

Woodbury United Methodist Church



January 4, 2026

The Second Sunday of Christmas

Wesley Covenant Service

10:30 AM Worship

Woodbury United Methodist Church

4 Church Street, Woodbury, CT 06798 203-263-4775

www.woodburyumc.net Church e-mail: wumc@woodburyumc.net

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS WESLEY COVENANT SERVICE

**January 4, 2026
10:30 a.m.**

*Please stand as you are able.

WE COME TOGETHER IN PRAISE

The Rev. John Wesley established Covenant Services as an important part of early Methodist life. The first Methodist Covenant Service was held August 11, 1755. Wesley found the service rich and meaningful. Eventually these services came to be held on New Year's Eve, New Year's Day or a Sunday early in the year.

Though the structure of this service is somewhat different than the one conducted by John Wesley, much of it is taken directly from Wesley's service of 1780. The heart of the service, focused in the Covenant Prayer, requires persons to commit themselves to God. This covenant is serious and asks congregants to participate sincerely.

You are advised to make this covenant not only in your heart, but in word; not only in word, but in writing. Therefore, with all reverence, lay the service before the Lord as your act and deed. And when you have done this, sign it. Then keep it as a reminder of the holy agreement between God and you that you may remember it during doubt and temptations.

The United Methodist Book of Worship, 1992, edited

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

"The Angelic Host"

JS Bach

+CALL TO WORSHIP

Carol Galloway, Liturgist

Leader: Let us dance with delight in the Lord!

People: *Let our hearts be filled with joy!*

ALL: *For eternal salvation has appeared on the earth. Alleluia!*

*CAROL

"Angels from the Realms of Glory"

UMH #220

PRAYER OF THE DAY (*unison*)

O God, Searcher of all our hearts, you have formed us as a people and claimed us for your own. As we enter into covenant with you, reveal any reluctance within us. Let your Holy Spirit impress your truth on our inmost being for the sake of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you, One God, world without end. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Adapted from the Rev. Howard Thurman

*Lord, forgive us for saying "Christmas is over." The Christmastide is here, and so let our prayer be that
When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and the princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flocks,
May our work of Christmas begin:
To find the lost, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry,
to release the prisoner, to rebuild the nations,
to bring peace among people, to make music in the heart. Amen.*

SILENT CONFESSION AND WORDS OF PARDON

FOR THE CHILDREN AND YOUTH

WE LISTEN FOR THE WORD OF GOD

THE EPISTLE

Isaiah 60:1-6

*THE GOSPEL

Matthew 2:1-12

*HYMN

"Sing We Now of Christmas"

UMH #237

THE SERMON *"Mrs. Kelly and the Christmas bulletin"* Pastor Brian Bodt

WE RESPOND IN FAITH

SHARING JOYS AND CONCERNS

THE PASTORAL PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER

UMH #895

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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

OFFERING OUR GIFTS

OFFERTORY

"*Nativity Carol*"
The Chancel Choir

Francis O'Brien

*RESPONSE OF PRAISE "Sing We Now of *Christmas*" UMH #237, vs. 5

*Gold and myrrh they took there, gifts of greatest price;
there was ne'er a stable so like paradise.*

*Sing we Noel, the King is born, Noel!
Sing we now of *Christmas*, sing we now Noel!*

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

THE WESLEY COVENANT SERVICE

+HYMN "*Come, Let Us Use the Grace Divine*" UMH #606
(This hymn was written by the Rev. Charles Wesley specifically for the Covenant Service.)

PROCLAMATION (*by the leader*)

Brothers and sisters in Christ, the Christian life is redeemed from sin and consecrated to God. Through baptism, we have entered this life and have been admitted into the new covenant of which our Lord Jesus Christ is the Mediator. He sealed with His own blood, that it might stand forever.

On one side, God promises to give us new life in Christ, the Source and Perfecter of our faith. On the other side, we stand pledged to live no more unto ourselves but only for Jesus Christ, who loved us and gave himself for us.

From time to time we renew our covenant with God, especially when we reaffirm the Baptismal Covenant and father at the Lord's table. Today, however, we meet, as the generations before us have met, to renew the covenant that binds us to God. Let us make this covenant of God our own.

INVITATION (*responsive*)

Leader: Commit yourselves to Christ as his servants. Give yourselves to him, that you may belong to him. Christ has many services to be done. Some are more easy and honorable, others are more difficult and disgraceful. Some are suitable to our inclinations and interests, others are contrary to both. In some we may please Christ and please ourselves. But then there are other works where we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves. It is necessary, therefore, that we consider what it means to be a servant of Christ. Let us, therefore, go to Christ, and pray:

All: Let me be your servant, under your command. I will no longer be my own. I will give up myself to your will in all things.

L: Be satisfied that Christ shall give you your place and work.

All: Lord, make me what you will. I put myself fully into your hands: put me to doing, put me to suffering, let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you, let me be full, let me be empty, let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and with a willing heart give it all to your pleasure and disposal.

L: Christ will be the Savior of none but his servants. He is the source of all salvation to those who obey. Christ will have no servants except by consent; Christ will not accept anything except full consent to all that he requires. Christ will be all in all, or he will be nothing.

Confirm this by a holy covenant. To make this covenant a reality in your life, listen to these admonitions:

First, set apart some time, more than once, to be spent alone before the Lord; in seeking earnestly God's special assistance and gracious acceptance of you; in carefully thinking through all the conditions of the covenant; in searching your hearts whether you have already freely given your life to Christ. Consider what your sins are.

Consider the laws of Christ, how holy, strict, and spiritual they are, and whether you, after having carefully considered them, are willing to choose them all. Be sure you are clear in these matters, see that you do not lie to God.

Second, be serious and in a spirit of holy awe and reverence.

Third, claim God's covenant, rely upon God's promise of giving grace and strength, so you can keep your promise. Trust not your own strength and power.

Fourth, resolve to be faithful. You have given to the Lord your hearts, you have opened your mouths to the Lord, and you have dedicated yourself to God. With God's power, never go back.

And last, be then prepared to renew your covenant with the Lord. Fall down on your knees, lift your hands toward heaven, open your hearts to the Lord, as we pray:

COVENANT PRAYER (The people kneel or bow)

All: O righteous God, for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, see me as I fall down before you. Forgive my unfaithfulness in not having done your will, for you have promised mercy to me if I turn to you with my whole heart.

L: God requires that you shall put away all your idols.

All: I here from the bottom of my heart renounce them all, covenanting with you that no known sin shall be allowed in my life. Against your will, I have turned my love toward the world. In your power I will watch all temptations that will lead me away from you. For my own righteousness is riddled with sin, unable to stand before you.

L: Through Christ, God has offered to be your God again if you would let him.

All: Before all heaven and earth, I here acknowledge you as my Lord and God. I take you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for my portion, and vow to give up myself, body and soul, as your servant, to serve you in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life.

L: God has given the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way and means of coming to God.

All: Jesus, I do here on bended knees accept Christ as the only new and living Way, and sincerely join myself in a covenant with him. O blessed Jesus, I come to you, hungry, sinful, miserable, blind, and naked, unworthy even to wash the feet of your servants. I do here, with all my power, accept you as my Lord and Head. I renounce my own worthiness, and vow that you are the Lord, my righteousness. I renounce my own wisdom, and take you for my only guide. I renounce my own will, and take your will as my law.

L: Christ has told you that you must suffer with him.

All: I do here covenant with you, O Christ, to take my lot with you as it may fall. Through your grace I promise that neither life nor death shall part me from you.

L: God has given holy laws as the rule of your life

All: I do here willingly put my neck under your yoke, to carry your burden. All your laws are holy, just, and good. I therefore take them as the rule for my words, thoughts, and actions, promising that I will strive to order my whole life according to your direction, and not allow myself to neglect anything I know to be my duty.

L: The almighty God searches and knows your heart.

All: O God, you know that I make this covenant with you today without guile or reservation. If any falsehood should be in it, guide me and help me to set it aright. And now, glory be to you, O God the Father, whom I from this day forward shall look upon as my God and Father.

Glory be to you, O God the Son, who have loved me and washed me from my sins in your own blood, and now is my Savior and Redeemer.

Glory be to you, O God the Holy Spirit, who by your almighty power have turned my heart from sin to God.

O mighty God, the Lord Omnipotent, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you have now become my Covenant Friend. And I, through your infinite grace, have become your covenant servant. So be it. And let the covenant I have made on earth be ratified in heaven. Amen.

(You are invited to sign your covenant.)

THE HOLY COMMUNION

PRAYER OF CONSECRATION (*by the pastor*)

RECEIVING THE BREAD AND CUP

All are welcome to receive, or refrain from receiving, the Sacrament.

In the United Methodist tradition, ours is an open table for all.

The choir will commune first, followed by the congregation as directed by the ushers. We will receive standing at the foot of the Chancel.

The celebrants will receive last.

GOING FORTH

+CAROL

"There's a Song in the Air"

UMH #249

+THE BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

"God Rest Ye"

+ + +

Held

THE WORSHIP IS ENDED: THE SERVICE BEGINS.

Woodbury United Methodist Church

We are a welcoming Christian fellowship who celebrate and share God's love with everyone. We seek a closer relationship with Jesus Christ. Inspired by His example, we strive to be God's hands in this world. Empowered by God's word, we proclaim the Gospel and serve through worship, study, mission, and community support.

*The Rev. Dr. Brian R. Bodt, Pastor Jeff and Barbara Hunt, Lay Leaders
Christopher Shay, Minister of Music Matti Paparazzo, Admin. Assistant*

A CHRISTMAS WELCOME

In the Name of Christ, the new-born King, welcome! The Twelve Days of Christmas continues to tomorrow, Twelfth Night, January 5. Please share the Christmas message of salvation in Jesus Christ!

If you do not have a spiritual home, we invite you to consider this church and to learn about us at www.woodburyumc.net. May our saying, "Love Spoken Here," be incarnate in you! May God, who is rich in mercy, enfold us with Christ's love! A blessed Christmastide to you!

Pastor Brian Bodt

TODAY AT WOODBURY UMC

WELCOME TO WOODBURY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH! IF YOU ARE A VISITOR PLEASE COMPLETE A VISITOR'S CARD AND PLACE IT IN THE OFFERING. Our desire is that you experience the warmth of Christ's welcome and ours in this church.

VISION 2025 EMPHASIS TODAY is "Evangelism." Emphases are Evangelism, Missions, Affirmation and Inclusion, Communications, Youth and Young Adults and Congregational Vitality and Growth (Spiritual Wellness, Financial Health, Inviting Facilities).

FELLOWSHIP TIME TODAY is a light luncheon and discussion of the book Christmas Jar. Do join us!

WE THANK TODAY'S WORSHIP LEADERS:

Liturgist and Communion Assistant: Carol Galloway

Communion stewards: JoAnn Behlman and Karen Fimmano

A.V. Tech: Mark Riefenhauser

Ushers and Greeters: Michael Pinevich and Eileen Bennett

Fellowship Time Hosts: Pastor Brian Bodt and Carol Galloway

THE WEEK AHEAD....

SUNDAY, JANUARY 4, 2026

WORSHIP, 10:30 a.m., Sanctuary

BLOOD PRESSURE SCREENINGS, 11:30 a.m., Assembly Room

FELLOWSHIP TIME LIGHT LUNCH AND DISCUSSION OF CHRISTMAS JAR, 11:30 a.m., Fellowship Hall

MONDAY, JANUARY 5

EVANGELISM MEETING, 7 p.m., Zoom

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7

BELL CHOIR REHEARSAL, 6 p.m., Sanctuary

CHANCEL CHOIR REHEARSAL, 7:15 p.m., Sanctuary

THURSDAY, JANUARY 8

OFFICE HOURS, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., Church office

BOARD OF TRUSTEES, 7 p.m., Assembly Room

(election of 2026 officers)

FRIDAY, JANUARY 9

TRANSITION ACADEMY, 9:15 – 10:45 a.m., Church Grounds

NEXT SUNDAY, JANUARY 11, 2026

The sermon “*God Plays No Favorites*” will be based on Matthew 3:13-17 and Acts 10:34-43. We will install our church officers for 2026. Our liturgist will be Sandy Purdy.

OUR PRAYER INTENTIONS

Michael Hennessey, Carol Hennessey's brother-in-law.

For Carol Quinby, with thanksgiving for improved vision.

For Carolyn Shay, being treated for a medical condition.

For conflicts in the Middle East and our troops stationed there; and for the conflicts in the Ukraine and the Sudan.

Bishop Bickerton; our new District Superintendent, the Rev. Heather Sinclair; and the churches and clergy of the NY Conference.

For Missionaries, especially Sarah Flores (Ecuador), Rev. Dexter Ceballos (Mongolia), Jonathan McCurley, and Joy Prim

For those facing life's difficulties and medical challenges, especially Carol Hennessey, Nancy Ossewaarde, Eni Mucco (friend of Jane Hutter) and Jean Lilly (Meg Temple's mother)

JANUARY MEETINGS

Evangelism meeting, Monday, Jan. 5, 7 p.m., Zoom

Board of Trustees, Thursday, Jan. 8, 7 p.m., Assembly Room
(election of 2026 officers)

Christian education, Sunday, Jan. 11, 11:45 a.m., Assembly Room

Affirmation and Inclusion, Mon., Jan. 12, 6:15 p.m., Assembly Room

Church Council, Thurs., Jan. 15, 7 p.m., Assembly Room

Communications, Mon., Jan. 26, 7 p.m., Assembly Room

HOLD THE DATE: Annual Meeting, Sunday, Feb. 1, after morning worship. Looking back at accomplishments in 2025 and forward to new challenges in 2026. All welcome.

MIDWEEK PRAYER SESSIONS

A fourth session of "Hopeful Readings and Reflections; Responses in Uncertain Times" will occur on Tuesday, January 20 from 7 pm - 7:45 pm.to read and reflect upon "A Model of Faith and Justice": Rabbi Abraham Heschel (with connections to Martin Luther King).

WINTER WEATHER PROTOCOL

Just a reminder to please check the website and the voicemail when there is inclement weather on the way. These are the best ways to stay up to date on church worship services, and cancellations.

MEMBER CARE

Family Nurture and Hospitality is excited to introduce our new "Member Care" initiative. Our hope is to assist church members dealing with current hardships for which they need assistance with meals, light housekeeping, transportation to appointments, grocery/prescriptions pickup, pastoral care, and/or church family visitation. Member care is different from Helping Hands in that it is specific to church members. Helping Hands provides community support, especially for seniors in Woodbury, Bethlehem, Watertown, and Southbury, offering help with home tasks, food, and general assistance through volunteers and coordination with town resources.

If you are interested in preparing or donating a meal, or if you would like to learn more, or join our team, please contact Cathy Riefenhauser (203-768-7680, or ccrief88@gmail.com) to discuss in more detail. Thanks!

ON-GOING MINISTRY

CURRENT WOODBURY FOOD BANK NEEDS are pumpkin, cherry or apple pie filling, pie crust mix, crispy onion rings (for green bean casserole). Please leave them in the Foyer box.

"I was hungry and you gave me food...." Jesus, Matthew 25:35

FOR THE CHURCH COMMUNITY

Pastor Brian can be reached at pastor.woodburyumc@gmail.com or 203.747.1781 for pastoral care. Want a visit? Please let him know. He'd love to meet with you!

Are you on our *"Living through Grace"* weekly email? If not, please contact Matti Paparazzo at wumc@woodburyumc.net She'll get you on!

HELP US FEED LOCAL FAMILIES



GIVE LOCAL. FEED LOCAL. WOODBURY HELPING WOODBURY.

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

- At the Woodbury Labonne's you can apply monetary funds to the food bank account
- Drop off most needed non-perishable food items
- Monetary donations, scan below:

Donate
via Pay Pal



CONNECT WITH US:

203-263-3869

community.services.council@gmail.com

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

Every can, every dollar, and every act of kindness helps us continue our mission to ensure no one in Woodbury goes hungry

MOST NEEDED FOOD ITEMS:

- Canned soup, chowders, stews & broth
- Rice, instant mashed potatoes & jarred pasta sauce
- Shelf-stable milk & juice
- Peanut butter & canned protein
- Pancake mix, cereal & oatmeal

DROP OFF LOCATION:

Woodbury Food Bank
(Behind Labonne's, under
Newtown Savings Bank)

“When the Song of the Angels Is Stilled”

*By Howard Thurman**

*When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and the princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flocks,
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 people,
To make music in the heart.*

*Howard Thurman (1899-1981) was a highly influential American author, philosopher, theologian, Christian mystic and civil rights leader. He was the 1923 valedictorian of Morehouse College and an ordained Baptist clergyman. He was a key spiritual mentor to Martin Luther King Jr. and a principal architect of the nonviolent Civil Rights Movement, shaping it with his message of "Common Ground" and the power of inner spiritual resources for facing oppression, as detailed in his influential book Jesus and the Disinherited.