

FIRST PARISH CHURCH OF GROTON

December 20, 2009

Ringing of the Bell

Rebecca Pike, Bell-Ringer

A Thought as the Service Begins

O Love, most high and most deep,
the edge of our reaching
and the limit of our sinking,
as this season presses us
with pressures unnamed,
You press us also,
press us closer to the wonder,...
and to the daily, hourly surprise that we were born at all,
and are alive enough
and aware enough to sing
Gloria in Excelsis and Peace on Earth.
For our lives, for the heartbreaking beauty of the stars,
for the complexity of history,
for our questions, our hopes,
we offer this, our praise around the manger,
the dirty unexpected manger
that signs the mystery of all our births,
Let us be amazed and let us praise and praise again (Belletini)

(We ask that you turn off the ringers on your cell phones, beepers and electronic devices. Please join us in a time of quiet during the prelude.)

Prelude

A Christmas Prelude for flute and organ
(Charles Callahan)

Call to Worship

I Saw Three Ships (traditional) Chimes

Welcome and Announcements

Annie Rayhill, Worship Leader

*Hymn O Come All Ye Faithful

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come, ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him, born the king of angels;
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Lo, humble shepherds, Hasting to his cradle,
Leaving their flocks in the fields, draw near.
We, too, with gladness, Thither bend our footsteps,
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above:
Glory to God in the highest,
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord

Lighting of the Chalice & Advent Wreath

Janet Armstrong

Response Hymn

(please remain seated)

#123

Spirit of Life, come unto me.
Sing in my heart all the stirrings of compassion.
Blow in the wind, rise in the sea;
Move in the hand, giving life the shape of justice.
Roots hold me close; wings set me free;
Spirit of life, come to me, come to me.

Offertory and Gathering of Guest at Your Table Gifts

The Cherry Tree Carol

(Appalachian, arr. Dona Gilliam and Mizzy McCaskill)

This morning's offering is for the work of the First Parish Caring Committee. White envelopes with checks or cash for the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee may also be put in the offering boxes.

*Offertory Response *(Words: Melinda Green; Music: Shawn McCann)*

We thank each other for these gifts
Which makes our giving bless-ed.
We bless the works our gifts sustain
And pray they ripple outward.
With grace and generosity
We show our faith enacted.

Hymn Do You Hear What I Hear

Said the night wind to the little lamb,
do you see what I see
Way up in the sky, little lamb,
do you see what I see

A star, a star, dancing in the night
With a tail as big as a kite, with a tail as big as a kite

Said the little lamb to the shepherd boy,
do you hear what I hear
Ringing through the sky, shepherd boy,
do you hear what I hear
A song, a song, high above the trees
With a voice as big as the sea, with a voice as big as the sea.

Said the shepherd boy to the mighty king,
do you know what I know
In your palace warm, mighty king,
do you know what I know
A Child, a Child shivers in the cold
Let us bring Him silver and gold, let us bring Him silver and gold.

Said the king to the people everywhere,
listen to what I say
Pray for peace, people everywhere!
listen to what I say
The Child, the Child, sleeping in the night
He will bring us goodness and light, He will bring us goodness and light.

The Story of the Nativity, according to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke (also known as the Paper Bag Pageant!)

***Hymn Away in a Manger**

Away in a manger,
no crib for His bed,
The little Lord Jesus
laid down His sweet head;
The stars in the heavens
looked down where He lay,
The little Lord Jesus
asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing,
the poor Baby wakes,
But little Lord Jesus,

no crying He makes.
I love Thee, Lord Jesus;
look down from the sky
And stay by my cradle
till morning is nigh.

***Hymn Go Tell It On the Mountain**

Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and ev'rywhere;
Go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!

While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night
Behold throughout the heavens, there shone a holy light.

Refrain

The shepherds feared and trembled when lo! above the earth,
Rang out the angel chorus that hailed the baby's birth.

Refrain

Down in a lowly manger the humble babe was born
And God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn.

Refrain

***Hymn Angels We Have Heard on High**

Angels we have heard on high sweetly singing o'er the plains
and the mountains in reply echoing their joyous strains.
Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why these songs of happy cheer?
What great brightness did you see?
What glad tidings did you hear?
Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing:
Come, adore on bended knee,
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.
Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo.

***Hymn We Three Kings**

We three kings of Orient are; bearing gifts we traverse afar,
Field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star.

O star of wonder, star of light, star, with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us through this perfect night.

Born a babe on Bethlehem's plain, gold I bring to crown him
again, love forever, ceasing never, in our hearts to reign.
Refrain.

***Hymn O Little Town of Bethlehem**

O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary,
And gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together
Proclaim the holy birth.
Let praises ring: from God they bring
Goodwill to all on earth.

How silently, how silently
The wonder is made known,
When God imparts to human hearts
The gift that is our own.
No ear may hear that coming,
But in this worldly din,
When souls are truly humble,
Then the dear babe rests within.

***Sung Benediction**

As we leave this friendly place,
Love give light to every face.
May the kindness which we learn,
Light our hearts til we return.

Postlude Deck the Halls (Welsh carol, arr. David Overton
and James Galway)

*(Please remain seated during the Postlude. You are also invited to come to
the front of the church and light a candle silently during this time. Please
place your candle toward the back of the candle table. We ask the
congregation to remain seated in quiet until the last candle is lit.)*

***Please stand as you are able.**

*Large Print Hymnals, Sunday Bulletins and Assisted Listening Devices are
available at the sanctuary doors. If you don't wish to keep your Sunday
Bulletin, please place it one of the recycle baskets at the sanctuary exits.*

* * * *

*Join us downstairs for good food and conversation immediately
following the service!*

The flowers in church this morning are given by Charlie and Bonnie
Peterson. "We share these flowers in loving memory of all those
spirits we hold a little closer in our hearts during this season of
evergreens, silent nights and soft, bold candlelight."

Greeters: Katharyn and Keith Dawson

Ushers: Susan Hughes, Owen Shuman

Special thanks to the Pageant-in-a-Paper-Bag Helpers: Gina

Benedict, Gin Mackey, Brenna Mayer, Colleen Tessier, Erica Willis

Special thanks this morning to Paul Funch, flute