

Welcome to First Congregational Church United Church of Christ
Celebrating a New Year
January 12, 2025

**** *Some rise to their feet, some rise in their hearts—please rise as you are able.*

GATHERING BELL

At the sound of the bell, please silence yourselves and prepare for worship.

PRELUDE

Forest Green, Ralph Vaughan Williams, arr Todd Beaney

Martha Jones

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rev. Paul Ashby

INVITATION TO WORSHIP

**Whoever you are...and wherever you are on life's journey...
you are welcome here!**

OPENING REFLECTION

Paul

CALL TO WORSHIP

Debra Weller

Each year is a gift and an opportunity.

No year is a re-run. Each new year unfolds with new dreams, hopes and experiences.

May we enter 2025 with freedom from regrets.

But there are things we wish were different, better or even erased from last year or last week.

May God free us from past regrets that we often drag with us from year to year.

We confess we cannot change the past. We cannot edit anything that happened last year.

Ask for the courage, faith and hope to change what needs to be transformed in this new year.

Help us to let go of the past and embrace the opportunities in each new day.

****HYMN NCH #434

All Beautiful the March of Days

All

All beautiful the march of days, as seasons come and go;
the hand that shaped the rose has formed the crystal of the snow,
has sent the silver frost of heaven, the flowing waters sealed,
and laid a silent loveliness on hill and wood and field.

O'er brilliant fields of sparkling snow the radiant morns unfold,
the solemn splendors of the night burn brightly through the cold.
Life mounts in every pulsing vein, love deepens 'round the hearth,
and clearer sounds the angel hymn "Good will to all on earth."

O you from whose unfathomed law the year in beauty flows,
yourself the splendid vision seen in crystal and in rose,
the passing days with grace declare, and passing nights proclaim,
in ever-changing words of light, the wonder of your name.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Paul

WELCOMING NEW MEMBERS

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Respond to each shared prayer request with "Peace, Shalom, Salaam."

PASTORAL PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

Our Creator, who art 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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

INVITATION TO OFFERING

Debra

OFFERTORY

Carry the Light, Joyce Eilers

Choir

****DOXOLOGY (tune: *Lasst Uns Erfreuen*)

**O gleaming star of love divine,
O light unveiling God's design,
 alleluia, alleluia;
O Word revealed in human birth,
O meeting place of heav'n and earth:
 Alleluia, alleluia,
 alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!**

****PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Debra

God of ongoing creation, we offer our gratitude for another year of life. Inspire us to love the gift of this life-giving earth that it may be protected for future generations. Help us to discover the beauty that is rooted in creation, in human life, and in the hearts that manifest compassion. AMEN

****HYMN NCH 432

"'Tis Winter Now; the Fallen Snow"

All

'Tis winter now; the fallen snow has left the heavens all coldly clear;
through leafless boughs the sharp winds blow, and all the earth lies dead and drear.

And yet God's love is not withdrawn; new life within the keen air breathes;
God's beauty paints the crimson dawn, and clothes the boughs with glittering wreaths.

And though abroad the sharp winds blow, and skies are chill, and frosts are keen,
Home closer draws its circle now, and warmer glows the light within.

O God, who gives the winter's cold, as well as summer's joyous rays,
Us warmly in your love enfold, and keep us through life's wintry days.

SCRIPTURE

2nd Corinthians 5:17-20

Debra

So, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; look, new things have come into being! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ: be reconciled to God.

MESSAGE

"One of the Greatest Secrets of Happiness"

Paul

****HYMN NCH 417, vs 1, 3, 4

This is a Day of New Beginnings

All

This is a day of new beginnings, time to remember and move on,
time to believe what love is bringing, laying to rest the pain that's gone.

Then let us, with the Spirit's daring, step from the past and leave behind

our disappointment, guilt, and grieving, seeking new paths, and sure to find.

Christ is alive and goes before us to show and share what love can do.
This is a day of new beginnings, our God is making all things new.

****BENEDICTION

Paul

****SUNG BENEDICTION

World Peace Prayer

All

Lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth,
From despair to hope, from fear to trust.
Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace,
Let peace fill our hearts, let peace fill our world,
Let peace fill our universe!

GREETING ONE ANOTHER IN THE SPIRIT OF LOVE

RECESSIONAL

Canticle of the Turning, Cooney/Hayes

Martha

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Today's Worship Leaders

preacher
liturgist
musicians

Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby
Debra Weller
Martha Jones, Karen Caton, Chancel Choir