Our Mission:

to be a visible and prophetic presence in the church and in the world,
to steadfastly proclaim the radically inclusive love of God,
to be open to, and celebrate differences; to honor thinking for oneself,
to faithfully work for the inclusion of, and justice for all people, regardless of
age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, marital status, race or national
origin, or any particular element of a person’s total humanity, and for all of
God’s creation.

Please join in where words are shown in bold type.
Please stand if you are able for items with an asterisk*.

Centering ourselves with the sound of the chime
and the Land Acknowledgement

Prelude
Joy to the World
arr. Mark Hayes

Call to Celebration
The Rev. Anne Hoffmann and the Rev. Tom Emanuel
By Stephen Fearing

One: Praise the Christ-child, the newborn Prince of Peace.
MANY: We have been redeemed. We are no longer afraid.

One: Praise to the God who has come to us in the flesh.
MANY: We are being created. We are no longer afraid.

One: Praise to the Spirit who calls us together to serve.
MANY: We will be sustained. We are no longer afraid.

One: Come, let us worship God.
MANY: Come, let us worship God!
Prayer of Invocation

*Gathering Carol

Ding Dong Merrily on High

Ding dong, merrily on high!
In heav’n the bells are ringing;
ding dong, verily the sky
is riv’n with angel singing.
Glo—ria, hosannah in excelsis!
Glo—ria, hosannah in excelsis!

E’en so here below, below,
let steeple bells be swungen,
And i-o, i-o, i-o,
by priest and people sungen.
Glo—ria, hosannah in excelsis!
Glo—ria, hosannah in excelsis!

Pray ye dutifully prime
your matin chime, ye ringers;
may ye beautifully rhyme
your evetime song, ye singers.
Glo—ria, hosannah in excelsis!
Glo—ria, hosannah in excelsis!

*Welcome and Passing of the Peace

Welcome Song

Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o’er the plains,
And the mountains in reply echo back their joyous strains.
Glo------ria in excelsis Deo, Glo------ria in excelsis Deo.

Time with the Children

Contemporary Reading

Making the House Ready for the Lord
By Mary Oliver
On Christmas Night All Christians Sing

1. On Christmas night all Christians sing, to hear the news the angels bring; On Christmas night all Christians sing, to made us glad.

2. Then why should we on earth be sad, since our Redeemer made us glad; Then why should we on earth be sad, since sing this night; From out of mystery came the Light, which made the angels sing this night.

3. From out of mystery came the Light, which made the angels bring—News of great our Redeemer made us glad, When from our made the angels sing this night: “Glory to joy, news of great mirth, news of our gracious Ruler’s birth. sin Christ set us free, all for to gain our liberty. God and peace to all, for ever more, Alleluia!”

The Puritan era in England sent the medieval carols underground. Many were not rediscovered until the early twentieth century when Ralph Vaughan Williams, Cecil Sharp, and others began collecting them. This tune is one found by Vaughan Williams in Sussex.

Tune: SUSSEX CAROL 8.8.8.8.8.
English traditional melody
Harm. Jonathan McNair, 1993
Scripture

Isaiah 9:2-7

The people who have walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who have lived in a land of deep darkness—on them the light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the trampling warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the HOLY ONE will do this.

Carol #131

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold;
“Peace on the earth, good will to all, great news of joy we bring.”
The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come, with peaceful wings unfurled,
and still their heavenly music floats o’er all the weary world;
Above its sad and lowly plains they bend on hovering wing,
and ever o’er its Babel sounds the blessed angels sing.

And you, beneath life’s crushing load, whose forms are bending low,
who toil along the climbing way, with painful steps and slow,
Look now, for glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing;
O rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing.

For lo, the days are hastening on, by prophet bards foretold,
when with the ever-circling years comes round the age of gold;
When peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors flying,
and all the world send back the song which now the angels sing.

Contemporary Reading

Amazing Peace: A Christmas Poem
By Maya Angelou
Carol #148

What Child Is This?

What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mary’s lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this, the angels sing, is Christ, God’s holy offering;
Haste, haste your praise to bring the babe, the child of Mary!

Why lies the Child in manger bare where ox and ass are feeding?
Give heed, draw hear; for sinners here the silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce him through, the cross be born for me, for you;
Hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe, the child of Mary!

Bring gifts of incense, gold, and myrrh; come, join in jubilation;
The Holy Child, though meek and mild, has come with God’s salvation.
Raise, raise the song on high, the mother sings her lullaby;
Joy, joy, for Christ is born, the babe, the child of Mary!

Contemporary Reading

From “For the Time Being: A Christmas Oratorio”
By W.H. Auden

Prayers of the People

Prayer Response: “God of Mercy, Hold Us in Love”
By Marty Haugen

Leader: In peace, in peace we pray to you …

Leader: Help us, comfort us all of our days …
Our Common Prayer

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,  
Source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all,  
Loving God, in whom is heaven:  
May the hallowing of your name echo through the universe!  
The way of your justice be followed by the people of the earth!  
With the bread we need today, feed us.  
For the hurts we inflict on one another, forgive us.  
In the time of temptation and test, strengthen us.  
From trials too great to endure, spare us.  
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.  
For your reign is in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever.  
Amen.

Contemporary Reading

On the Mystery of the Incarnation  
By Denise Levertov

Offering

The Invitation  
Rev. Hoffmann

Offertory  
Infant Holy, Infant Lowly  
Polish carol, arr. Charles Maggs  
Tracy Halter-Balin, handbells; Curtis Heard, piano

Scan above for our secure online donation site.

*Doxology: Old Hundredth (Hymn No. 7)  
Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God all creatures here below;  
Praise God with all the hosts above;  
Praise God in wonder, joy and love.

*Prayer of Thanksgiving  
Rev. Hoffmann

Scripture

Matthew 1:18-25

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a
righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’ All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by God through the prophet:

‘Look, the young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel’, which means, ‘God is with us.’

When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the HOLY ONE commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Carol #132

Joy to the World

Joy to the world! the Lord is come: let earth its praises bring; Let every heart prepare Christ room, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the earth! the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ; While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

Christ rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove The glories of God’s righteousness and wonders of God’s love, and wonders, wonders of God’s love.

*Benediction

The Work of Christmas

By Howard Thurman

When the song of the angels is stilled, When the star in the sky is gone, When the kings and princes are home, When the shepherds are back with their flock, The work of Christmas begins: To find the lost, To heal the broken, To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,  
To rebuild the nations,  
To bring peace among others  
To make music in the heart.

Benediction Response  
Love came down at Christmas,  
Love all lovely, Love divine;  
Love came down at Christmas;  
star and angels gave the sign.

Postlude  
Go, Tell It on the Mountain  
Curtis Heard  
arr. Jo Hammerly

Community Life Announcements  
See the announcement playlist on YouTube:  
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEBlwzL0DILYFdhyVgdkqhVVsi4chwp

The sanctuary flowers are provided by the Cole family. “Happy Birthday to Betty. We have all been blessed with such a thoughtful, genuine and caring person in our lives. Your spirit is contagious, your depth of concern authentic and your loyalty unwavering. Enjoy your special day, all year long.” Love, The Cole Family.

Parish Concerns  
Please remember Ruth Keller; Doug Emslie’s friend Glen Banks; Lindsey Nelson’s friend Heather Bouchard and her mother Karin; and Jeff Gholson (cards welcome, no calls please).

Birthdays This Week  
26 Betty Cole  
30 Naomi Johnson, Rebecca Johnson  
31 Mary Humme  
1 Charmaine Charles, Rene Quiroz

To submit joys and concerns for inclusion in the bulletin and the newsletter or to subscribe to the newsletter, contact the office: office@firstchurchlb.org.
This Week at First Church

Sunday, December 26
10 am  Service of Celebration – Sanctuary & YouTube

Monday, December 27 – Friday, December 31  
Office closed

Wednesday, December 29
6:30 pm  Sacred Practices – Sacred Space & Zoom

Sunday, January 2
8:45 am  Adult Education – Pownall Room & Zoom
10 am  Service of Celebration – Sanctuary & YouTube
11:30 am  Board of Social Justice & Outreach Meeting – Koinonia Room
1:30 pm  Board of Stewardship & Finance Meeting – Zoom
          Urban Community Outreach Drop-In Center – on-site
2 pm  Women’s Group – Zoom
5:30 pm  Youth Group – Koinonia Room
CHURCH OFFICERS
Christopher Bobo
Moderator
Sara Schoenfelder
Vice Moderator
Steve Crow
Treasurer
Ruth Keller
Secretary

BOARD CHAIRS
Board of Christian Education:
   Cynthia King
Board of Cultural Arts:
   Melody O’Keefe
Diaconate Board: Clarence Dendy
Board of Parish Life:
   Randall Goddard
Board of Social Justice and Outreach:
   Sebastian Jobin-Reyes
Board of Stewardship and Finance:
   Randy King and Pamela Chapin

AT-LARGE COUNCIL MEMBERS
Kathleen O’Neal, Kirsten Pickus,
   Harold Sutherland

POET-IN-RESIDENCE
Tina Datsko de Sánchez

COMPOSER-IN-RESIDENCE
Curtis Heard

HISTORIAN
Kathy Young

CLERGY
Anne Hoffmann, Interim Minister
Tom Emanuel, Associate Minister

CLERGY IN OUR COMMUNITY
Jerry Stinson, Senior Minister Emeritus
Katy Hyman, Program Coordinator for Palliative Care, Long Beach Memorial Medical Center
Laverne R. Joseph, Retired from Retirement Housing Foundation

MUSIC STAFF
Curtis Heard, Director of Music
Tracy Halter-Balin, Associate Director of Music and Youth
Marc Dickey, Organist

PROFESSIONAL STAFF
Tracy Halter-Balin, Interim Christian Education Director
Eric Peterson, Business Manager
Ruth Warkentin, Office Manager
Preston Andres, Custodian
Melody O’Keefe or Heather Chambers at Heather R. Chambers, CPA, Inc., Bookkeeper

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