebrate Christ's birth!

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CELEBRATING 250 YEARS  
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
Woodstock, Vermont

# Christmas Eve

& Advent Services

DECEMBER 3RD, 10TH, 17TH, & 24TH AT 10:30 AM

Candlelight Christmas Eve Service  
December 24th at 5:00 pm

36 Elm Street Woodstock VT | (802) 457-9818  
fccwinfo@gmail.com  
www.fccw.net



CELEBRATING 250 YEARS

# First Congregational Church of Woodstock

## Wassail Events December 8-10 2023

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8**

- 4:30PM BUILDING & HISTORY TOUR: FREE
- 5:00PM ORGAN CONCERT: FREE
- 5:30PM BUILDING & HISTORY TOUR: FREE

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9**

- 11:00AM-2:00PM HOT WASSAIL & SMORES: FREE
- 2:00PM PARADE WATCH PARTY FCCW LAWN
- 3:00PM THE TEN OF NYC A CAPPELLA: FREE

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10**

- 9:00AM SUNDAY SCHOOL ALL AGES
- 10:30AM SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP WITH CHRISTMAS CAROL SING, ALL ARE WELCOME

EVENTS WILL TAKE PLACE ON-SITE AT  
FCCW 36 ELM STREET, WOODSTOCK, VT 05091  
FCCWINFO@GMAIL.COM | 802-457-9818

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Weekly Gathering Opportunities

Sundays, 6:00 pm — Young Adult Fellowship Group in the library

Tuesdays, 7:00 am — Middle School & High School Bible Study—meet at Maplefields to grab breakfast, then on to the church for study, discussion, and prayer.

Tuesdays, 10:00 am — Ladies' Bible Study meets in person at the Thompson Senior Center and via ZOOM, please contact Bonnie Atwood at (802) 457-4120 or email bonhope2@gmail.com.

Tuesdays, 6:00 pm — Prayer Meeting, in person in the library and via ZOOM

Wednesdays, 6:15 am — Men's Bible Study, in person in the library and via ZOOM, please contact Dick Atwood at (802) 457-4120 or email rbatwood1@gmail.com.

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## **Drawing Near vs. Standing Far Off**

<sup>18</sup> Now when all the people *saw* the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, *the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off* <sup>19</sup> and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.” <sup>20</sup> Moses said to the people, “Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.” <sup>21</sup> The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.

### **1. How Did the People Respond to God’s Revelation?**

### **2. Moses Interceded as Covenant Mediator.**

### **3. The Invitation to Draw Near Is Still Open.**

**CONCLUSION:** God closes the Decalogue in the same way He began it—with grace. The One who saved the people would be the One *to draw near to them* as Immanuel, *God with us*. We, like our spiritual forebears, are often tempted to flee from God in trembling fear. We are much more comfortable with our sin than with a God who is truly holy and beckons us to join Him in righteousness. The resurrection of Jesus, our greater Moses, is the only way for us to conquer our terror and enjoy the fear of the Lord that is the beginning of wisdom.

## Westminster Larger Catechism

**Q. 152.** What does *every sin deserve* at the hands of God?

**A.** Every sin, even the least, *being against the sovereignty, goodness, and holiness of God, and against his righteous law*, deserves his wrath and curse, both in this life, and that which is to come; and cannot be expiated but by the blood of Christ.

Jas. 2:10-11; Ex. 20:1-2; Hab. 1:13; Lev. 10:3; Lev. 11:44-45; 1 John 3:4; Rom. 7:12; Eph. 5:6; Gal. 3:10; Lam. 3:39; Deut. 28:15-68; Matt. 25:41; Heb. 9:22; 1 Pet. 1:18-19.

**Q. 153.** What does God require of us, that we may escape his wrath and curse due to us by reason of the transgression of the law?

**A.** That we may escape the wrath and curse of God due to us by reason of the transgression of the law, he *requires* of us repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and the diligent use of the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of his mediation.

Acts 20:21; Matt. 3:7-8; Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 16:30-31; John 3:16, 18; Prov. 2:1-5; Prov. 8:33-36.

**Q. 154.** What are the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of his mediation?

**A.** The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to his church the benefits of his mediation, are all his ordinances; especially the Word, Sacraments, and prayer: all which are made effectual to the elect for their salvation.

Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:42, 46-47.

**Q. 155.** How is the Word made effectual to salvation?

**A.** The Spirit of God makes the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of enlightening, convincing, and humbling sinners; of driving them out of themselves, and drawing them unto Christ; of conforming them to his image, and subduing them to his will; of strengthening them against temptations and corruptions; of building them up in grace, and establishing their hearts in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation.

Neh. 8:8; Acts 26:18; Ps. 19:8; 1 Cor. 14:24-25; 2 Chr. 34:18-19, 26-28; Acts 2:37, 41; Acts 8:27-39; 2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Cor. 10:4-6; Rom. 6:17; Matt. 4:4, 7, 10; Eph. 6:16-17; Ps. 19:11; 1 Cor. 10:11; Acts 20:32; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; Rom. 16:25; 1 Thess. 3:2, 10-11, 13; Rom. 15:4; Rom. 10:13-17; Rom. 1:16.

# Taking Gathered Worship Home

Distrust tends to create distance. Trust invites proximity. We need to trust God in order to draw near to Him. His holy commands, understood in the gospel, help us to trust His vision for us and so to draw near to Him.

*Please use the devotional material below each day this week to praise Christ.*

## Sunday Morning

READ **Exodus 20:18-21; Hebrews 4:14-16; 7:22-28; Deut 20:1-4; Ecclesiastes 5:1-7; Isaiah 29:13-16; 45:18-25; Zephaniah 3:1-2; Luke 15:1-2; James 4:6-12; Psalm 119:145-176.** DISCUSS What have you learned about the Decalogue? What has surprised you? Challenged you? What is the significance of the people standing at a distance? How can we draw near? MEDITATE on **Hebrews 11:6** and *Westminster Larger Catechism* #152-55. PRAY “Immanuel, God with us, *You have drawn near to us* that we might draw near to You. We praise You!”

## Sunday Evening

The **Young Adult Fellowship Group** will not meet tonight.

## Monday

READ **Exodus 20:18-21; Hebrews 4:14-16; Isaiah 45:18-25; Psalm 119:145-176.** DISCUSS In both Hebrews and Isaiah there is a reminder of what God has done followed by a command for what we should do. How does that relate to drawing near? On what basis? SERVE Demonstrate love for God through reaching out to someone in need! MEDITATE on **Hebrews 11:6** and *Westminster Larger Catechism* #152-55. PRAY “Immanuel, You have drawn near to us. Enable us to continue to draw near to you with confidence in Christ alone.”

## Tuesday

READ **Exodus 20:18-21; Hebrews 7:22-28; Psalm 119:145-176.** DISCUSS In whom are we drawing near to God? How securely is He saving us? What do we know about the Son? SERVE Draw near to someone in Christ’s name. MEDITATE on **Hebrews 11:6** and *Westminster Larger Catechism* #152-55. PRAY “Immanuel, *You have rescued us.* We are gladly Yours alone.”



### Wednesday

READ **Exodus 20:18-21; Deuteronomy 20:1-4; Ecclesiastes 5:1-7; Romans 5:1-11; Psalm 119:145-176.** DISCUSS What are the two kinds of fear in these texts? How is fear of the Lord different from fear of man? MEDITATE on **Luke 1:57-58** and *Westminster Larger Catechism* #147-9. PRAY “Immanuel, please free us from the fear of men, that we rightly fear You and draw near.”

### Thursday

READ **Exodus 20:18-21; Luke 15:1-2; James 4:6-12; Psalm 119:145-176.** DISCUSS In Luke’s Gospel who was rejoicing and drawing near Jesus? Who was grumbling? Why? SERVE Demonstrate delight by putting someone else’s interests *above your own!* MEDITATE on **Hebrews 11:6** and *Westminster Larger Catechism* #152-55. PRAY “Immanuel, You are all that we need. Make our hearts grateful in You.”

### Friday

READ **Exodus 20:18-21; Hebrews 4:14-16; 7:22-28; Deut 20:1-4; Ecclesiastes 5:1-7; Isaiah 29:13-16; 45:18-25; Zephaniah 3:1-2; Luke 15:1-2; James 4:6-12; Psalm 119:145-176.** DISCUSS What has God been teaching you this week? SERVE by *caring for someone in need!* MEDITATE on **Hebrews 11:6** and *Westminster Larger Catechism* #152-55. PRAY for God to continue to revive and refresh FCCW.

### Saturday

PREPARE today for *gathered Sunday worship tomorrow.* READ **Luke 1:1-2:52.** *Invite others to join you tomorrow for the worship service @ 10:30 am.*

## Hebrews 11:6

And without faith it is impossible to please him,  
for whoever would *draw near to God* must believe  
that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.