



First United

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

1917 Fifth Avenue, Troy, NY 12180
Unitedprestroy.org † (518)272-2771

DECEMBER 7, 2025

THE SERVICE FOR THE LORD'S DAY

GATHERING MUSIC

Two Interpretations of the Advent plainsong
"Creator of the Stars of Night" (*Conditor alme siderum*, #84)
Jean Titelouze (1563-1633)
Rebecca Groom te Velde (b. 1956)
Variations on "Awake, Awake, and Greet the New Morn" (*Rejoice, rejoice*)
Marty Haugen (b. 1950), arr. Robert Benson (b. 1942)

WELCOME & FRAMING

*GATHERING WORDS

Family of faith, God is at work!
God is healing and creating, redeeming and dreaming,
calling and sending, listening and loving.
Yes, indeed, God is at work!
So may we worship our God who never gives up on us.
Let us worship our God who holds onto hope!

*HYMN #107- *Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Moon*

***Awake! Awake, and greet the new morn, for angels herald its dawning.
Sing out your joy, for soon his is born, behold! Child of our longing.
Come as a baby weak and poor, to bring all hearts together,
He opens wide the heavenly door and lives now inside us forever.***

***To us, to all in sorrow and fear, Emmanuel come a-singing;
His humble song is quiet and near, yet fills the earth with its ringing;
Music to heal the broken soul and hymns of loving-kindness.
The thunder of his anthems rolls to shatter all hatred and violence.***

***In darkest night his coming shall be, when all the world is despairing,
As morning light so quiet and free, so warm and gentle and caring.
Then shall the mute break forth in song, the lame shall leap in wonder,
The weak be raised above the strong, and weapons be broken asunder.***

***Rejoice, rejoice, take heart in the night. Though dark the winter and cheerless,
The rising sun shall crown you with light; be strong and loving and fearless.
Love be our song and love our prayer and love our endless story;
May God fill every day we share and bring us at last into glory.***

LIGHTING OF THE HOPE CANDLE

In a world full of fear, where do you see peace?

**We see glimmers of peace in the quiet of early morning,
when people shake hands,
when loved ones say they're sorry,
and when the church sings together.**

You are right. Even in a fearful world, peace is all around us.

Today we light the candle of peace as a reminder of this good news.

May this light help us remember that even in a fearful world, peace is present.

We only have to look for it.

Thanks be to God! Amen.

RESPONDING TO PEACE

#137- *He Came Down*

***He came down that we may have hope;
He came down that we may have hope;
He came down that we may have hope;
Hallelujah forevermore!***

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

On-the-move God, we have every reason to hold onto hope. We have every reason to believe that spring will come, that flowers will bloom, that the sun will rise. And yet, too often hope slips through our fingers. With anxious hearts we cry out to you, "Will change ever come? Will things ever get better? Will I ever make a difference? Does my life, my work, matter?" Soothe our weary hearts and show us the places where the sun is shining. Show us the places where you are on the move. With open hearts we pray, amen.

Silence is kept for Prayer and Reflection.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Friends, proclaim with me this good news:

When we're running out of hope, God is still at work.

Thanks be to God! Amen.

*RESPONSE TO GRACE

#76- *Do Not Be Afraid* (Refrain)

***Do not be afraid, for I am with you.
Chosen and beloved, you are my own.
Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you:
By your name I called you for my own.***

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

The Peace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, be with you!

And also with you!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 43:19-21

Matthew 11:1-11

SERMON

“Death Row Hope”

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

**We have seen the valley. We have seen a sky without stars.
We have seen the longest night, and still we believe.
We believe in a with-us God. We believe in the hope of tomorrow.
We believe that good news is louder than fear. We believe this good news is for all people.
So even when our knees shake, even when our voice trembles,
even when fear is all around us, we will hold onto that good news.
We will reach for each other. We will look for God in our midst.
We will sing songs of joy. We will proclaim: Unto us, love is born.
We have seen the longest night, and we have seen unimaginable love.
So still, we believe. Amen.**

SERMON RESPONSE

“Looking Out a Prison Window” (tune: *Irby*)

***Looking out a prison window, who can see the flowers bloom?
Hope dissolves like dreams at daybreak, leaving us an empty room.
Still beyond what we can see, God is always planting seeds.***

***All the things that keep us captive shrink our optimistic faith.
We must practice hope on purpose, even when our spirits break;
'Til at last our freedom comes, and we finally see the sun.***

***To our siblings still imprisoned behind bars of steel or fear,
Bring the message from our Savior: hope is real and dawning near.
Tell the gospel all around: new life springs up from the ground!***

***We are called to liberation—to be freed and to set free—
Breaking chains of worldly powers who would claim our liberty.
Body, spirit, mind and heart: liberate each captive part.***

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

PASTORAL PRAYER

MOMENT FOR MISSION

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY

*An offering plate will be passed during the service,
or you may give online through Tithely: <https://tithely.com/give?c=1309305>
Please note where you would like your gift to be directed (general fund, deacons, etc.)*

OFFERTORY

*DOXOLOGY

#607- *Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow*

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Christ, all people here below;
Praise Holy Spirit evermore;
Praise Triune God, whom we adore. Amen.***

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

God of peace, bless these gifts and make them instruments of Your love. Where fear divides, let peace unite. Where anxiety overwhelms, let calm prevail. Use our offerings to sow peace in every corner of Your world. Amen.

COMMUNION

INVITATION

PRAYER OF GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

SANCTUS

#559- *Holy, Holy, Holy*

***Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.***

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest!

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION

#560- *Christ Has Died, Christ is Risen*

Christ Has Died; Christ Is Risen; Christ will come again.

INVOCATION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Creator, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kin-dom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kin-dom, and the power, and
the glory, forever. Amen.**

AMEN

#561- *Amen*

Amen, Amen, Amen.

SHARING IN THE LORD'S SUPPER

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

*HYMN

#250- *In the Bulb There is a Flower*

***In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed an apple tree;
In cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.***

***There's a song in every silence, seeking word and melody;
There's a dawn in every darkness, bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future; what it holds, a mystery,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.***

***In our end is our beginning; in our time, infinity;
In our doubt there is believing; in our life, eternity.
In our death, a resurrection; at the last, a victory,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.***

*BENEDICTION

SENDING MUSIC

Postlude on *Promise*

Natalie Sleeth (1930-1992), arr. John Carter (b. 1930)



Pastor: Rev. Marranda Major (marranda@unitedprestroy.org)
Guest Organist: David A. Vrendenberg – Eastern NY Chapter, American Guild of Organists (AGO)
Onscreen Visuals: Charlotte Albertin, Martha Juenger, and Jim Parmelee
Audiovisual Production: Martha Juenger and Dan Rogers

Liturgy adapted from materials by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org.

| Session | | |
|--|--|---|
| <u><i>Class of 2026</i></u> Dan Rogers Peggy Smith Savchik Vacant | <u><i>Class of 2027</i></u> Jim Parmelee Sue Steele Marilynn O'Dell | <u><i>Class of 2028</i></u> Alan Chandler Kodzo Dzikunu Bruce Reed |
| Diaconate | | |
| <u><i>Class of 2026</i></u> Peg Drew Martha Juenger Pat Rudebush | <u><i>Class of 2027</i></u> Debbie Brown Miriam Parmelee Brenda Westbrook | <u><i>Class of 2028</i></u> Diane Chandler Olga Green Noel Hains |



Christmas Poinsettias

HELP US DECORATE THE CHURCH IN REMEMBRANCE AND
CELEBRATION OF OUR LOVED ONES!

If interested, place the form in Sunday's offering plate, or send it to the church
office by Sunday, December 7th, 2025.

Please make your check payable to First United Presbyterian Church and note
"Christmas Poinsettias".

If you have any questions, please contact Peggy Drew.

I WISH TO ORDER...

_____ Red Poinsettia(s) at \$12.00 each
_____ White Poinsettia(s) at \$12.00 each
_____ Pink Poinsettia(s) at \$12.00 each
_____ Marble Poinsettia(s) at \$12.00 each
_____ **Total**

I WOULD LIKE TO...

_____ Pick up my plant(s) after the Christmas Eve service.
_____ Have the deacons deliver my plant(s).

GIVEN IN MEMORY/CELEBRATION OF:

GIVEN BY:

