

The Congregational Church of Salisbury

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



PRELUDE

The Holy Boy

John Ireland

WELCOME

✠ **HYMN #95**

“Prepare the Way of the Lord”

PREPARE THE WAY

(✠ *The congregation may rise, in body or in spirit.*)

ANNOUNCEMENTS | JOYS AND CONCERNS | SILENT PRAYER

ADVENT WREATH: THE CANDLES OF HOPE, PEACE, AND JOY

Lesch Family

READER 1: When God’s people were surrounded by hardship, suffering, and grief, Isaiah proclaimed,

The spirit of the YHWH God is upon me, because YHWH has anointed me and sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of God’s favor, and the day of vengeance of the Holy One; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in the Promised Land — to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.

(Isaiah 61:1-3a)

READER 2: We come today as people who are also surrounded by suffering and grief. And yet, the Spirit hovers among us, tending and anointing, inspiring freedom where there is captivity, declaring blessing in places the world has cursed, and igniting fierce joy where mourning and heartache prevail.

ALL: We wait as people acquainted with hardship and pain — yet we are called to witness to the persistent joy that sustains our life as God’s people.

READER I: We light these candles as signs of our shocking hope, just peace, and fierce joy. May our lives shine with the fierce, tenacious joy of the Light who lives in our hearts as we wait and work for the coming of God's realm on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

RESPONSE IN SONG

"Kindle a Flame"

The image shows a musical score for the song "Kindle a Flame". It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/8. The melody is written in the treble staff, and the accompaniment is in the bass staff. The lyrics "Kin-dle a flame to light - en the dark and take all fear a - way." are written below the treble staff, aligned with the notes. The score ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

TEXT: The Iona Community 1987

MUSIC: The Iona Community 1987

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CALL TO RECONCILIATION

Hope, peace, joy, wonder, forgiveness, — these are a few of the gifts God offers to us in this season of preparation and anticipation. Yet often, we give our best attention to expectations of work and family or seasonal busyness, in place of searching for union with God. Let us confess the lives we lead, praying,

UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

O Holy God, our very waiting in Advent is itself a confession:

If we are waiting for Emmanuel, we are not yet with you;

if we are waiting for Jesus, we need a Savior;

if we are waiting for a Messiah, the proud are still powerful,

the mighty are still exalted, the hungry stand unheard at the door;

if we are waiting for your incarnation in human form,

we confess that we have not known you in our sister,

we have not loved you in our brother,

we have not served you in our neighbor.

In this time of great meaning, in the stillness of Advent love and light,

hear our deepest confession. Heal us and make us new,

through the good tidings of your presence in our lives. Amen.

(We pray in silence)

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

This is the good news in Jesus Christ: we can stand before God — not through our own goodness, but through God’s delight in us. Rejoice and be glad, for God forgives us our waywardness and comes to enfold us in grace.

Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Amen.

RESPONSE IN SONG

“Kindle a Flame”

RESPONSIVE PSALTER: Psalm 126

ONE: When the Almighty restored the well-being of our people,

MANY: We were like those who wake with their dreams fulfilled.

Then our mouths were filled with laughter,

And our tongues with songs of joy;

Then it was said among the nations,

"The Holy One has done great things for them."

The Holy One has done great things for us,

And we have rejoiced.

Restore our well-being now, O God Most High,

As You restore the streams in the desert.

May those who sow in tears

Reap with songs of joy.

Let those who go out weeping,

Bearing the seed for sowing,

Come home with songs of joy,

Carrying their sheaves of grain.

A THOUGHT FOR YOUNG MINDS

THE LORD’S PRAYER (*debts/debtors*)

Hymnal, p. 35

✕ HYMN #96

“On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry”
All attending Sunday School may leave as we sing the hymn.

WINCHESTER NEW

OFFERTORY

THE LIGHT OF SERVICE

Offerings not specifically designated for the Church (including any checks with “Light of Service” or “LOS” in the memo line) will be given to an organization doing compassionate work that complements our church’s mission. This week, we share our gifts with the 8th grade of Salisbury Central School.

ONE: God has poured gifts into our lives; we now return our tithes and offerings.

**ALL: Let us gather our gifts with grateful praise,
and offer them to God’s purposes.**

RECEIVING OUR OFFERINGS

Our church welcomes every size gift, and thanks you for your generosity.

MUSICAL OFFERING

Northern Lights

Ola Gjeilo

Pulchra es amica mea,
suavis et decora filia Jerusalem,
terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata.

*Thou art beautiful, O my love,
sweet and lovely daughter Jerusalem,
terrible as an army set in array.*

Averte oculos tuos a me
quia ipsi me avolare fecerunt.

*Turn away thy eyes from me,
for they have made me flee away.*

✠ DOXOLOGY

OLD 100TH

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
praise Christ, all people here below;
praise Holy Spirit ever more;
One God of grace, whom we adore! Amen.**

✠ UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION

God of Joy, you have blessed us richly. Now, we pray, bless these offerings, that they may serve your purposes by causing joy to be heard and seen and felt, more and more. Bless us, your servants, that with joyful hearts we may carry your wonder to the world. We ask it in Jesus’ name; Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Old Testament, p. 846

GOSPEL READING

John 1:6-8, 19-28

New Testament, p. 111

SERMON

“The Finger Pointing at the Moon”

Pastor John A. Nelson

PASTORAL PRAYER

✕ HYMN #104

“O Lord, How Shall I Meet You?”

VALET WILL ICH DIR GEBEN

BENEDICTION and SUNG AMEN

POSTLUDE

Noël Suisse

Louis-Claude Daquin



Welcome to Church!

Gathered in 1744, the Congregational Church of Salisbury is an Open and Affirming member of the United Church of Christ. It is also a welcoming home to people from a great variety of church backgrounds and life experiences. Your presence is a gift to us! We hope you will feel God’s Spirit here today through our worship and fellowship.

*We seek to love God with all our hearts, souls, and minds and love our neighbors as ourselves. This Church is **Open** to all for participation, membership, leadership and employment regardless of race, ancestry, class, gender identity, physical and mental ability or sexual orientation. We **Affirm** each individual as a child of God, celebrating the total identity of each person.*

*As an **Open and Affirming** Congregation, we commit to work toward ending ignorance, fear, hatred, prejudice, and discrimination against any person.*

*Whoever you are, wherever you are on life’s journey,
you are welcome here!*

If you are visiting us, Welcome! Please sign our guest book and introduce yourself to our Pastor or to one of the Deacons. Fill out a welcome card in the pew to join our email list. Assistive Listening Devices are available; please ask an usher for assistance.

Kindly set phones to silent (unless you’re expecting a call from Jesus).

Today's Worship Leaders

Ushers: Allison Gray and Sarah Morrison

Reader: Jennifer Kronholm-Clark • *Deacon:* John Estabrook and Don Mayland

Today's liturgy is adapted and reprinted from *Lectionary Liturgies* by the Rev. Thom Shuman © 2023 (lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com); used by permission.

Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy by Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries of the United Methodist Church.

Psalm adapted from *The Psalms in Worship*, Mary Susan Gast, © 2002; used by permission.

Our Ministry Team

Ministers: All Participants in the Life of the Congregation

Worship & Music

Music Director: David Baranowski
Bell Choir Director: Mary Davidson
Cantor: Jennifer Oberto

Faith Formation

Sunday School Coordinator: Holly Tierney
Youth Group Leader: Sarah Lesch
Youth Group Assistant: Dan Baker

Holding the Parts Together

Administrative Assistant: Loriann Chevremont

Sexton: Richard Tietjen

Stewardship & Database Mgr: Kelly Rybczyk

Church Officers:

Betsy Beck, *moderator*;

Janet Offensend, *treasurer*; Jennifer Oberto, *clerk*

Pastor and Teacher: The Rev. Dr. John A. Nelson

Occasions for Service, Witness, and Prayer

IN OUR PRAYERS:

We gladly list joys and concerns, and typically print them for four weeks after they are offered in worship. (Prayer requests may be renewed at any time.)

New concerns:

Weekly prayer from UCC Global Ministries,
for mission partners in India: Center for Social
Equity and Inclusion • Student Christian Movement
of India • Christian Medical College, Ludhiana •
Christian Medical College, Vellore • Christian
Medical Association of India • Indian Samaritans,
New Delhi • Pravaham, Vellore • Tamilnadu
Theological Seminary • Lady Doak College • Henry
Martyr Institute • Family Village Farm and King's
Matriculation • Deep Griha Society, Pune •
Darjeeling Tibetan Refugee Center and Tibetan

Children's Village • Church's Auxiliary for Social
Action • Church of South India • Church of North
India • United Theological College, Bangalore.

Continuing concerns:

Peace in Israel/Palestine, Armenia/Azerbaijan,
Sudan, Ukraine

Bob Hubby, recovering from surgery •
Margaret Haubrich, in memory care • Neighbors
around the world recovering from catastrophic
wildfires, floods, and hurricanes • all affected by
gun violence, especially survivors, those tending to

the traumatized, and those advocating for safety • neighbors who serve or live in war or in conflict zones around the world • for peacemakers.

For those in treatment for cancer — Peter (and Janet) • Deborah Lifton, Peter Kiernan, Jenny, Frank Swaye, David Douyea, Deborah Merwin, Keith Blanton — prayers for healing and strength.

Family & Friends who have passed away

We thank God for the gift of life, and pray for the Spirit's strong presence with family and friends who grieve.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE A PASTORAL VISIT, please call the church office (860-435-2442) or email Pastor John (jnelson@salisburyucc.org). Sometimes we don't find out about an injury or illness or other need until long after — so please call!



Please Recycle this Bulletin!



Prepare the Way of the Lord 95

Capo 1: (D) (G) (D)
* E^b A^b E^b * (chords continue)

Pre- pare the way of the Lord. Pre- pare the way of the Lord,
and all peo- ple will see the sal - va - tion of our God.

**May be sung as a canon.*

All three synoptic gospels identify John the Baptist as the forerunner of the Messiah (Matthew 3:3/Mark 1:2-3/Luke 3:4) in accord with Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 40:3b). Because the latter part of the text (Isaiah 52:10b) has yet to be accomplished, this is still our mission today.

TEXT: Taizé Community, 1984
MUSIC: Jacques Berthier, 1984
Text and Music © 1984 Les Presses de Taizé (admin. GIA Publications, Inc.)

PREPARE THE WAY
7.7.6.7

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96 On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry

1 On Jor - dan's bank the Bap - tist's cry an -
 2 Then cleansed be ev - ery life from sin; make
 3 We hail you as our Sav - ior, Lord, our
 4 Stretch forth your hand; our health re - store, and

nounc - es that the Lord is nigh; a - wake and heark - en,
 straight the way for God with - in, and let us all our
 ref - uge and our great re - ward; with - out your grace we
 make us rise to fall no more. O let your face up -

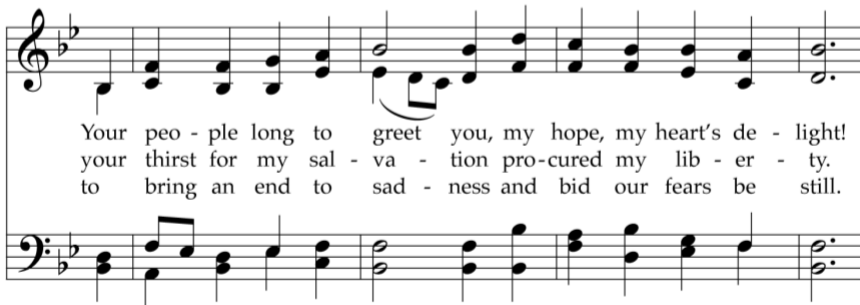
for he brings glad ti - dings of the King of kings!
 hearts pre - pare for Christ to come and en - ter there.
 waste a - way like flowers that with - er and de - cay.
 on us shine and fill the world with love di - vine.

This hymn shows how once-unconnected parts can work together. The text about John the Baptist was written in Latin in the 18th century and translated into English in the 19th century. Similarly, the 17th-century melody was adapted to its present form in the 19th century.

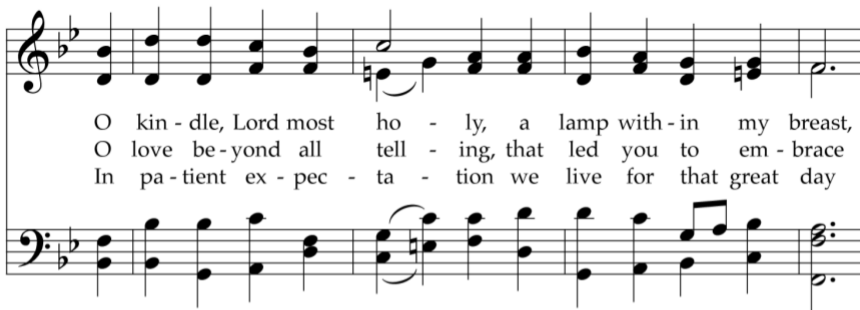
O Lord, How Shall I Meet You 104



1 O Lord, how shall I meet you, how wel-come you a - right?
2 Love caused your in - car - na - tion; love brought you down to me;
3 You come, O Lord, with glad - ness, in mer - cy and good-will,



Your peo - ple long to greet you, my hope, my heart's de - light!
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 kin - dle, Lord most ho - ly, a lamp with - in my breast,
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 do in spir - it low - ly all that may please you best.
in love, all loves ex - cel - ling, our lost and fal - len race.
when your re - newed cre - a - tion your glo - ry shall dis - play.

Though many Advent hymns address Christ with entreaty and invitation, this more contemplative text considers how an individual prepares for and responds to Christ's coming. It also brings together a recollection of the First Coming with an anticipation of the Second Coming.

This Week at Salisbury UCC



SUNDAY, 17 DECEMBER

10AM **Worship**
*followed by fellowship & refreshments
in the Parish Hall*

11:15AM **Christmas Pageant**

MONDAY, 18 DECEMBER

9:15AM Centering Prayer (via Zoom)
11:30AM Duplicate Bridge Club

TUESDAY, 19 DECEMBER

9AM Taichi Class
5:15PM Handbell Choir rehearsal

WEDNESDAY, 20 DECEMBER

12:30PM Staff Meeting
4PM Women's Bible Study

THURSDAY, 21 DECEMBER

11:30AM Duplicate Bridge Club
5:30PM Choir Rehearsal

FRIDAY, 22 DECEMBER

8:45AM Men's Bible Study



The Congregational Church of Salisbury

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Meeting in Grace • Transformed by Love • Serving with Joy

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email: welcome@salisburyucc.org • web: salisburyucc.org

Office Hours: 8:30am – 1:30pm, Monday-Thursday