

Third Sunday of Advent  
December 14, 2025 10:30 a.m. Worship



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**"My soul proclaims your greatness, O God, and my spirit rejoices  
in you, my Savior." —*Luke 1:47***

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## **First Presbyterian Church**

Mailing address: P.O. Box 2729; San Bernardino, California 92406

**909.882.3308**

[www.fpcsb.net](http://www.fpcsb.net)

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

**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](http://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 4<sup>th</sup>.**

# Morning Worship†

Lector: The Nord Family

## REFLECTION BEFORE THE SERVICE

We often hear Jesus referred to as the “Son of God” and the “Son of Man.” But this carol points out his identity over and over as the “Son of Mary.” This equally powerful description points to his being reared by a woman who, upon hearing she would bear a child, said “yes” to one of the most difficult and precarious situations she could face. And then she sings with joy a song of justice for the ages. She goes on to guide and help form this child who would tend to the suffering ones. How can we proclaim a deep joy “in spite of” hardship in our time?

- Rev. Dr. Marcia McFee

## GATHERING MUSIC

### WELCOME

### PRELUDE

*Pastorale*

*G. Handel (1685-1757)*

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

### \* CALL TO WORSHIP / CANDLE LIGHTING

This week in our Advent series...

✠ What Child is this, who, laid to rest,  
On Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,  
While shepherds watch are keeping?

We often hear Jesus referred to as the “Son of God” ...

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

For all whose despair feels endless.

For all who find little joy in daily living.

For all whose disappointment runs deep.

Our question for today at the scene of the nativity is this: “How can we proclaim a deep joy “in spite of” hardship in our time?”

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† 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 Son of Blessed Mary who reigns with joy 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 107**

*Awake! Awake, and Greet  
the New Morn*

REJOICE, REJOICE

### PRAYER of CONFESSION

There are two great equalizers among us. One is that we have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory. The other is that we are all now justified by God's grace through the gift of Christ Jesus. Confident of both, let us admit where we have fallen short and receive grace without limit. (*Romans 3:23-24*)

*(Take a moment to silently name your longing.)*

✠ Holy and wonderful God, we confess that we have closed our eyes to what you are doing. We prefer to concentrate on problems, bad news and violence. When we do, we miss all the healing, freeing and helping you accomplish in our world. We pass up opportunities to participate in your Good News. We rob ourselves of so much joy. Forgive us and give us eyes to see, ears to hear, minds to understand, and hearts to treasure your mission in the world. Fill us with unquenchable joy at the coming of Jesus. Amen.

The angel told Joseph, "You are to name the baby Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." Believe the good news of the gospel: (*Matthew 1:21*)

✠ In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Hallelujah! Amen.

*(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!

## TIME with the CHILDREN

*[Children are always welcome in worship. There is KidSpace today in Room 10 following the Time with the Children.]*

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### ANTHEM

#### *Ave, Ave, the Angel Sang*<sup>1</sup>

Robert Lau

O lowly maiden, O blessed woman, you have been chosen to bring us the king. Peace be with you, O fairest holy one, Mary, mother, child of God. *Ave, ave, ave Maria. Ave, ave the angel sang. Ave, ave, ave Maria. Ave, ave the angel sang.* Fair one so gentle, filled with the Spirit, you will bear Jesus, the savior for all. Don't be afraid now, God's love surrounds you, Mary, mother, child of God. *Ave, ave, ave Maria ...* What will you call him, O lovely maiden? Rulers and nations will bow at his name. Let all creation give thanks for the holy one: Jesus, Savior, child of God. *Ave, ave, ave Maria ...*

### OUR SENSE of SAFETY

#### SCRIPTURE

#### **Luke 1:26-56**

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

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<sup>1</sup> Text & Music: Robert Lau. ©1995 Wayne Leupold Editions. Reprinted with permission under ONE LICENSE #A-706254. All rights reserved.

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

And Mary said,  
"My soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant.  
Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed,  
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name;  
indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.  
He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.  
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones  
and lifted up the lowly;  
he has filled the hungry with good things  
and sent the rich away empty.  
He has come to the aid of his child Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

This is the word of faith that we proclaim

✠ **Thanks be to God.**

**SERMON**

*Son of Mary (Joy)*

*Rev. Brian S. Symonds*

**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

### \*DOXOLOGY

OLD HUNDREDTH

- ✠ Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God all creatures here below;  
Praise God above, ye heavenly host;  
Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost, Amen.

### \*PRAYER OF THANKS

We thank you God, for all the ways you work and heal and bless and free us. Accept these gifts given in great gratitude and in anticipation of Christ's return. Multiply them for your glory and for the good of all people.

- ✠ Amen.

### 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 prayers for the world, for its people, for the kind of kin-dom embodied by the child who was son of a strong and wise woman.

### TIME of SILENT CONTEMPLATION

Living one, how will you lead us?

"Not by scheming or by stealth, not with glamor, power and wealth,  
But through Jesus, teacher, healer,  
In a manger born, [joy] on Christmas morn."

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

Holy Living One, Child of Joy, Spirit of Audacity, we come to you today weary of the forces that make joy such a difficult thing to hold, weary of the effort it takes to birth something new in a world bent on regressing away from wholeness for all people. 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 nativity begins to fill with the promise of new birth, we again plead for your presence to break into our lives and show us the light

of joy. We ask for the courage to step into the scene, preparing the way for fullness of possibility for all people.

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.**

**\*HYMN 372**

*O For a World*

AZMON

**\*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**

*Carols*

**GREETER: Bobbie Terrell**

**USHERS: Mark Adelson, *Lead Usher***

**Chris Thomas, Rick Rodriguez, *Security Ushers***

**SOUND ENGINEERS: Dan Direen, Brent Nord, Brandon Turner**

**LIVESTREAM ENGINEER: James Welte**

**CAMERA OPERATORS: Kevin Lamb, Lynn Usher**



REMEMBER IN PRAYER THIS WEEK

Ron & Ruby Kraft, Bob Saenz

*Elders:* Amy Smith, Lily Bolaños, Jon Horstmann

*Deacons:* Chris Thomas, Joanna Nord, Mindy Rueda

**This Weeks' Celebrations**

*Dec 16* Jon Horstmann

*Dec 18* Patrick Garcia

*Dec 19* Jim & Carol Coyne

Kristin Arellano

*Dec 20* Melodee Kistner

***Our Annual PW Alternative Christmas Market -- December 14<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup>,*** 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).

***Symphonie Jeunesse Orchestra*** will present their **annual Christmas concert this afternoon in Fellowship Hall at 3:00 p.m.** Admission is free. Donations of non perishable food are requested to help feed our neighbors.

***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.

***Annual Reports.*** Committee Chairs, project leaders, and all others who serve and lead our congregation: It is that time again, when we ask you to write a (brief!) report on where you saw God at work in your organization in 2025. **All reports must be submitted to Amy Smith amyms952@aol.com and/or Mimi Lange pres.first@gmail.com NO LATER THAN Friday, January 16th, so they can be included in the Annual Report to the Congregation.** Presbyterian Women must include a financial report. If you have any questions or need help, contact Amy or Mimi.

***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](mailto:LKSavage3@gmail.com)

***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.**

## *Music Box*

She had learned stillness early.

At the School of Unlearning, where most came to shed habits, she clung to inaction with careful devotion. She sat longer than the others, spoke less, and moved only when invited. The masters praised her restraint. The novices admired her serenity. Even the restless found themselves calmed in her presence. She called it devotion. Others called it maturity. She privately called it safety.

Every day she waited for the next instruction, the next sign, the next turning of the unseen wheel that would tell her when it was finally time to act. And so she waited.

It was during a pale hour—neither fully day nor fully night—that the Stranger appeared at the edge of the courtyard. No one saw him arrive. He was simply there, leaning against a column that looked rooted like an ancient oak. She noticed him because he was looking directly at her. Not at her posture. Not at her composure. At her.

After a long while, he spoke. “You wait very well.” She inclined her head, uncertain whether this was praise. Then he added, gently, “Waiting can be fear wearing holy robes.”

She felt heat rise in her chest. Her throat tightened. “I am patient,” she said. “I am obedient.” He studied her a moment longer. “Yes,” he said. “And you are terrified of choosing.”

She wanted to protest, to explain the layers of intention, the discipline, the purification of impulse. But the Stranger was already turning away, crossing the courtyard without haste, disappearing into the night.

That night she did not sleep. A single sentence kept echoing softly through her: Waiting can be fear wearing holy robes. For the first time she questioned the altar she had been kneeling before.

The next morning, without consulting her teachers, without seeking a sign, without waiting for clarity, she acted. Poorly. She spoke—and her voice trembled. She chose—though she was unsure. She stepped forward—while every instinct cried, “wait.” Every attempt was awkward. Her hands shook. Her answer was incomplete. Her timing was wrong.

And yet—beneath the embarrassment, beneath the uncertainty, beneath the ache of imperfection, something ignited.

Motion.

A heat she had never allowed herself to feel. She no longer mistook inaction for courage. And she no longer postponed her fire by calling it reverence.

-- 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.