

Second Sunday of Advent
December 7, 2025 10:30 a.m. Worship



“Our God has done this for me. In these days, God has shown favor to us and taken away the disgrace among the people.” —Luke 1:25

First Presbyterian Church

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MINISTRY OF WORD AND SACRAMENT: REV. BRIAN S. SYMONDS

COMMISSIONED LOCAL 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

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 with those who rejoice, weep with 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.

OUR NEXT COMMUNION will be Sunday, January 4th.

Morning Worship†

Lector: The Fletcher Family

REFLECTION BEFORE THE SERVICE

The poet of our theme carol, “What Child Is This,” penned the phrase “the silent Word is pleading.” Our vision of the child in the manger may be the soothing lullaby and the silent night, but the reality of babies, and of that time in history, is that of a “crying out.” It was a time when many were silenced and the need for prophesying justice in the midst of trauma was great. Zechariah does this when his silence is lifted. The Word became Flesh for such a time. How will we cry out for true peace for all people? How will we sooth the trauma of the world in our time?

- Rev. Dr. Marcia McFee

GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME

PRELUDE

When the Saviour Jesus Christ..

J.F. Dandrieu

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

* CALL TO WORSHIP / CANDLE LIGHTING

We continue our Advent series...

✠ Why lies He in such mean estate,
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear: for sinners here
The Silent Word is pleading.

The poet of our themed carol, “What Child Is This”

We light this candle of Peace for those who need it most.

For all who are being silenced.

For all who are afraid to speak out.

For all who know that peace comes with justice.

Our question for today at the scene of the nativity is this: “How will we cry out for true peace for ALL people? How will we soothe the trauma of the world in our time?”

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

* Stand if you are able

✠ The congregation will read.

What child IS this? This, this, is the Prince of Peace who invites us to proclaim his reign forever.

✠ This, this is Christ, the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary!

***HYMN 106**

Prepare the Way, O Zion

BEREDAN VÅG FÖR HERREN

PRAYER of CONFESSION

We hear the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord and make God’s paths straight.” Let us prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ as we confess our sin together:

(Take a moment to silently name your longing.)

✠ God of Grace, we confess that we are not ready for you to come into our world — not quite yet. We cling to the known and familiar, afraid of the transformation your grace will bring. Yet you are always a step ahead of us, a voice crying out in the wilderness, inviting us into bold new ways of being disciples. Humble us, O God, and teach us to do the work of repentance so that, fully reliant on your grace, we may know the richness of restored relationship with you and one another. Amen.

“Friends, hear the good news: God’s mercy is from everlasting to everlasting. Before we repent and change our ways, God’s love has already claimed us as God’s own. Proclaim with me the good news of the gospel:

✠ In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!

(We stand and sing Alleluia)

*ALLELUIA

William Zeitler

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! Al - le al - le - lu - ia!

TIME with the CHILDREN

[After Time with the Children, our children are encouraged to worship with us. There are activity bags and books in the Narthex.]

BLESSING of TRANSITION

ANTHEM *How Far Is It to Bethlehem*¹ arr. Alice Parker, Robert 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.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 1:5-25

In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was descended from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. But they had no children because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years.

Once when he was serving as priest before God during his section's turn of duty, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord to offer incense. Now at the time of the incense offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified, and fear overwhelmed him. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I know that this will happen? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years." The angel replied, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the

¹ Text: Frances Chesterton. Music: Traditional English; arr. Alice Parker and Robert Shaw.

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presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. But now, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, you will become mute, unable to speak, until the day these things occur.”

Meanwhile the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering at his delay in the sanctuary. When he did come out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He kept motioning to them and remained unable to speak. When his time of service was ended, he returned to his home.

After those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she remained in seclusion. She said, “This is what the Lord has done for me in this time, when he looked favorably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people.”

This is the word of faith that we proclaim

✠ **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON

The Silent Word (Peace) Rev. Brian S. Symonds

MOMENT for MISSION

Rick Rodriguez

THE OFFERING of OUR TITHES and GIFTS

(We offer our tithes and gifts to be part of God's purposes in the world, and we invite you to take part. You may place your offering in the basket in front or give it to the usher. You may always send gifts by mail or online.)

OFFERTORY

***PRAYER OF THANKS**

Christ calls us to live generous and grateful lives. Take these gifts we offer today, O God, and use them to the fulfillment of Christ's ministry. May these gifts help to free the captives, heal the sick, comfort the lonely, feed the hungry, heal the wounded. As Christ's hands and feet, use us too, in service to building your beloved community.

✠ **Amen.**

CELEBRATION of HOLY COMMUNION

INVITATION to the LORD'S TABLE

So come, you who hunger and thirst for a deeper faith, for a better life, for a fairer world. It is Jesus himself who invites you.

SURSUM CORDA

The Lord be with you.

✠ **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

✠ **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

✠ **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

GREAT PRAYER of THANKSGIVING

SANCTUS

James C. Huffstutler

✠ **Holy, holy, Lord Almighty, God of power and might.**

Heaven and earth are full of your glory, Glory in the highest!

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

Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest.

PRAYERS of the PEOPLE, OUR LORD'S PRAYER

✠ **Great, Holy One, spreading time and space,
show us who You are in a human face.**

In this moment of silent contemplation, we lift up our hopes for the world, for its people, for the kind of kin-dom embodied by the child who became the Prince of Peace.

TIME of SILENT CONTEMPLATION

Seeking one, how will you meet us?

"In the person who resists hate and greed, and then persists;
when my people work together, righting ancient wrongs,
singing peaceful songs."

✠ **Great, Holy One, spreading time and space,
show us who You are in a human face.**

Holy Living One, Child of Peace, Spirit of Justice, we come to you today weary of ongoing unrest, weary of greedy forces claiming what's "right" for the many based on what benefits the few. We know you are with us, for you came to our human story when we needed your message so much. We still do.

We ask, "what child is this that we follow, and who are we in the scene of this unfolding story?"

As the manger waits for your arrival, we again plead for your presence to break into our lives and show us the light of peace. And we ask for the courage to step into the scene, and raise our voices for those who cannot.

We give you thanks, O God, this day for...

We name our sorrow this day for...

We ask for your forgiveness this day for...

Be with us as we seek to be the Body of Christ in the world.

We pray this in the way you taught us, saying...

✠ **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 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.**

✠ **Great, Holy One, spreading time and space,
show us who You are in a human face.**

PRAYER of CONSECRATION

WORDS of INSTITUTION

SHARING of the BREAD and CUP

*(The cup is non-alcoholic. There is gluten free bread available
Communion will be served by intinction at two stations. As you feel ready,
please come up by the inside aisle to a station, receive bread, dip it in the
cup, eat it, and return to your seat by an outside aisle.
If you would rather remain seated, rovers will bring the elements to you.
During this time, we invite you to sing these prayers.)*

SUNG PRAYER

Refrain 90

***Wait for the Lord*²**

Jacques Berthier

Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.

Wait for the Lord; be strong; take heart!

² Text: Taizé Community. Music: Jacques Berthier. © 1984 Les Presses de Taizé (admin. GIA Publications, Inc.) All rights reserved. Used by permission of OneLicense #A706254.

Refrain 95

Prepare the Way of the Lord³

Jacques Berthier

Prepare the way of the Lord.

Prepare the way of the Lord.

And all people will see the salvation of our God.

Refrain 583

Gloria. Gloria ⁴

Jacques Berthier

Gloria, gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Gloria, gloria, alleluia, alleluia!

PRAYER after COMMUNION

✘ So, friends and neighbors, now it's up to us.

May we welcome strangers, building faith and trust.

May we live like Jesus in our time and place

'Til this weary people know amazing grace. Amen.

***HYMN 87**

Comfort. Comfort Now My People

GENEVAN 42

***MOMENT for REFLECTION**

***CHARGE and BENEDICTION**

***RESPONSE**

ST. GEORGE'S WINDSOR

✠ **This, this is Christ, the King,**

Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:

Haste, haste to bring Him laud,

The Babe, the Son of Mary!

POSTLUDE

Improvisation

GREETER: Phyllis Hough

USHERS: Brad Smith, *Lead Usher*

Jim Siegmund, Al Rueda, *Security Ushers*

SOUND ENGINEERS: Dan Direen, Brent Nord, Brandon Turner

LIVESTREAM ENGINEER: James Welte

CAMERA OPERATORS: Kevin Lamb, Lynn Usher

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REMEMBER IN PRAYER THIS WEEK

Sandy Garza, Debora Holk

Elders: Susan Skogund, Katie Smith, Neal Williams

Deacons: Rebecca Allen, Brad Smith, Dave Thomas

This Weeks' Celebrations

Dec 7 Zienna Long

Dec 9 Maddie Ramirez

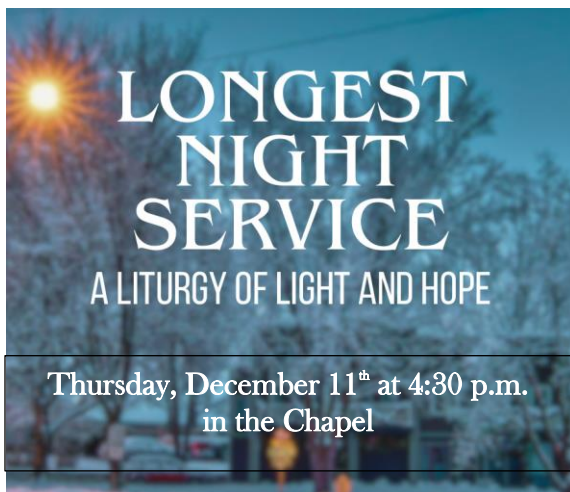
Dec 11 Christi Showman Farrar
 Deagan Belle

A-Caroling we will go! Everyone-of any age- is invited to join the Annual Intergenerational Car Caravan Christmas Caroling mission. **We will meet after church today** for a light lunch and a little bit of practice before we take the show on the road. Two or three different teams will then caravan to some of the homes of our homebound members and friends. You may have the energy for only a couple of stops or you may feel able to go to everyone on your team's list---you will be appreciated for whatever you are able to do! **Please let Mary Bolaños or Robin Edwards know if you are able to join the fun so that there will be enough lunch.**

Our Annual PW Alternative Christmas Market -- December 14th & 21st, in the Fellowship Hall following worship! 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).

Christmas Food Assistance. If you are a church member and you know of anyone who could use food assistance for Christmas, there is a **sign-up sheet in the office** to get a Stater Bros. gift card provided by the Deacons.

Leonard Scholarship Applications for Fall 2026 are available in the church office and on the church website. All applications must be in the church office by February 28, 2026. Any questions can be emailed to Lynda Savage. LKSavage3@gmail.com



A Memorial Service for Jim Babcock will be held at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, December 13 at Bobbitt's Memorial Chapel.



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 21st.**

The Celebration of Life for Curtis Webster will be held at St. Mark's Presbyterian Church in Newport Beach at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, January 23, 2026. People from all chapters of his life are invited. 2200 San Joaquin Hills Road, Newport Beach, CA 92660

Thank you for your generous support of our food participants. Thank you for your generous donations of shelf-stable foods. A suggestion list is available at reception, and on our website. We encourage bargain shopping since all donations can be put to good use. **Currently we would especially appreciate both regular & pop-top cans of fruit.**

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.

Music Box

At the eastern edge of Sereth stood the Scribe's Gate, a two-arched stone passage carved with words so old no living scholar could read what remained of them. Travelers came and went by the left-hand arch — the Known Way. It led to market towns, to family, to safety.

If the right-hand arch had ever had a name, it was lost to the sands of time ages ago.

So people called it the Unchosen Way.

It led somewhere, of course. Every road did. But no one could say where. The few who stepped beneath that arch returned changed or not at all. Most everyone avoided it entirely.

Instead, the right-hand path was simply a part of the landscape, like an old mole on the city's skin — a familiar, unremarkable blemish.

Mirel paused there at midmorning, exhausted. The city bells had just rung the hour, their hollow notes drifting like a stale draft through her heart. She had slept poorly — again. She still kept a second cup on the shelf, though the one to whom it belonged had chosen — elsewhere. Loss collected in the corners of her life like dust. Too many days felt like empty repetitions of happier yesterdays.

She hadn't meant to stop at the Gate. Her errands lay along the left-hand arch, same as always. But she found herself standing still in the sunlit dust, staring at the seam of shadow beneath the right-hand arch.

A farmer pushing a cart called to her, "Wrong way."
But she didn't move.

Mirel's breath trembled. Not from fear — she was too tired for fear — but from a pressure she couldn't name, a sense of being on the verge of something small but real, like a bud deciding whether to open. She stepped closer.

The dust around her feet stirred, then settled again.

Her throat tightened.
"What the hell," she murmured.

She turned toward the left-hand arch again — but her feet didn't follow. They remained angled toward the unnamed road, as though some silent inner vote had already been cast without her consent.

She took a single step beneath the right-hand arch.

The air shifted.

Not dramatically — just enough that she felt it at the edges of her skin, a subtle thinning, a sense of being recognized by something she couldn't see.

Dust rose in a faint swirl behind her. When it settled, she saw them: impressions in the earth beside her footprints. Soft hollows, as though someone else walked beside her with a gait slightly longer than her own.

She froze.

Looked back.

Called softly, "Is someone there?"

The impressions faded.

Only her own prints remained.

Mirel swallowed.

Her pulse beat in her ears.

Tentatively, she walked forward again.

With her second step, the companion footprints reappeared — this time clearer, more defined, as though the unseen traveler wished to reassure her: You're not imagining me. I'm here when you walk, not when you look.

She reached down to touch one.

Her fingers passed through dust — the imprint dissolving at her touch, then re-forming once she lifted her hand.

A wind picked up.

The road stretched forward in a quiet golden line, bending out of sight beyond low hills. Birds called somewhere unseen.

Mirel took another step.

The other footprints matched her pace.

Her breath steadied.

She didn't know where the road led. She didn't know what walked beside her. She didn't even know why she'd set foot here today. But she felt, with a clarity gentler than certainty, that her long solitude wasn't her whole truth — and that today, she had finally allowed herself to feel that.

She walked.

Not quickly.

Not bravely.

Not with any grand resolve.

Just enough —

just the next step
and then the next.

Behind her, distant voices called her name. She didn't answer. The wind carried those voices away like old obligations finally allowed to drift into nothing.

The companion prints deepened as the road rose toward the horizon, as if whoever walked beside her was growing more sure-footed with her continuing resolve.

At the crest of the hill, she paused, breathing the clean air. The path ahead glimmered faintly in the afternoon light — not glowing, not magical, just... attentive. As though the world itself leaned forward to listen.

Mirel whispered, not to the road, not to the unseen traveler, but to herself: "I don't know where I'm going. But I've certainly left where I was!"

The wind answered with a luminous silence, brushing her hair behind her shoulders like a gentle hand preparing her for what comes next.

She took another step, and another.
And the distant horizon welcomed her.

-- William Zeidler



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:

Lily Bolaños, Margaret Doane, Jon Horstmann, Phyllis Hough,
Sue Alexander, Jeanne Clark, Kathy Showman, Norm Wallis,
Pat Morris, Susan Skoglund, Katie Smith, Neal Williams,
and Clerk of Session Amy Smith

and supported by our Board of Deacons:

Rebecca Allen, Brad Smith, Dave Thomas, Chris Wright-Thomas,
Kristine French, Joyce Lyons, Joanna Nord, Mindy Rueda, Rick
Rodriguez, Jim Siegmund, Kyle Smith, and Christian Usher.