



*First Sunday of Advent
Sayville Congregational United Church of Christ
December 3, 2023*

*Whose laughter invites us, whose earth upholds us,
whose stars we wish upon,
whose symphony for birdsong awakens, oh awakens, us,
candle to a blinding sun.*

*from "By a Mighty and Shining Grace"
by Joseph H. Gilmore*

Ringing of the Bell

Prelude “The Christmas Song” by Robert Wells and Mel Tormé
 James Cesare, trumpet soloist

Call to Worship & Lighting of the Candle

Today is the first Sunday of Advent. In a moment, we will light the first candle on our Advent wreath: the candle of Hope.

In the time before the birth of Jesus, the Israelites had little hope for the future of their nation or their people, except for the power of God that remained strong in their lives, even as it wavered from time-to-time. They awaited the “One who would come; a messiah, an anointed leader, like David. They believed when that happened, all would be well – again.”

Today begins our 2023 Advent journey as we anticipate the birth of Jesus, the one who is called the Light of the World and the Hope of the Nations.

As we light the candle of Hope, we give thanks for all who ceaselessly and courageously speak words of hope and encouragement and love for each of us and this world, in the name of the one called Jesus.

(The candle is lit...)

Please rise if you wish and join us in singing.

One Candle is Lit

Come surely, Sweet Jesus, as dawn follows night,
Our hearts long to greet you, as roses the light.
Salvation, draw near us, our visions engage.
One candle is lit for the hope of the day.

Please be seated.

A Voice Responds

*This fire atop a tower of wax,
symbolizes the ever-present Light of the World,
A light born to us long ago,
in a manger far away
and (now) as close
as the hearts that beat within us
all.*

Chancel Choir “The Joy of Christmas”
Arranged by Van Denman Thompson
Robert Acker, tenor soloist

Please rise if you wish and join in praying our Unison Prayer

Unison Prayer

Remind us, please, Gracious God,
how near you truly are.
Free us to be still in your presence, especially for this Advent, this day, and this
time.
A time in which we remember your love and ours –
 for all who know AIDS;
 and all who struggle with illness.
Inspire us – Loved One – with hope that fires our love and our resolve;
Hope that brings warmth and comfort and change
 wherever it may be needed.
May hope help us remember—who and whose we are;
We seek the hope of “joyful awareness”
 that you are already with us, “Emmanuel”.

Please remain as you are and join us in singing...

Opening Hymn

“Comfort, Comfort O My People”
New Century Hymnal #101

“Comfort, comfort, O my people, tell of peace,” thus says our God;
Comfort those whose hearts are shrouded, mourning under sorrow’s load.
Speak unto Jerusalem of the peace that waits for them:
Tell them that their wrongs I cover, and their warfare now is over.

For the herald’s voice is calling in the desert far and near,
Bidding us to grow forgiveness since the realm of God is here.
O that warning cry obey! Now prepare for God a way;
Let the valleys rise in meeting and the hills bow down in greeting.

Right shall be what long was crooked, and the rougher places plain!
Let your hearts be true and humble, for Messiah’s holy reign.
For God’s glory evermore shall be known o’er all the world;
And all flesh shall see the token that God’s word is never broken.

Please be seated.

Joys and Concerns

Please respond, “God, hear our prayers.”

Assurance of God’s Love

The Prayer of Jesus – “The Lord’s Prayer”

Creator God who is 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 trespasses
as we forgive those who have trespassed against us.
Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from evil
for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Please rise and join us in passing the Peace of Christ

Passing of Christ's Peace

We know God is with us; we hold the greatest of commandments to love as a practice, a way of life. And, with the greeting of the one who promises "peace" beyond all understanding, from our minds, our hearts and our souls we say:

"May the peace of the Risen Christ be with you!" And also with you.

Friends, let us offer one another a sign of peace.

Scripture Readings Isaiah 2:1-5

There's a day coming when the mountain of God's House
Will be *The Mountain*—solid, towering over all mountains.

All nations will river toward it, people from all over set out for it.

They'll say, "Come, let's climb God's Mountain,
go to the House of the God of Jacob.

God will show us the way God works
so we can live the way we're made."

God will settle things fairly between nations.

God will make things right between many peoples.

They'll turn their swords into shovels, their spears into plowshares.

No more will nation fight nation; they won't play war anymore.

Come, family of Jacob, let's live in the light of God.

The Chancel Choir

"How Far Is It to Bethlehem?" and "Questions"
from *Emmanuel*, by Dorothy Davidson Hausske

Gospel Readings: Matthew 24:36 ff.

“But the exact day and hour? No one knows that, not even heaven’s angels, not even Jesus. Only God knows.

“The arrival of the One to Come will take place in times like Noah’s. Before the great flood everyone was carrying on as usual, having a good time right up to the day Noah boarded the ark. They knew nothing—until...

Therefore, keep awake – for you do not know... (Mark 13:35)

Homily *“It’s the Moment”*

Holy Communion

Communion Hymns

“Let Us Break Bread Together” #330 New Century Hymnal

“It Came Upon a Midnight Clear” #131 New Century Hymnal

Thanksgiving & Benediction

Church Covenant

In response to God's love,
we covenant with each other...
to be faithful to the demands
and inspiration of the eternal spirit,
revealed in the event of Jesus Christ;
to accept and respect each other
with love and concern
in our worship and witness;
to reach out with the courage
of our convictions
in the cause of justice,
liberation, and equality for all.
In this, we covenant to keep the
ultimate promise: "I care, I am with you."

Please be seated

Choral Blessing "May the Road"
 Traditional Irish blessing, arranged by James Ahrend

Ringling of the Bell

Postlude "Migratory V" by Adam Guettel



Sayville Congregational United Church of Christ

For more nearly 175 years, Sayville's Congregational Church has served families on the South Shore of Long Island and has been a voice for the progressive Protestant tradition. A member of the United Church of Christ since it was established in 1957, celebrate God's love, however you may know God, by our continuing to advocate for the oppressed, while welcoming all on their spiritual journey, from wherever they may come. Thank you for being with us today. Please contact us at any time for more information about our congregation and questions you may have.

Thank you!

Sean Cameron, Music Director

James Cesare, Trumpet Soloist and Robert Acker, Tenor Soloist

Karen Maust, Liturgist

Diane Vaughan and Michael Hoff, Ushers

Christine Hoff, Hospitality Set Up

Diane Vaughan and Karen Gunkel, Hospitality Host

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Today's Service is being simulcast on our church channel at

www.echimestv.org Tune in any time!

Peace. Shalom. Salaam. For the ways of peace are many. "Namaste"