

Welcome to First Christian Reformed Church!
Pastor John Knoester
December 24, 2023 – Fourth Sunday in Advent

* Please stand in body or in spirit

“O come, desire of nations, bind”

Prelude

Sung Call to Worship: LUYH #61 v. 1-7

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

Soloist

1. O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Soloist

2. O come, O Wisdom from on high,
who ordered all things mightily;
to us the path of knowledge show
and teach us in its ways to go.

Soloist

3. O come, O come, great Lord of might,
who to thy tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times did give the law
in cloud and majesty and awe.

Soloist

4. O come, thou branch of Jesse's stem,
unto thine own and rescue them!
From depths of hell your people save,
and give them victory o'er the grave.

Women Only Sing, All Stand

5. O come, O Key of David, come
and open wide our heavenly home.
Make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery.

Men Only Sing

6. O come, O Bright and Morning Star,
and bring us comfort from afar!
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
and death's dark shadows put to flight.

All Sing

7. O come, desire of nations, bind
all peoples in one heart and mind.
Bid all our sad divisions cease,
and be thyself our King of peace.

Refrain

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

Words: Psalteriolum Cantionum Catholicarum, Köln, 1710; tr.
Composite, P.D.; Music: French processional, 15th c. P.D.; arr.
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* Welcome

* Call to Worship:

Leader: Please join us in the call to worship:
Because God is a God of love:

**People: "This is what the Lord Almighty says:
... I will shake all nations,
and what is desired by all nations will come."**

Leader: With Mary of Nazareth we say,

**People: "The Mighty One has done great things for us –
holy is his name." Let us worship God!**

- Haggai 2:7, Luke 1:49

- * Opening Hymn of Praise: "Holy is Your Name" v. 1,3,4,5
The verses will be sung by a soloist; the congregation joins in each time on the chorus.

Solo

1. My soul is filled with joy
as I sing to God my Savior:
you have looked upon your servant,
you have visited your people.

Refrain

*And holy is your name
through all generations!
Everlasting is your mercy
to the people you have chosen,
and holy is your name.*

Solo

3. I proclaim the power of God,
you do marvels for your servants;
though you scatter the proud-hearted,
and destroy the might of princes.

Refrain

Solo

4. To the hungry you give food,
send the rich away__empty.
In your mercy you are mindful
of the people you have chosen.

Refrain

Solo

5. In your love you now fulfill
what you promised to your people.
I will praise you Lord, my Savior,
everlasting is your mercy.

Refrain

*And holy is your name
through all generations!
Everlasting is your mercy
to the people you have chosen,*

*And holy is your name
through all generations!
Everlasting is your mercy
to the people you have chosen,*

Words: Luke 1:46-55; David Haas (b. 1957) © 1989 GIA Publications, Inc.;
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* God's Greeting

* We Greet Each Other

*(During the mutual greeting those lighting the Advent candle
are invited to make their way forward)*

"All peoples in one heart and mind."

Announcements

Lighting of the Advent Candle

Advent Prayer of Confession

Lighting of the Advent Candle

Words of Assurance: Malachi 3:1-3

"I will send my messenger,
who will prepare the way before me.

Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come
to his temple; the messenger of the covenant,
whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty.

² But who can endure the day of his coming?

Who can stand when he appears?

For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap.

³ He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver;

he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver.

Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings
in righteousness.

Commitment to Grateful Living

Leader: "I desire to do your will, my God;
your law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8).

**People: Yes, Lord, walking in the way of your laws,
we wait for you: your name and renown
are the desire of our hearts** (Isaiah 26:8).

Leader: You guide me with your counsel,
and afterward you will take me into glory.

**People: Whom have I in heaven but you?
And earth has nothing I desire besides you.**

Leader: My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart
and my portion forever (Psalm 73:24–26).

Song of Response: LUYH #72 "Imagine" v. 1-2

1. Who hears?
Who hears the voice of the hungry, the thirsty?
Who sees? Who sees the tears of the suffering ones?

Refrain

*Imagine a King who would come through the darkness
and walk, where I walk, full of greatness,
and call me to his side, just like a father and child.*

2. Who knows?
Who knows the hopes that lie hidden, forgotten?
Who comes? Who comes to lead all the children home?

Refrain

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*(Following the singing of the last verse the children
are invited forward for the Children's Message)*

Children's Message – Mrs. Marjo Rouw

*(Following the children's message children ages 3-3rd grade are invited to
make their way to Children in Worship in the Fellowship Hall)*

Offering: General Fund

Offertory: "O Come, All You Unfaithful" – Sovereign Grace

"Bid all our sad divisions cease,"

Scripture Readings: Haggai 1:1-2:9

Prayer of Illumination

Message: "**O Come, Desire of Nations**"

Time of Prayer

"And be thyself our King of peace."

* Hymn of Response: LUYH #82 v. 1-3

"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.

Refrain

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

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

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

Words: French, 18th c.; tr. Crown of Jesus Music, 1862, alt., P.D.: Music: French, 18th c. P.D.; CCLI #678905

* Advent Prayer:

*The following resource is based on the
"O" Antiphons, a traditional Advent prayer.*

Reader #1: O Immanuel, child of promise and sign of hope,
you come from a distance far beyond our reach,
yet are closer to us than we are to ourselves:
remain with us in our own days of expectation,
that we may give birth to what is just, true,
beautiful, and good— through the name
of Jesus Christ, our Lord,
who with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
abides with us, one God now and forever.

People: Come, Lord Jesus.

Reader #2: O Wisdom, your words uttered in the beginning
generated a world of beauty and goodness,
giving purpose and value to each creature;
instruct us in the way of prudence,
that we may nurture the world
with justice and joy.
Help us to resist evil and to obey you,
so that we may walk in your ways and the beauty
of your creation may flourish—
through the one whom we know as
the Wisdom of the ages, even Christ, our Lord.

People: Come, Lord Jesus.

Reader #1: O Lord of might, master of the universe
and ruler of the house of Israel,
your mighty acts have rescued remnants
of your people from the midst of slavery, exile,
war, and holocaust: raise your scepter over us,
that your saving rule may be extended
to all people in all places—
for the sake of him who we know as Lord of all,
even Jesus, the Christ.

People: Come, Lord Jesus.

Reader #2: O Root of Jesse, you reach deep down
into the darkness of the earth
and stir the world's longings for deliverance
and hope: raise up within our own lives a spirit
of courage and strength, of wisdom and insight,
that we may do your work for the coming
of your kingdom— through the merits of the one
we know as the beginning of the ages,
even Christ, our Lord.

People: Come, Lord Jesus.

Reader #1: O Key of David and throne of glory,
you open the way to the future and no one closes;
you close the way to the past and no one opens.
Release us and all your people
from the oppressions of the past,
that we may face the future with boldness
and purpose— through the merits
of the Son of David, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

People: Come, Lord Jesus.

Reader #2: O Rising Dawn, you shine with warm brightness
and clean freshness,
chasing the fearsome shadows of the night away:
enlighten the lives of your people
with visions of shalom until you bring all things
into the harmony of your kingdom—
for the sake of him we call the light of the world,
Christ, our Lord.

People: Come, Lord Jesus.

Reader #1: God of grace, ever faithful to your promises,
the earth rejoices in hope of our Savior's coming
and looks forward with longing to his return
at the end of time.
Prepare our hearts to receive him when he comes,
for he is Lord forever and ever.

People: Amen.

* God's Blessing:

* Parting Praise: LUYH #56 v. 1-4 *"Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"*

1. Come, thou long-expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.
2. Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art:
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.
3. Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a king,
born to reign in us forever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.
4. By thine own eternal Spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all-sufficient merit
raise us to thy glorious throne.

Words: Charles Wesley (1744), P.D.; Music: Christian F. Witt's *Psalmodia Sacra*,
1715; adapt. Henry J. Gauntlett, 1861; desc. John W. Wilson © 1983 Hope
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Postlude

As Christians around the world rejoice in Christ's birth, we welcome you to worship. God revealed his great love for us by sending Jesus to earth to save us. After joining us in worship, join us in the fellowship hall next to the sanctuary for a cup of coffee or juice and continued fellowship.

Tech Team	Today: 12/24	Tomorrow: 12/25	Next Week: 12/31
Sound:	Tim H.	Mardy S.	Henry H.
Projection:	Maddie D.	Brad D.	Isaac D.
Video:	France B.	Isaac D.	Brandon S.
Offering:	General Fund	L.O.V.E. Inc. & C.A.R.E.	General Fund

First CRC Bulletin Announcements

December 24, 2023

The deadline for announcements is Thursday, 9AM.

OUR CHURCH FAMILY

Next Sunday we will be celebrating the sacrament of Communion.

"In the supper our Lord offers the bread and cup to believers to guarantee our share in his death and resurrection, and unite us to him and to each other.

We take this food gladly, announcing as we eat that Jesus is our life and that He shall come again to call us to the Supper of the Lamb."

Fireside Chats - Jan. 7 and 14: There is currently no Sunday School scheduled for January 7 and 14. However, we will be having a couple of "Fireside Chats" with Pastor Don Lagerwey in the church fellowship hall before the service. During this time we will hear a little bit about his story of faith, calling to ministry, and some of the joys and challenges he has experienced through the years. We'll also open it up for a time of question and answer near the end of each session. So please join us from 9:30 - 10:15 AM on both January 7 and 14!

Beth will be out of the office this week, and Sylvia will be filling in if you have prayer requests or bulletin announcements. Thank you!

Hospitality - Church Use: The Skagit SonShine Youth Choir is a local Christian youth choir of about 45 participants. It began practicing over a decade ago at Bethany Covenant Church and in recent years has been meeting at Sunrise Christian Center in Sedro-Woolley. Beginning **Wednesday, January 10** they will be returning to Mount Vernon and start practicing in our church sanctuary on Wednesday afternoons between **4-6 PM**. In addition, they generally have two concerts a year - both a Christmas and Spring concert. More details on this year's spring concert will be forthcoming, but in the meantime if you are at church on

Wednesday afternoons please take the time to warmly welcome them and make them feel at home. Thank you!

Church Membership: At the November 27 elders meeting the observation was made that in recent months we have had the opportunity to practice the gift of hospitality through regularly welcoming several new individuals and families to our Sunday morning services. We hope we are using that gift well and our prayer is that First CRC is a welcoming place for all those who desire to grow in their faith and love for Jesus Christ. We also want to do our best to encourage those who are regular attenders to consider becoming members of the First CRC family! If interested, please reach out to Pastor John, Pastor Brad, or Beth with any questions you might have and so the elders can potentially follow up accordingly. We look forward to hearing from you!

Young Adults Pizza Party! Last chance to RSVP for FREE PIZZA on **Thursday, Dec. 28 at 6:30 PM at Coconut Kenny's in Burlington, WA.** Friends and 'significant others' are invited as well. If possible, please send Sylvia a quick RSVP email (secretary@firstcrcmv.com) so that we can plan ahead accordingly. Thank you!

Worship Service YouTube Links:

12-17AM Service: <https://youtu.be/cZK1DZYXUnQ>

12-17Candlelight: <https://youtu.be/RyW7U9X8OIM>

First CRC offers the option to give *your offerings online, donations.* For information on this and other ways to give please check the "Give" page on the church's website: https://firstcrcmv.com/?page_id=1509

Pastoral Care – Heather Village: Pastor Don Lagerwey, a well-known, beloved, and retired CRC pastor is currently living near our church. Recently he graciously offered to carry out any pastoral visiting and/or pastor care calls specifically to those living in Heather Village, or nearby the church. The council is deeply grateful for his willingness to serve and minister. If interested in receiving a visit from Pastor Don – please don't hesitate to call him or his wife Joanne at either of the following numbers: 360-202-1369 or 360-333-5582.

“O Come, Emmanuel!” – 2023 Advent Series

Dear Friends in Jesus Christ,

Sprinkled throughout the famous Advent hymn, “*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,*” are various biblical titles for Jesus. These titles invite us to contemplate the character of the God whose advent we welcome.

Throughout the Advent season we will be reflecting on a different title each week as we make our way to the manger on Christmas morning. Listed below is a tentative schedule for our journey. May God bless us as we reflect on these titles of Jesus together.

In His Grace, Pastor John

5. Dec. 24 – “*O Come, Desire of Nations*” – Haggai 1:1-2:9

6. Dec. 25 – “*O Come Emmanuel, Our King of Peace*” – TBD

Calendar:

Greeters/Coffee Hosts today: Tim H., Mardy & Kristi S.

Greeters/Coffee Hosts next week,

Dec. 24: Larry VP, Clarence & Eleanor K.

Dec. 25: Brooke K., Sarah Z., Jack & Trudy VK

Worship Team:

Dec. 24: Eliot B., Heidi B., Kayla VH, Ella VH

Dec. 25: Stan B., Julie, Adriana & Tessa S.

Dec. 31: Greg & Beth B., Emmalyn S., Nellie VDH

Nursery:

Today: Dec. 17: Kiera L., France B.

Next Week: Dec. 24: Marissa VDK, Tessa S.

Children in Worship:

Today: Heather VH, Julissa O.

Next Week, Dec. 31: Heidi B., Joel L.

Today:

Have a Merry Christmas!

This Week:

Christmas Day Service: 10:00am

Thurs., Dec. 28, 6:30pm: Young Adults Pizza Party at Coconut Kenny’s

Upcoming Dates to Note:

Jan. 3, 6:30pm: GEMS Christmas Party!!

ORGANIZATIONS WE SUPPORT:

We embrace the joy of this time of year as we think about the coming Savior on Christmas, but many places in our world still haven't heard the Good News of salvation in Christmas, but many places in our world still haven't heard the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ. The people of First CRC are helping to sow seeds of the Gospel through your recent support of the Luke Society. Besides physical healing, our world needs spiritual healing. We are grateful to have you on our team as we support doctors and nurses committed to proclaiming Jesus to the world. – The Luke Society

CRC COMMUNICATIONS:

Jesus is All of Christmas - As we give and receive gifts, we celebrate Jesus, God's gift to us! Will you add someone who lives in poverty to your Christmas giving today? Change a life for good with an item from World Renew's Gift Catalog. Give online at worldrenew.net/gifts or call 800-552-7972.

Kids Corner: Christmas Love for God's Global Family - Check out this week's kids' devotion at www.kidscorner.net. Just like the wise men, we can choose to follow Jesus. By accepting the gift of his love, we give him a big gift: our hearts. God's family is together by the love of Jesus, which was shown on the first Christmas. Check out all the great content at kidscorner.net, like the Bible story podcast "The Wise Men."

Family Fire - is an online community exploring Spirit-led family, marriage, parenting, in-laws, blended families, and intimacy. Find encouraging articles and devotions at familyfire.com. Subscribe for regular email updates and connect with our Family Fire community on Facebook.

Groundwork: Jesus: Our Prince of Peace - As we celebrate Christmas, join Groundwork as we study Isaiah 9:6, Psalm 137, Isaiah 49:6, Isaiah 53:4-12, Ephesians 2:14-19, and Luke 2:1-21 to discover the deep and meaningful shalom Jesus brought to us in his birth, that he promises to establish permanently when he returns, and how we can be his agents of peace in our world here and now. Listen now at GroundworkOnline.com and subscribe to Groundwork's weekly emails for future episodes.



People to be remembered with prayers, cards, letters & words of encouragement. Email the office at secretary@firstcrcmv.com or call the church office at (336-2405) by 9:00 am Thursday of each week with your prayer items.

CONTINUING REQUESTS:

Please pray for Hans Meischke and his family as they mourn the loss of Aileen. The Memorial Service for Aileen is this coming Friday the 29th at 1:00pm here at First CRC.

Please continue to pray for **Maxine Greidanus**, as she resumes her chemotherapy, that it will take care of any remaining cancer.

Please continue to pray for **Juli Oostra's** platelet levels!

Yvonne Boon has her last chemo for a bit on the 26th of December and a bone marrow biopsy in January. Please pray that the chemo takes care of the remaining percentage of bad cells.

Please continue to pray for those members who have lost loved ones recently.

Pray for continued healing for **Margaret VanderPol** as she strives to get her strength back with physical therapy.

SHUT INS: **Nell Annema** and **Marion Ekkelkamp** at Birchview Memory Care in Sedro-Woolley; **Shirley Boonstra** at Country Meadow Village in Sedro-Woolley, **Marjean DeGroot** at Mountain Glen in Mount Vernon; **Mary Koopmans** at Where the Heart is in Burlington; **Hans Meischke** at Kenmore Living in Kenmore, WA, **Adrianna Swanson**, and **Clarence Vander Griend** at Home Place in Burlington; **Hank VanderVeen** at *The Bridge* in Mount Vernon; **Grace Feddema** and **Sally Reehoorn** at Creekside in Burlington; **Bev Van Slageren** with family in Grandview, WA.

OTHER REQUESTS: (CRC Communications)

Monday December 18 - *ReFrame: Recovery*

A Today devotional reader named Gail asks for prayers for patience and trust. "My son has been in recovery from addiction," she said; "I do not doubt that our heavenly Father is with him. Pray that God's grace and peace will be with him always."

Tuesday December 19 - *World Renew: Refugees*

As of May 2023, more than 110 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide. As the year comes to a close, we pray for the many millions of refugees who have fled their countries, seeking opportunity, safety, and freedom. Pray that they may find strong advocates for their most basic human rights, bringing them hospitality and hope for the future.

Wednesday December 20 - *Resonate: Uganda*

Resonate missionaries Josh and Mandy Shaarda led a "New Life" gathering for former inmates in Uganda. They read the Bible together, prayed together, shared testimonies, and participated in an outreach event. Pray that the seeds planted at this gathering will grow.

Thursday December 21 - *Edmonton Native Healing Centre: Seasons*

As seasons change, so does our community. This fall, we lost three younger people to drug overdoses. Our staff members need prayers for peace and courage as they carry on their work in difficult situations. Please pray for peace and joy as we move into the season of winter rest. We're thankful that seasonal changes show the Creator's faithfulness and abundance. Hiy, Hiy!

Friday December 22 - *Calvin Theological Seminary: Christmas season*

Many of our students, especially international students, are not able to travel home to be with family members for the holidays. Pray for all who will travel as well as for all who are apart from family during this season, that tidings of comfort and joy may overflow in their homes as they celebrate Christ's coming.

Saturday December 23 - *Resonate: Cohort*

Pray for young adults who are volunteering with Resonate through Cohort programs in Central America, Detroit, Europe, and the Middle East. Ask God to work in and through them as they serve with a ministry, living in community and engaging in deep spiritual formation.

Sunday December 24 - *Communications: Christmas Eve*

Thousands of Christians will gather in churches this evening and tomorrow to celebrate the birth of Christ. As we come together, may God fill us with wonder at his plan for salvation, and with love for the people of this world he came to save.