

3rd Sunday of Advent

December 15, 2024

10:30 a.m. Worship



European Robin in Snow

The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.

--Malachi 3:2

First Presbyterian Church

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COMMISSIONED PASTOR: DR. WENDY L. LAMB

MINISTRY OF PASTORAL SUPPORT: REV. DR. STEPHEN W. SMITH

MINISTRY OF VISITATION: LAURIE STAFFORD

MINISTRY OF MUSIC: CURTISS ALLEN, JR., DIRECTOR OF MUSIC;

WILLIAM ZEITLER, ORGANIST;

AMY GANO, BELLS

PASTOR EMERITUS: REV. JAMES C. HUFFSTUTLER

Welcome to Worship at First Presbyterian Church

This service is being livestreamed and can be viewed on our YouTube channel in real time or as a recording. **Large-print copies of this order of service**, as well as **audio enhancement devices** are available **from the ushers**.

We gather on Sunday for 3 reasons:

- **To seek God**- whom we find in sacred text and sacrament, in music and in song, in prayer, in the beauty of this space, in the stillness where we can hear our hearts. We offer God our thanks and praise, our lament and longing, and our resources. We let go of burdens and receive grace and forgiveness. We see the One our hearts love.
- **To practice Community** – rejoice w/those who rejoice, weep w/those who weep. To break bread with those whom we love and those whom we need to love more fully. We practice things our culture does not emphasize: resting, forgiving, sharing. Jesus asked us to love one another as he loved us, and we cannot do so without practice.
- **To listen for our Call**- often an invitation to go out and be or do or remember. God is speaking all the time: through conscience, nature, friends, and certainly scripture. We gather to listen for that Call and to recommit ourselves to discipleship.

Information on our common life can be found on our website www.fpcsb.net, along with sermons and newsletters. You can participate in our work by supporting us financially with a one-time or sustaining donation.

Children are **welcome** in worship. Younger children may go to the Nursery at any time.

OUR NEXT COMMUNION will be Sunday, January 5th.

Morning Worship†

Lector: Abby Willis

Candle Lighter: Rhyland French

REFLECTION before the SERVICE

Prepare is a traditional command for the season of Advent, but so are *Wait*, *Listen*, and *Watch*. Preparing to receive Christ into our hearts sometimes means that we do less, not more.

--Heidi Haverkamp, *Advent in Narnia*

GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME

PRELUDE

Advent Prelude

Charles Callahan

Susan Addington, Flute

Allow the music to usher you into sacred space and time.

INTROIT

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

VENI EMMANUEL

O come, thou Root of Jesse, free thine own from Satan's tyranny; from depths of hell thy people save, and give them victory o'er the grave. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

INVITATION to ADVENT

CHOIR 89 v. 2

For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits;

Truly my hope is in you.

Spring of Joy, rain down upon our spirits;

our thirsty hearts are yearning for your word;

come, make us whole, be comfort to our hearts. For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits;

Truly my hope is in you.

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world; the one who follows me will not walk in darkness but have the light of life."

We light these candles as a sign of the coming light of Christ.

(Child lights first candle.)

† The symbols you will see in this order of worship mean:

* **Stand if you are able**

✱ **The congregation will read.**

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;

✘ **On those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned**

(Child lights second candle.)

I will lead the blind by a road they do not know,

by the paths they have not known I will guide them.

✘ **I will turn the darkness before them into light,**

The rough places into level ground.

(Child lights third candle.)

The LORD says to his servant,

✘ **I will give you as a light to the nations,**

that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.

***HYMN 89¹ v. 1**

✘ **O Lord of Light, our only hope of glory,**

your radiance shines in all who look to you;

come, light the hearts of all in dark and shadow.

For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits;

truly my hope is in you.

The Christ of Joy be with you

✘ **and also with you!**

HYMN 82

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

HYFRYDOL

PRAYER of CONFESSION²

✘ **Merciful God,**

always with us, always coming:

We confess that we do not know

how to prepare for your Advent.

We have forgotten how to hope in miracles;

we have ignored the promise of your kingdom;

we get distracted by all the busyness of this season.

Forgive us, God.

(Moment for silent reflection and confession)

✘ **Grant us the simple wonder of the shepherds,**

the intelligent courage of the Magi,

and the patient faith of Mary and Joseph,

that we may journey with them to Bethlehem

and find the good news of a child born for us. Amen.

¹ Text & Music: Marty Haugen. ©1982, 2005 GIA Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Used by permission of OneLicense #A706254.

² *Worship Sourcebook, 2nd ed.*

(We remain seated for the kyrie, an ancient song of the church. We will sing it through in Greek first and then in English.)

KYRIE³

Musical score for Kyrie, featuring two systems of music. Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a lower voice line (bass clef). The lyrics are: Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son. Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son. Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy. The first system includes a note: *Note: Lower voices may hum.* The second system includes a fermata over the final note of the vocal line.

ASSURANCE of FORGIVENESS

Friends, believe the good news of the gospel:

✘ **In Jesus Christ we are forgiven and are being made whole. Amen.**

(We stand and sing Gloria)

*GLORIA 113⁴

GLORIA

Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!

TIME with the CHILDREN

[Children are always welcome in worship.]

ANTHEM

How Far Is It to Bethlehem⁵ arr. Parker/Shaw

How far is it to Bethlehem, not very far? Shall we find the stable room lit by a star? Can we see the little child, is he within? If we lift the wooden latch, May we go in? May we stroke the creatures there, Ox, ass, or sheep? May we peep like them and see Jesus asleep? If we touch his tiny hand, Will he awake? Will he know we've come so far Just for His sake? God in His Mother's arms, Babes in the byre Sleep as they sleep who find their heart's desire.

A READING

³ Traditional Liturgical text. Music: Dinah Reindorf, 1987. ©1987 Dinah Reindorf. All rights reserved. Used by permission of OneLicense #A706254.

⁴ Music: French carol; arr. Edward Shippen Barnes, 1937 ©1996 H. W. Gray Company. All rights reserved. Used by permission of OneLicense #A706254

⁵ Text: Frances Chesterton. Music: Traditional English; arr. Alice Parker and Robert Shaw. ©1961,1981 Alfred Publishing. All rights reserved. Used by permission of OneLicense #A706254.

***RESPONSE**

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

VENI EMMANUEL

O come, Desire of nations, bind all people in one heart and mind; bid envy, strife, and discord cease; fill the whole world with heaven's peace. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

***POSTLUDE**

Advent Carol

Resources for this Series:

“Advent in Narnia,” Cindy de Jong, Reformed Worship 129

Advent in Narnia: Reflections for the Season, Heidi Haverkamp

The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe, C.S. Lewis

GREETERS: Claudia Oakes, Lynda Savage

USHERS: Brad Smith, *Lead Usher*

John-Paul Fletcher, Dave Thomas, *Security Ushers*

SOUND ENGINEERS: Dan Direen, Brent Nord

VIDEO ENGINEER: Oliver Lamb

CAMERA OPERATORS: Kevin Lamb, Lynn Usher

REMEMBER IN PRAYER THIS WEEK

Marianna Fowles, Sandy Garza, Debora Holk

Elders: Mary Bolaños, Brooke Dvorak, Pat Morris

Deacons: Chris Thomas, Kristine French, Joyce Lyons

Pastor Nominating Committee:

Shelby Obershaw, Christa Wallis, Neal Williams

This Weeks' Celebrations

Dec 16 Jon Horstmann

Dec 20 Melodee Kistner

Dec 18 Patrick Garcia

Dec 21 Danielle Garza

Dec 19 Jim & Carol Coyne

Kristin Arellano

Our Annual PW Alternative Christmas Market. In the Fellowship Hall following worship! ***Last chance*** to visit our market – we're offering unique gifts for those you love! Invest in our **Internship program**, or support our **Food Ministry**, or send funds to our super successful **LifeSkilz program** at SBHS. All of these gifts keep on giving to those who need support and encouragement. Cards representing most of these gifts will be available for you to share with the recipient of your thoughtful gift(s).

Deacons' Community Outreach/Christmas Gift Cards

Christmas will be here in less than two weeks (!) and the Deacons are ready to take orders for Stater Bros. gift cards. **The Deacons' plan is for you to deliver these \$50 cards to your needy friends and neighbors.** The sign-up sheet is in the office, and **today is the only day to sign someone up.** On the sign-up sheet, please list the recipient's name (non-church members only, this is part of the Deacons' Community Outreach ministry) and your name. The Deacons will have the gift cards ready for you to pick up and deliver next Sunday, December 22nd. If you cannot pick up your gift card(s) that day, please let us know so we can make other arrangements. **Thank you for helping us help our neighbors!**

We have been given a small pipe organ, built by Ron Kraft. He and Ruby have kindly donated it to our church and it will be installed in Fellowship Hall, enhancing our summer worship, and perhaps leading to some other joyful activities. The cost of installing it has been greatly discounted, but will still require about \$3,500. **If you would like to donate to this, please contact the church office.**

The Christmas Joy Offering has been a cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s. The Offering distributes gifts equally to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions, which provides critical financial support to church workers and their families, and to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color providing education and leadership development while nurturing racial and ethnic heritage. **We will receive the offering on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 22.**

Symphony Jeunesse will present Carols & Cookies – Cinnamon & Cider, a holiday concert in Fellowship Hall on Sunday, December 22nd at 3:00 p.m. For more information, go to **Symphoniejeunesse.com**, or contact **sjostings@gmail.com**.

Inland Master Chorale presents *A John Rutter Christmas*, Sunday, December 22nd at 4:00 p.m. at the Memorial Chapel of the University of Redlands. Tickets can be purchased at **www.inlandmasterchorale.org**

Leonard Scholarship Applications. Leonard Scholarship applications for fall 2025 are available in the church office and on the church website. **<https://www.fpcsb.net/leonard>** All applications must be in the church office no later than Feb. 28, 2025. Any questions can be emailed to Lynda Savage. **Lksavage3@gmail.com**

The Joy of Generosity! Thank You! As of December 12, we have received 38 pledges for a total of \$228,924. If you have not yet pledged, you can mail your pledge in, or drop it in the offering plate, or phone Laurie or Mimi at the church office, and we'll be happy to take your pledge over the phone.

KING SIZED BED w/ mattress (CA King) and 1 set of sheets available in exchange for a donation to the church. Text Kathy Showman at (951)312-8175, if you are interested.

News and announcements are available in your Friday *Keeping in Touch* emails. If you are not receiving these, and you would like to, contact Mimi in the church office.

The Music Box

In a distant valley cradled by snow-draped peaks, there lived a young woman named Eryth, who was known for her skill in mending things. Her hands could coax life back into broken tools and torn garments, and people came from far and wide to ask for her help.

Eryth had always felt content with her simple life. The rhythm of her work, the gratitude of those she helped, and the quiet beauty of the valley filled her days with a steady satisfaction. One afternoon, though, she overheard a passing merchant speak of the importance of “following your bliss.” The words haunted her. She began to wonder: Was her life truly worthy if it wasn’t filled with the radiant joy the merchant described? Had she been settling for contentment when she could have bliss?

One day, a traveler passed through the valley, bearing a curious object: a lantern made of smooth, golden metal, inscribed with words in some unknown language that glimmered faintly when the light struck them. The traveler spoke of its enchantment. “This lantern reveals your bliss,” he said, offering it to Eryth. “Follow where its light shines, and you will find unending joy.”

Eryth hesitated, but the promise of bliss was too alluring to ignore. She sold her possessions and set out with the lantern in hand.

The first night, the lantern’s beam pointed toward the rolling hills to the west, where flowers bloomed in endless colors. Eryth frolicked among the blossoms and drank sweet water from crystal streams. For a while, it felt as though bliss had found her.

But as the weeks passed, the novelty wore thin. She missed her home, her community, her work, and the sense of purpose she’d once had. She began to wonder: Was bliss this fleeting?

Still, the lantern’s light called her onward. It led her through dense forests, shimmering cities, and golden deserts. Each new place promised joy but delivered only moments of it. Bliss, Eryth realized, was like the wind — always moving, never settling, always fleeting.

One evening, as the lantern guided her down a thorny path overgrown with brambles, she stumbled and fell. The lantern rolled from her grasp, its light extinguished. Eryth sat amid the thorns, weary and scratched, and cried out in frustration.

“What is the point of this journey?” she cried aloud.

From the shadows, an old woman emerged. Her face was weathered but kind, her eyes glinting like stars. “What troubles you, child?”

Eryth explained the lantern’s promise and her disappointment. The woman listened silently, then asked, “And what did you hope to find?”

“Something that made all the struggle worthwhile,” Eryth admitted.

The old woman smiled. “Bliss is a fickle guide, for it promises an escape from struggle. But meaning — ah, that is a lantern you carry within. Its light reveals what truly matters to you, even in the dark places. What did you leave behind to chase this fleeting bliss?”

Eryth thought of her valley, the people who had trusted her to mend what was broken, and the quiet satisfaction she’d felt in her work. Her heart yearned for the life she had abandoned, not for its ease but for its meaning.

With the old woman’s help, Eryth found her feet and turned back the way she had come, brambles tugging at her sleeves. The path was no easier on the return, but each step felt lighter as she thought of the life she would build — not perfect, not blissful, but hers.

When she reached her valley, her hands found new purpose in mending what had been left undone during her absence. People welcomed her back with stories of how they had struggled without her skill and kindness.

The golden lantern sat on her shelf, unlit and no longer needed. Its promise of bliss had led her astray — in one sense. But in another it had fulfilled its promise by revealing her ‘true bliss’ – a life of meaning for HER. It had led her to realizing the worthiness of a life spent in service to what matters to HER, even when the road is hard and overcast with rain.

From that day on, when others sought her wisdom, Eryth would tell them, “Don’t ‘follow your bliss’ — that can too easily lead you astray. Seek instead what gives your life meaning, and even the brambles will feel like part of the path.”

--William Zeitler



The seal of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is a symbolic statement of the church's heritage, identity, and mission in contemporary form. Its power depends on both its simplicity and complexity, as well as its traditional and enduring qualities.

The basic symbols in the seal are the cross, Scripture, the dove, and flames.

As a church of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), our congregational life is governed by the Ruling Elders of our current Session:

Mary Bolaños, Brooke Dvorak, Pat Morris, Martha Pinckney, Lily Bolaños, Margaret Doane, Jon Horstmann, Phyllis Hough, Sue Alexander, Jeanne Clark, Kathy Showman, Norm Wallis,
and Clerk of Session Amy Smith

and supported by our Board of Deacons:

Rebecca Allen, Dan Direen, Robin Edwards, Rick Rodriguez, Katie Smith, Brad Smith, Dave Thomas, Chris Wright-Thomas, Kristine French, Joyce Lyons, Joanna Nord, Mindy Rueda

In this time of change for our congregation, a Pastor Nominating Committee has been elected by the congregation:

Susan Addington, Mary Bolaños, John-Paul Fletcher,
Brian Gano, Kendra Lamb, Jim Morris,
Shelby Obershaw, Christa Wallis, Neal Williams