

CHRISTMAS SERVICE/CONCERT

December 12, 2021, 10:00 am

WELCOME AND OPENING WORDS

Rev. John Morehouse

COVENANT *Love is the Spirit of this church and service its law. This is our great covenant: to dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, and to help one another.*

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”

ALL 1. O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

WOMEN 2. O come, thou Day-spring, come and cheer our spirits by thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death’s dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

MEN 3. O come, thou Wisdom from on high, who orderest all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show,
And teach us in her ways to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

ALL 4. O come, Desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind;
Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease;
And fill this world with heaven’s peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

We Have All Come Down

Rev. Dr. Edward Thompson

“Hanerot Hallalu” Becky Mayo Women’s/Men’s Choir

“Light” Enrico Miaroma Women’s/Men’s Choir

“Solstice Chant” Thompson Women’s Septet
The sun has gone, the dark comes in, the shortest day of the year;
So let the light that glows within cast out all doubt and fear.

“Stopping by Woods” Ruth Gray Women’s/Men’s Choir

CANDLELIGHTING

Rev. Morehouse

SPOKEN REFLECTION

Rev. Ed Thompson

OFFERING <https://vop.tucw.org/> VENMO (The Unitarian Church in Westport, or @TUCW-1)

“Welcome Yole”	Benjamin Britten	Women’s Septet
“What Songs Were Sung”	John Jacob Niles	Mike Costantino
“Love Is Christmas”	Sara Bareilles	Jenna McPartland
“Touch Hands”	Abbie Betinis	Women’s/Men’s Choir
“William the Angel”	Rob Mathes	Chris Beaurline
CLOSING WORDS		Rev. Morehouse
“We Have All Come Down”	Thompson	Chris Beaurline and Choir

Best wishes of the season to everyone!

WOMEN’S SEPTET

Trina Wong, Cathy Paine, Wendy Levy, Catherine Onyemelukwe, Linda Hudson, Beth Cliff, Carol Hamilton

WOMEN’S/MEN’S CHOIR

Sharon Bittenbender, Beth Cliff, Carol Hamilton, Debbie Handler, Dale Hill, Jalna Jaeger, Jenny Klein, Wendy Levy, Betsey Miller, Catherine Onyemelukwe, Cathy Paine, Anita Pfluger, Jane Sherman, Trina Wong, Chris Beaurline, Rainy Broomfield, Randy Burnham, Linda Hudson, Dave Callan, Doug Flam, Charles Harrington, Tom Hearne, John McWeeney, Michael Costantino

ACCOMPANIST Ellen Dickinson

Flowers

Today's flower arrangement is in loving memory of Peggy Boldt, a founding member of this church. It is a gift of her daughter Deborah, and her sons David and John *in spiritu*.

Visiting us this week? We're glad you're here with us! Please feel free to leave us your contact information, and then tear off this page and place it in the offering plate, or hand to a minister on your way out. Questions? Contact beth@uuwestport.org

Name: _____ **Cell:** _____

Email: _____

PROGRAM NOTES for *We Have All Come Down*

You will find here all of the usual elements that recur at this season: the celebration of Chanukah, the Solstice, the Celtic holly and evergreens, the star/birth/journey. We have survived the year and the turning of the seasons. This year there is a different kind of turning. Some people call it a Great Turning, meaning that there is a great birthing of new consciousness on our planet. In order for any change to occur it has to begin with awareness or consciousness on the part of each individual. Some say that is why a figure like Jesus was born – to bring us a new way of looking at things. But then, why would one limit it to Jesus? We also came down! If a new sort of awareness is to happen in our earthly dimension, it is up to each one of us to birth it. May these pieces be an aid to you in reflecting on your awareness.

Hanerot Hallalu is a piece that celebrates Chanukah. These days we tend to focus on the element of those lamps burning for 8 days. While that may appear to be a miracle, the aspect which deserves more attention is that the Chanukah story is about religious freedom. And in that freedom lies our ability to tend to our spiritual impulses.

Italian composer Enrico Miaroma set these words of Tagore at Easter time in 2017. We sing it at this time because ***Light*** speaks about how joy and light are present all the time. The author of the words, Rabindranath Tagore says: “the light dances at the center of my life; and the light strikes the chords of my love....” In other words, we have the potential to tune in and be carried by that ever-present stream of goodness.

The Sun Has Gone is a chant that articulates the essential truth of the earth-centered celebration: As the outer light diminishes, let the inner light increase and cast out all doubt and fear. And while we use this annual demarcation to number our years, it is a reminder that the living earth also goes through its seasons.

Ruth Morris Gray’s setting of this famous Robert Frost poem, ***Stopping by Woods*** is written in a purposefully simple way. It allows the words to come through more easily and it keeps Frost’s sentiment intact. His encounter in nature and in silence permits him to realize that we all, individually and collectively, have miles to go before we sleep.

Benjamin Britten wrote “A Ceremony of Carols” in 1942, in the middle of World War II, while on board a ship headed from the United States to England. Those were dark days and yet Britten, in this first chorus, ***Welcome Yole***, creates a festive mood reminding us that it is up to us to remember what joy feels like. Interestingly, Britten used an ancient poem written in Middle English. It is a subtle reminder that we are not the first ones who are facing major challenges. Like those ancestors who faced wars and plagues, we also carry on.

Born in Kentucky, John Jacob Niles was an American folksinger, folk music collector and composer. When he was 15 he began to collect Appalachian folk songs. ***What Songs Were Sung***, is one of his original songs, although one can easily hear the Appalachian influence. In part, the lyrics read: “We do not know, we cannot tell what songs were sung, what starlight fell, or why the holy mystery stands for so many years in so many lands... and peace and love became as one.” He keeps the scenery simple and like the circumstances in which he lived. This simplicity underlines our commonality.

“I don’t care if the house is packed or the strings of lights are broken. I don’t care if the gifts are wrapped or there’s nothing here to open. Love is not a toy and no paper will conceal it. Love is simply joy that I’m home.” So begins ***Love Is Christmas*** written by contemporary singer/songwriter Sara Bareilles. It is a beautiful song which describes how everyone partakes in Christmas because love and joy belong to everyone. We all ‘came down’ to experience it.

Abbie Bertinis, a Minneapolis composer, set the poem of W.H.H. Murray “Touch Hands”. ***Touch Hands*** is subtitled “A Table Grace” because it was originally meant for a prayer before a meal. It is an invitation to touch hands with those who are gathered because the guests will go as fast as the years go; for who may say if ever this day will come to us again.

William the Angel was composed by Connecticut composer Rob Mathes. It is a fictitious story about an angel sent by God on a 20-year mission. His job is to deliver a message to various people that they are loved by God. As the story begins, William has a broken wing and is sitting in the middle of the highway. He is completely frustrated because it is almost time for him to go back to the celestial realms and he claims that people are too dense or distracted to get the message. Feeling very discouraged, he remembers the song of the angels (heard in the piano part) and is then inspired to go on. He asks to be sent anywhere in the world to complete his mission. While we tend to think of angels as non-physical entities, I would suggest that we have all met angels in the flesh. It is that compassionate part of us which reaches out in times of need. Lincoln called it “the angels of our better nature”. Like Scrooge who was transformed into a different person, it is that sense of compassion which allows William to go on.

Christina Rossetti wrote a poem called “Love Came Down at Christmas”. I have created a lyric that is a take-off: ***We Have All Come Down***. Why? I wish to underline the fact that what we call divinity is not an up/down matter, or a greater than/lesser than relationship. Each of us is here for a reason and it is our job to discern what that is and then integrate it into our life. In the same way that Jesus fulfilled his mission, so it is with us. According to the Gospel of John, he allegedly said: the things that I do you shall also do; and even greater things shall you do.” During this holiday season may we take a moment to remember that we also birth ourselves into a path that will make us whole, helpful and happy.