

First Sunday of Christmas  
December 28, 2025 10:30 a.m. Worship



---

“This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called my son.” —*Matthew 2:15*

---

**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†

Lectors: Wanda Skipper  
Kristin Arellano

## REFLECTION BEFORE THE SERVICE

"This, this..." reverberates into our time, our lives, our world. The Magi see the reverberation of Light and are drawn to it. They too, were looking for a new world order – one of true peace and compassion. The subsequent story of the flight of the Holy Family as refugees, running from the threat of extinction by an insecure tyrant, is much too real in all of human history. Even in the return home, the child of Mary and Joseph would know the heartache of oppression that would shape his ministry – a ministry of proclaiming that God continues to be with us, that we are called to be with one another, even and especially in the midst of hard times.

- Rev. Dr. Marcia McFee

## GATHERING MUSIC

### WELCOME

**PRELUDE**      *Moderato cantabile, Op. 110*    L. Beethoven (1770-1827)  
dated December 25, 1821

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

### \* CALL TO WORSHIP / CANDLE LIGHTING

We have been on a journey of discovery...

✠ 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?

The Magi see the reverberation of Light and are drawn...

We light these candles for those who need it most.

For all who need more Hope.

For all who yearn for Peace.

For all whose Joy lays dormant.

---

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

\* Stand if you are able      ✠ The congregation will read.

For all who need the salve of Love.

For all who need this Child of possibility.

Our question for today at the scene of the nativity is this: “How do the messages of this child reverberate into our time, our lives, our world?”

What child IS this? This, this, is Christ the King who reigns with hope, peace, joy, and love 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 119**

***Hark! the Herald Angels Sing***

MENDELSSOHN

### **PRAYER of CONFESSION**

Hear these words of the Apostle Peter, “Repent, therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord ...” With humble and trusting hearts, let us confess our sin before God and one another.  
*(based on Acts 3:19-20)*

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

✠ **God of Christmas, we would never have thought to find your Savior in an innocent baby. We confess we would have expected a warrior with a great army. We would not have thought to find your kingdom to be one of service, obedience and humility. We confess we would have expected, maybe even wanted, a kingdom that reflected our own values and self-interests. Lord, forgive us when we quickly leave Christmas behind and neglect to live lives worthy of our calling as followers of our Lord, the Prince of Peace. By your Holy Spirit, help us turn to you and live according to the values of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.**

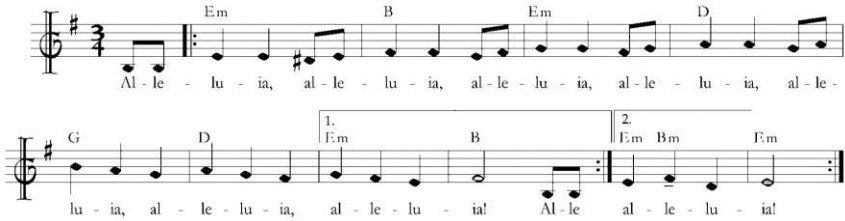
The angel said to Joseph, “She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” Indeed, he did and still does. Friends, believe this good news:

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

*(We stand and sing Alleluia)*

**\*ALLELUIA**

*William Zeitler*



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

**SCRIPTURE**

**Luke 2:1-20**

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room.

Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the

manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them, and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

This is the word of faith that we proclaim

✠ **Thanks be to God.**

**SERMON**

*The Grumpy Shepherd*

*Rev. Dr. Tina Blair*

**\*HYMN 113**

*Angels We Have Heard on High*

GLORIA

### **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**

Gracious and loving God, in this season of giving and receiving gifts, we thank you for your indescribable gift of your only Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. With gratitude and joy, we bring our tithes and offerings today. With your blessing, may they be multiplied and used to share the good news and love of Jesus Christ. Thank you, God, for your many blessings and your claim on our lives to share them with others. In Jesus's name we pray.

✠ **Amen.**

### **PRAYERS of the PEOPLE, OUR LORD'S PRAYER**

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.

**\*HYMN 147**

*The First Noel*

THE FIRST NOWELL

**\*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**

**The Rev. Dr. Tina Blair** is the daughter of an American diplomat, born in Morocco, growing up in Italy, India and France as well as Washington D.C. She came to California to attend Pomona College, and then pursued graduate studies at Stanford and the American Baptist Seminary of the West in Berkeley. She was ordained by Santa Barbara Presbytery in 1982, and completed her PhD in "Theology and Religious Education" at the Claremont School of Theology. For 13 years, she served as a professor at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, teaching in the field of practical theology. She missed the ministry of the parish and left to be one of the pastors at the American Church in Paris, France. She returned to the US in 2007 and has served as an Interim Pastor in several churches in Riverside Presbytery. She is currently happily retired, spending time reading, singing, writing, and helping out at churches when needed. A widow, she is the mother of Gillian, a graphic designer.

**GREETER:** Meryll Davis

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

Al Rueda, Chris Thomas, *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

Lorraine Bishop, Noé Falconi

*Elders:* Kathy Showman, Norm Wallis, Pat Morris

*Deacons:* Rick Rodriguez, Jim Siegmund, Kyle Smith

### **This Weeks' Celebrations**

***Dec 28*** Lillian Franklin

***Dec 29*** Irene Sandoval & David Suverkrup

***Dec 30*** Charlotte Pringle

***Jan 1*** Jeremy Allen

***Jan 2*** Carol Wright

***Jan 3*** Alex Smith

***From the Deacons:*** The recent Red Robin Fundraiser was highly successful 🤗. We raised a total of \$426.37. The money will be donated to our Food Closet Program. From all reports everyone had a jolly good time. 🎅 **Stay tuned for the date of our next FUNraiser.**

***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.

***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 cans or bags of beans (pinto, navy, red, etc.).

***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**

***2026 Companions on the Inner Way Retreat Opportunity.***

This spring, *Companions on the Inner Way* will once again offer a safe communal place to explore deep longings for the Holy. Grounded in the Christian tradition, the guided retreats incorporate body, mind, and soul through presentations, dialogue, spiritual practices, art, music, movement, and worship with Eucharist. The retreats strive to create an environment that is theologically curious, radically welcoming, and liturgically vibrant.

The retreat will take place from Sunday, March 8, 2026 to Friday, March 13, 2026 at Serra Retreat Center in Malibu, California.

Registration information can be accessed at **[www.cotiway.org](http://www.cotiway.org)**

Please contact Christa Wallis **[chriwallis@aol.com](mailto:chriwallis@aol.com)** if you'd like to apply for a scholarship to help defray the cost of attending.

***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

***Winter Camp*** will take place on the weekend of March 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>. Registration begins now. We're inviting you to an awesome winter camp weekend designed just for 6<sup>th</sup> thru 12<sup>th</sup> graders! Our theme this year is ***Warm Hearts, Renewed Spirits***, and it's all about experiencing God's life-giving warmth in the middle of a cold, crazy season. You can look forward to powerful worship & messages, winter fun & chill time, real community and so much more. Call (877)285-0199 or email **[registration@bblccc.com](mailto:registration@bblccc.com)** for more information. Cost is \$165 per camper. Financial help is available.

## *Music Box*

Few metaphors are more worn than “the wheat and the chaff.”

It usually arrives already moralized. Wheat is what matters. Chaff is what doesn't. Keep the good, discard the rest.

But this tidy image misses the depth of the metaphor.

To begin with, there would be no wheat at all without what we later call chaff. The stalk lifts the seed toward light and nourishes it as it grows. The husk encloses the wheat like a nutshell, protecting it from birds, weather, and disease. These structures are not incidental. Without them, there is no grain.

How many things are we quick to label “chaff” in our own lives? Outgrown identities. Provisional beliefs. Coping strategies that served us for a season and are no longer needed. We speak of them as mistakes, as though they were always dead weight slowing us down on the way to our “true self.”

But how many of them were essential stalk and husk all along?  
Stalks that supported and fed us when we could not yet stand?  
Husks that protected something fragile while it was still forming?

Think about the parts of yourself that you like and respect. How many of those qualities exist because of so-called chaff in your earlier life — experiences that make you uneasy when you look back on them now, but helped you grow into your current stage of fruition?

Then comes the harvest. And the threshing. These are not for the faint of heart.

Scythes cut the wheat in the field. It is carried to the threshing floor, where great oxen crush the husks beneath their heavy hooves and stone-weighted sledges scrape across the wheat. The plant that grew whole must be broken open for the grain to be released.

Anyone who has lived long enough recognizes this stage: the dark night of the soul, the hero's descent into the underworld. A painful process in which what is truly essential is broken open, and what can no longer serve us is broken apart.

After threshing, the result is not clarity but confusion: grain, straw, husk, and dust mixed together. A heap of chaos.

And then comes winnowing.

How does one separate the wheat from the chaff? How does one sort out the chaos?

With wind.

The Greek word for wind is *pneuma*. It also means breath. And spirit. These meanings still hang together. Breath is wind made personal. Spirit is breath made meaningful.

Ancient farmers winnowed their grain where there was wind — often outside the village; sometimes high ground was better. And because the wind rose most reliably at dusk, winnowing frequently took place at that liminal hour, between day and night, in a liminal place — not in town, but not in the wilderness either.

The farmer took the chaotic mixture and threw it upward. Not around. Up. And let the wind do its work.

The heavier kernels fall back to the floor. The lighter material drifts aside. Nothing is accused. Nothing is condemned. Things go where they belong.

The wind does not destroy the chaff.  
It removes it from this stage of the work.

Straw becomes bedding. Husks become fuel. Ash returns to the soil. Nothing is wasted. Nothing was a mistake.

Breath — wind — spirit does not ask us to decide what is unnecessary. It asks us to lift everything up and see what can remain.

So perhaps our task is not to despise our chaff, but to bless it — and the entire process that turns our seeds into fruit.

To honor the stalks that lifted us toward light.  
To thank the husks that once protected us.  
To trust that what can no longer remain is not being destroyed, but renewed.

Breath — wind — spirit moves through us,  
and the grain discovers where it belongs.

*-- 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.