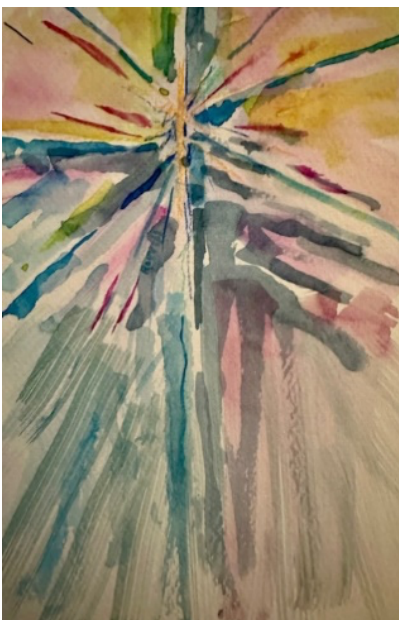


New Year's Eve Open Sanctuary
South Freeport Church, UCC
December 31, 2023



Original Art: Linda Rowel Kelley

Good morning & welcome. If you are new to our church, we are an Open and Affirming church which means no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

Today this will be an open sanctuary service, different from our usual Sunday worship. As the New Year approaches, we are offering this special time, and we invite you to sit, reflect, meditate, pray or listen. You are welcome to stay the whole hour or leave as you wish.

During this time, Will Bristol will be providing background music of his own improvisations. Will has blessed us with his beautiful piano and organ music for the past 6 months. This will be his last Sunday here, as he moves to the Brunswick Unitarian/Universalist Church as choir director and organist. It is with warm gratitude that we wish him well.

At the end of the service, around 10:30, the music will end for a minute and then Will will play his final postlude for our church: Federic Chopin's Etude B. 130, number 2 in A Flat Major.

Each Sunday during Advent, we lit candles representing **Hope, Peace, Joy and Love**. On Christmas Eve we lit the Christ Candle, **representing the life of Jesus Christ and the light he brought to humanity**.

If you like, at some point, you can light a candle at the front of the sanctuary. Your candle may represent the memory of a lost loved one, perhaps someone who is struggling, prayers for the Earth or regions of conflict. It might represent courage for a fresh start in the New Year. Whatever feels right.

A Word About Lighting Candles

For safety sake, please light your candle from one of the candles in the sand. You can carefully place it to the left or right of the center candle. Please avoid the possibility of flames from the candles burning your clothing.

Please Note

While no offering is being collected this morning, there is an offering plate at the back of the sanctuary for your donation.

There will be no coffee hour this morning.

Excerpt from Steven Charleston's book titled CLOUD WALKING, January 1 entry

“ all marks of time are an illusion, but even illusions have their place, so I step over this threshold, with a reminder of God's timeless grace. May the days ahead, bring you the challenge to be who you are called to be. May they offer you a warm hand of healing when you hurt, strength in every struggle, the sheer joy of new discovery. May you know the peace that passes understanding, the hope that lifts your spirit to new horizons. May you know, love. May your talent be tested. And may the path you follow, the causes you embrace, the truths, you tell, bring you closer to the meaning of your tomorrow.”

Whatever your process, we hope that you will find this quiet time nourishing for your soul. This is your time.

Gratitude to all of the Deacons for their ideas, thoughts & suggestions in developing this service.