

Today is Pastor Merdith Jeffers' final service with us. We are grateful for her three years serving as our Interim Pastor. We wish her all the best in her future endeavors.



Susan Alker will be Guest Preacher on December 28.

Our new Settled Pastor, the Rev. Jeff Birch will be leading worship January 4



### **The First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ**

23 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT 06492

Church telephone: (203) 265-1691

Church Office Hours: Tues.– Fri. - 9:00am – 1:00pm

Email: [officemanager@firstchurchwlfld.org](mailto:officemanager@firstchurchwlfld.org) (office)

[pastormeredith@firstchurchwlfld.org](mailto:pastormeredith@firstchurchwlfld.org) (pastor)

[gross7jeanette1@gmail.com](mailto:gross7jeanette1@gmail.com) (Minister of Music)

Website: [www.firstchurchwallingford.org](http://www.firstchurchwallingford.org)



**To make a gift to First Church**



**At the First Congregational Church, UCC of Wallingford, CT, we have discerned the following vision and mission for our faith lives together:**

### **Vision**

**Our faith – rooted in the compassion and teachings of Jesus Christ – is the foundation of our love for one another and service to the world around us.**

We offer a home for those seeking deeper meaning or purpose in their lives through the exploration of Jesus Christ's teachings. The love and compassion found in those teachings commit us to up lift each individual and celebrate our shared humanity.

### **Mission**

**We will foster spiritual growth, loving communication, and mutual care, thereby empowering us to confront issues that impact our community and the world, including poverty, isolation, and exclusion.**

We commit to developing a nurturing environment where all are loved, valued, and inspired to meaningful participation in the life of the church. Through our Christian faith, compassion, and service, we will dedicate ourselves to making a positive impact on the lives of people in our community and beyond.

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# **First Congregational Church Wallingford, CT**



**December 21, 2025**

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

ORDER OF WORSHIP

+ Please rise in body or in spirit  
NCH = New Century Hymnal (Black)

PRELUDE Noel Louis-Claude Daquin

WELCOME

CENTERING MUSIC O Little Town of Bethlehem arr. Sandra Eithun  
Handbell Ensemble

CALL TO WORSHIP

Come, people of God, the Light is drawing near.

We gather to remember the God whose love breaks into our world.

In the stillness of this holy season, God whispers good news to the humble and the lowly.

We come with open hearts, ready to receive the love that seeks us first.

The God who chose shepherds still chooses us—still calls us, still comes close.

Let us lift our eyes and open our spirits to the One who loves the world.

Come, let us worship the God whose love is born among us.  
Come, Lord Jesus. Come, Love Divine. Amen.

HYMN Love Divine, All Love’s Excelling NCH #43

CALL TO REFLECTION

PRAYER OF REFLECTION

Merciful God, You are the Light that no darkness can overcome, yet we confess that we have often chosen shadows over Your radiance. You call us to love as You have loved us, but we have been slow to forgive, quick to judge, and hesitant to extend grace. In this season of waiting, we have been distracted by our own desires and have not prepared room in our hearts for Your Son. Forgive us, Lord. Shine Your light into the corners of our lives, that we may walk in Your ways, love with Your compassion, and bear witness to the hope that is Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

SILENT REFLECTION

ASSURANCE OF GOD’S LOVE

PASSING OF THE PEACE

LIGHTING OF THE FOURTH ADVENT CANDLE – Love  
Trina Regan, Yvonne Ortiz, and Jackie Wadelin

RESPONSE When God is a Child (Stanzas. 1,4)

MESSAGE FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE Karen Blakeslee

CELEBRATION OF BAPTISM  
Cyrus McFadden, Alexander Gonzalez and Maxon Gonzalez

HYMN Child of Blessing, Child of Promise NCH #325

READING FROM SCRIPTURE

ANTHEM Why A Baby? Why A Child? Jay Althouse

THE MESSAGE

CALL TO PRAYER Blessed Be the Tie That Binds NCH #393

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND PASTORAL PRAYER

THE LORD’S PRAYER  
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come. Thy 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 thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

CALL TO GENEROSITY

OFFERTORY Who Would Send a Baby?  
Mary Kay Beall/setting John Carter

+ DOXOLOGY (melody In the Bleak Midwinter)  
Praise the one Creator, praise the Living Christ  
Praise the Holy Spirit, praise both day and night.  
Praise when you are weary, praise in times of joy  
Praise with soul, with all your strength, and your heart and voice.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

+HYMN Angels We Have Heard on High (vss. 1, 2,3) NCH # 125

COMMISSION AND BENEDICTION

RESPONSE All Earth is Waiting (Stanzas 1, 4) NCH #121  
1. All earth is wait-ing to see the Prom-ised One, and o-pen furr-rows, the sow-ing of our God. All the world, bound and strug-gling, seek true lib-er-ty; it cries out for justice and search-es for the truth.  
4. In low-ly stable the Prom-ised One ap-peared, yet feel that presence though-out the earth to-day, For Christ lives in all Chris-tians and is with us now; a-gain, on ar-riv-ing Christ brings us lib-ber-ty.

POSTLUDE Noel Parisienne, Op. 26, No. 4 Charles Quef

Announcements

Welcome to the First Congregational Church of Wallingford, an Open and Affirming Church of the United Church of Christ! No matter who you are, or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here! Please join us for refreshments and conversation downstairs in Congregational Hall immediately following the service.

Serving the church today are ushers: Jeremy Phillips, Steve & Kathy Knight, Bruce & Kathy Ollodart; chimes: Debbie Clark

The flowers on the altar are given in honor of Rev. Dr. Meredith Jeffers and with gratitude for her Interim Ministry with First Congregational Church.

Join us for a Hot Chocolate Bar and Cookies after this morning’s service.

Join us for Christmas Eve Worship, Wednesday, December 24. Family Worship at 5 PM will feature Carols and a Christmas Tableau, Worship at 11 will feature Carols, Candlelight, and Communion. Come, and Bring a Friend!

Pastor Jeff Birch - Sunday, January 4, 2026, will be our new settled pastor’s first worship service here at our beloved First Congregational Church of Wallingford. Please join for the service and a time of celebration following the service.

First Church Star Ball: You are invited to attend this very special ending to the celebration of our 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year. Saturday, January 10<sup>th</sup> 6:30-10:30pm at the Elks Club. Tickets will be available after church for \$35 and \$40 at the door.

Rev. Dr. Meredith Jeffers, Interim Pastor  
Dr. Jeanette Gross, Minister of Music.  
Search in Process, Office Manager

Mr. Tony Annunziata, Sexton  
Search in Process, Director of Sunday  
School and Youth Ministries