Everything that is done in the world is done by hope.
~ Martin Luther

November 29, 2026 **First Sunday of Advent** **9:30 a.m.**

Prelude — Keith Ciccone, organ

Welcome and Announcements — Rev. Karen E. Gale

Passing the Peace
Peace be with you.
And also with you.
Let us pass the peace with one another...

*Introit *like a child*
like a child love would send to reveal and to mend,
like a child and a friend, Jesus comes
like a child may we find claiming heart soul and mind,
like a child strong and kind, Jesus comes

like a child born to pray and to show us the way,
like a child here to stay, Jesus comes
like a child we receive all that love can conceive,
like a child we believe Jesus comes

*Call to Worship
In this season as the days grow shorter and the shadows lengthen, we gather in eager expectation for the Light of the World to dawn.
We are waiting, watching, and hoping.
In Advent we prepare for a life of discipleship, and watch faithfully for signs of God's light breaking into the world.
We are waiting, watching, and preparing.
The prophets call us to keep awake so that we are ready for Jesus' arrival, to lay aside all those things that distract us from faithful watching for the coming of Christ.
We are waiting, watching, and praying.
The time is drawing near when God's hope will be revealed. The signs of God's light are breaking into the world.
Let us wait for the light with hope.

*Hymn 83 *People Look East*

** Indicates all who are able may stand. Please silence your cell phones*

Lighting the Advent Wreath

As the days grow shorter and the nights stretch on, our fears and doubts can loom large. Where is God in the dark days of December?

This morning we light the first Advent candle: hope. We choose hope. We lean into hope. We rest in hope believing that the birth of Christ and love of Jesus are breaking into our world even now.
The light shines in the darkness,
And the darkness shall not overcome it.

Sung Response

O Come, o come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel
Who mourns in lowly exile here. Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel, shall come to thee O Israel.

A Time for All Ages

Scripture: Isaiah 9:2-4

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.
You have multiplied exultation; 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.

Luke 1: 5-25, 57-66
(see insert)

*Gloria Patri

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be.
World without end. Amen. Amen.

Sermon "Choosing Hope" Rev. Karen E. Gale

Musical Reflection *The Advent of Our God*

Prayer of the People/Pastoral Prayer

Lord's Prayer

Our Father (Creator), 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.

*Hymn 95 *Love Came Down at Christmas*

Dedication of the Offering

*Doxology
Praise God, from whom all blessings flow. Praise God, all creatures, here, below. Praise God, above, ye heav'nly hosts. Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

*Prayer of Dedication

God of hopeful waiting,
We give thanks for all of the ways in which you reveal yourself to us.
Help us to clear away the many distractions of this season.
Remind us that we wait for something far more precious than what the world promises.
May these offerings be a sign that we are choosing hope each Advent day.
Amen.

*Hymn 88 *Canticle of the Turning*

*Benediction

Postlude

Deacon of the Day: Denise Keaney
Coffee Hour Host: Barbara Larsen

First Church Braintree Announcements

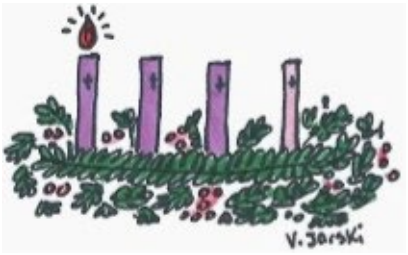
We Need Advent Wreath Lighters

We need people to light the Advent wreath. You can serve as a lighter by yourself. You can share the role with a church friend. You can light the candles with family members. Being an Advent lighter is easy. Read a short prayer. Light the candle. Done! Please let me know if you are able to light candles this year as we wait for The Light to arrive. We need lighters for each Advent Sunday and for Christmas Eve.

Christmas Gifts for DCF Kids

We received the wish lists for 12 DCF children and teens this year. Ages range from 3-17 and each list comes with suggestions and sizes. Mattie is coordinating the list. You can sign up by texting her at 920-284-7694 or by email. mattie@firchchurchbraintree.com or talking with her on Sunday.

Gifts are due back to the church by <u>Wednesday December 9th.</u> It's a tight window this year. So shop early or order online. Please bring gifts unwrapped with the tag details included with the bag. Thank you for helping make holidays more joyful for kids having a challenging time.



The First Congregational Church of Braintree is an <u>Open & Affirming Congregation</u> working in partnership with all churches of the United Church of Christ. We welcome all God's children into Christian faith regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, political stance or theological perspective, national origin, mental health status, physical and cognitive abilities, and the many diverse forms of family configurations. We proclaim and affirm that full and equal participation in the life and leadership of our church is open to all. We seek to continue learning and growing together as the inclusive Body of Christ. We are committed to spreading the light and love of Christ into the world through worship and service.

Whoever you are and wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

Rev. Karen E. Gale, Interim Pastor ❖revkarengale@gmail.com
Keith Ciccone, Director of Music ❖keciccon@aol.com
Mattie Gietman, Dir. Children's Ministry❖mattie@firstchurchbraintree.com
Deb McMartin, Administrator ❖office@firstchurchbraintree.com
Valerie Fink, Bookkeeper ❖finance@firstchurchbraintree.com

Luke 1: 5-25, 57-66

During the rule of Herod, King of Judea, there was a priest assigned service in the regiment of Abijah. His name was Zachariah. His wife was descended from the daughters of Aaron. Her name was Elizabeth. Together they lived honorably before God, careful in keeping to the ways of the commandments and enjoying a clear conscience before God. But they were childless because Elizabeth could never conceive, and now they were quite old.

It so happened that as Zachariah was carrying out his priestly duties before God, working the shift assigned to his regiment, it came his one turn in life to enter the sanctuary of God and burn incense. The congregation was gathered and praying outside the Temple at the hour of the incense offering. Unannounced, an angel of God appeared just to the right of the altar of incense. Zachariah was paralyzed in fear.

But the angel reassured him, “Don’t fear, Zachariah. Your prayer has been heard. Elizabeth, your wife, will bear a son by you. You are to name him John. You’re going to leap like a gazelle for joy, and not only you—many will delight in his birth. He’ll achieve great stature with God.

“He’ll drink neither wine nor beer. He’ll be filled with the Holy Spirit from the moment he leaves his mother’s womb. He will turn many sons and daughters of Israel back to their God. He will herald God’s arrival in the style and strength of Elijah, soften the hearts of parents to children, and kindle devout understanding among hardened skeptics—he’ll get the people ready for God.”

Zachariah said to the angel, “Do you expect me to believe this? I’m an old man and my wife is an old woman.” But the angel said, “I am Gabriel, the sentinel of God, sent especially to bring you this glad news. But because you won’t believe me, you’ll be unable to say a word until the day of your son’s birth. Every word I’ve spoken to you will come true on time—God’s time.”

Meanwhile, the congregation waiting for Zachariah was getting restless, wondering what was keeping him so long in the sanctuary. When he came out and couldn’t speak, they knew he had seen a vision. He continued speechless and had to use sign language with the people.

When the course of his priestly assignment was completed, he went back home. It wasn’t long before his wife, Elizabeth, conceived. She went off by herself for five months, relishing her pregnancy. “So, this is how God acts to remedy my unfortunate condition!” she said...

...When Elizabeth was full-term in her pregnancy, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives, seeing that God had overwhelmed her with mercy, celebrated with her. On the eighth day, they came to circumcise the child and were calling him Zachariah after his father. But his mother intervened: “No. He is to be called John.”

“But,” they said, “no one in your family is named that.” They used sign language to ask Zachariah what he wanted him named. Asking for a tablet, Zachariah wrote, “His name is to be John.” That took everyone by surprise. Surprise followed surprise—Zachariah’s mouth was now open, his tongue loose, and he was talking, praising God

A deep, reverential fear settled over the neighborhood, and in all that Judean hill country people talked about nothing else. Everyone who heard about it took it to heart, wondering, “What will become of this child? Clearly, God has a hand in this.”

Last Chance…Deadline is TODAY

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF BRAINTREE

MEMORIAL CHRISTMAS HYMN SING
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2026
AT 9:30 AM



To sponsor one or more of the following hymns *In Memory of* or *In Honor of* a loved one, please indicate your name (given by), their name, your hymn choice and amount of donation. Suggested donation per hymn is $10 but any amount is appreciated.
To ensure your request is included in our special bulletin, please return this request form to the church office or place it on the collection plate *no later than* ***Sunday, November 29.***

Choice of Hymns:

1. *O Come, All Ye Faithful*
2. *What Child is This?*
3. *O Little Town of Bethlehem*
4. *Silent Night*
5. *Angels We Have Heard on High*
6. *The First Nowell*
7. *Hark, The Herald Angels Sing*
8. *I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day*
9. *It Came Upon A Midnight Clear*
10. *Joy to the World*

Please PRINT the names below *exactly* as you wish them to appear in the bulletin.

Given by: _____
(Write your name as you wish it to appear in the bulletin)

Hymn #	Hymn Name Abbreviate if necessary	Circle One	*In Memory of* or *In Honor of* (Please print name clearly, exactly as you wish it listed.)	Amount Donated (Suggested amount is $10 per hymn.)
		Memory Honor		$
		Memory Honor		$
		Memory Honor		$
		Memory Honor		$
		Memory Honor		$
	Checks should be made payable to First Congregational Church of Braintree. Please write "Hymn Sing" in the memo.		**Total**	

Thank you for your support.