



The _____
First Congregational Church
_____ of Woodstock _____

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

*December 24th, 2023
The Fourth Sunday in Advent*

The Order of Morning Worship

December 24th, 2023

The Fourth Sunday in Advent

Ten-thirty

Welcome & Announcements

Pastor Doug Warren

Prelude & Silent Prayer

The Advent Reading

Peter & Rosmarie Vanderhoof

Leader: Christmas is getting closer! Why do we light the Advent candles?

Congregation: Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world. He who follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the Light of Life."

Leader: What is the meaning of the fourth lighted candle?

Congregation: The fourth candle is the King Candle because Messiah came as the promised Son of King David to perfectly rule and defend His people.

Leader: Why was He born in Bethlehem?

Congregation: King David had been born in Bethlehem a thousand years before Jesus came to earth, and God promised that David's greater Son, Jesus, would also be born there. (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:5-6)

Leader: What kind of King is Jesus?

Congregation: Jesus is the King of Kings and much greater than earthly rulers. His reign is holy, righteous, and just. His Kingdom will have no end. (1 Kings 2:45; Isaiah 9:7)

The Christmas Story

Pastor & Sunday School Kids

❖ Carol #204

Away in a Manger

Congregation

❖ Call to Worship

based on Luke 1:68-79

Pastor

Scriptural Call to Repentance

1 John 1:8-9

Pastor

Collective Confession

Congregation

Faithful God, You have sent Your prophets to warn us. For generations we have ignored them, abused them, even killed them. You have remembered Your holy covenant. You sent Your Son, born in a manger, humble and lowly to gently win us back to Yourself in Your tender mercy.

Forgive us for the ways we have neglected and rejected You, Jesus. Restore us to the Father's favor, enable us to walk in Your ways. In the light of Your glory, guide our feet into the way of peace.

Silent Reflection and Confession

Proclamation of Forgiveness	Jeremiah 33:8	Pastor
Pastoral Prayer		Pastor
Offering	(collected from back to front)	Congregation
❖ Scripture Reading	Micah 5:2-5a	Pastor
❖ Carol #201	<i>O Little Town of Bethlehem</i>	Congregation
The Sermon	Luke 1:57-80	Pastor
	<i>“Joy, Restoration, and Blessing”</i>	
❖ Hymn of Response #203	<i>Hark! the Herald Angels Sing</i>	Congregation
❖ Benediction	The Worship Sourcebook	Pastor

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

Postlude

~~ Organist: Jonathan Denham ~~

~~ Please ensure cell phones are off ~~

Preludes: O Little Town of Bethlehem (Phillips)

Go, Tell it on the Mountain (Manz)

Offertory: Once in Royal David's City (Howell)

Postlude: O Come, All Ye Faithful (Willcocks)

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## Candlelight Christmas Eve Service tonight!

Our traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will be held tonight at **5:00 pm**. Bring your family and friends and join us as we celebrate Christ's birth. All ages welcome!

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There will be no Sunday School on December 24 and December 31.

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## Advent and Christmas Devotional Booklet

We are still using the Advent and Christmas booklet for daily devotions rather than the weekly Taking Gathered Worship home. Be sure to pick up your copy from the back table!

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The December Prayer Letter is available on the back table.

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## Save the Date!

**Sunday, January 21** — Missionary visit with Ben & Sarah Courtemanche

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Joy, Restoration, and Blessing

1. **They Rejoiced at John's Promised Birth (57-63).**

2. **God Restores Zechariah (62-67).**

3. **Blessed Is the Lord God of Israel (68-80).**

CONCLUSION: God blessed an old couple with a child. That child was the cause for great joy not just because he was a blessing to them, but because God had appointed him to be a great blessing to the whole world in proclaiming the fulfillment of God's promises. John was *sent to declare the holy visitation of the King of Kings to redeem His people from their sin and misery*. He was coming not just so that this couple could rejoice, but *so that His people everywhere could rejoice*. We can rejoice since God has restored us to our original design as the people of God delighting in Him and blessing His great name. In Christ we are freed to bless Him as we should. Won't you join in His praise?!