First Sunday of Advent

November 29, 2026 10:30 a.m. Worship



Photo by Pastor Brian

"John replied,
"I am a voice crying out in the wilderness,
Make the Lord's path straight,
just as the prophet Isaiah said." *John 1: 23*

First Presbyterian Church

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MINISTRY OF WORD AND SACRAMENT: REV. DR. 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**, 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, December 6th.

Morning Worship†

Lector: Sue Alexander

"Here, we have a beautiful parallel portrait where Jesus, the Word and the Son, bears witness to God for those who cannot see. John, the man sent from God testifies to Jesus for those who do not yet believe."

— Lindsey Scott, *The Working Preacher*

GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME

PRELUDE ***Seven Antiphons on Veni Emmanuel (O Come, O Come, Emmanuel)*** *W. Zeitler*

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

INTROIT ***Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending*** HELMSLEY

Lo, he comes with clouds descending, once for our salvation slain; thousand, thousand saints attending join to sing the glad refrain: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia! Christ the Lord returns to reign.

HOPE AS HORIZON: ***Through the Artist's Lens***

Setting the Scene

***LIGHTING of the ADVENT CANDLE**

Advent begins in the dark, and it begins with a demand. O that you would tear open the heavens and come down.

✠ **We light this candle as a sign of hope.**

(Light first candle)

Hope is not the same as optimism. Optimism expects things to improve. Hope keeps watch when there is no evidence yet, and refuses to go to sleep.

✠ **You are the voice crying out in the wilderness, making the path straight.**

Keep awake, Jesus said, because you do not know when the owner of the house will come.

✠ **Come, O God. We are waiting. We are awake.**

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

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

***PRAYER after LIGHTING**

God of the torn-open heavens: we are tired of waiting for a world that has not arrived yet. Do not let our tiredness become resignation. As this candle burns through the longest weeks of the year, keep us watchful, keep us restless, and keep us hopeful – not because things are fine, but because you are not finished.

✠ **Amen.**

HYMN 82** ***Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus HYFRYDOL

PRAYER of CONFESSION

Preparing for Christ's coming requires honest examination of our lives and our hearts. Let us turn to God in our prayer of reconciliation first in silence and then together:

Moment of silent prayer

✠ **Prince of Peace, the wars and rumors of wars betray our addiction to violence, our destructive and dehumanizing ways. We deserve your judgement and condemnation. Yet, you remain faithful, a steadfast source of peace in the midst of our warring madness. Holy God, turn us from evil. Return us to Christ's nonviolent path. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.**

ASSURANCE of FORGIVENESS

Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. The old life has gone; a new life has begun. Know that you are forgiven and be at peace.

✠ **Amen.**

(We stand and sing the Response)

RESPONSE 88** ***O Come, O Come, Emmanuel VENI EMMANUEL

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.

TIME with the YOUNG DISCIPLES

[After Time with the Young Disciples,
There is KidSpace today in Room 10.]

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ANTHEM ***Just As I Am*** *arr. Arnold B. Sherman*

Just as I am, without one plea but that thy blood was shed for me and that thou bid'st me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I come. Just as I am, and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blot, to thee whose blood can cleanse each spot, O Lamb of God, I come, I come. Just as I am, thy love unknown has broken ev'ry barrier down; now to be thine, yea, thine alone, O Lamb of God, I come, I come! Just as I am, I come, I come.

PRAYER for ILLUMINATION

✠ **Savior God, guide us by your word and Spirit, that we might hear your truth, heed your call and be prepared for Christ's coming this Christmas. Amen.**

SCRIPTURE Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 CEB

The Lord God's spirit is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me.
He has sent me
to bring good news to the poor,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim release for captives,
and liberation for prisoners,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor
and a day of vindication for our God,
to comfort all who mourn,
to provide for Zion's mourners,
to give them a crown in place of ashes,
oil of joy in place of mourning,
a mantle of praise in place of discouragement.
They will be called Oaks of Righteousness,
planted by the Lord to glorify himself.
They will rebuild the ancient ruins;
they will restore formerly deserted places;
they will renew ruined cities,
places deserted in generations past.
I, the Lord, love justice;
I hate robbery and dishonesty.
I will faithfully give them their wage,
and make with them an enduring covenant.
Their offspring will be known among the nations,
and their descendants among the peoples.
All who see them will recognize
that they are a people blessed by the Lord.

I surely rejoice in the Lord;
my heart is joyful because of my God,
because he has clothed me with clothes of victory,
wrapped me in a robe of righteousness
like a bridegroom in a priestly crown,
and like a bride adorned in jewelry.
As the earth puts out its growth,
and as a garden grows its seeds,
so the Lord God will grow righteousness and praise before all the nations.

John 1:6-8, 19-28 CEB

A man named John was sent from God. He came as a witness to testify concerning the light, so that through him everyone would believe in the light. He himself wasn't the light, but his mission was to testify concerning the light.
This is John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him, "Who are you?"

John confessed (he didn't deny but confessed), "I'm not the Christ."

They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?"
John said, "I'm not."
"Are you the prophet?"
John answered, "No."

They asked, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

John replied,
"I am a voice crying out in the wilderness,
Make the Lord's path straight,
just as the prophet Isaiah said."

Those sent by the Pharisees asked, "Why do you baptize if you aren't the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?"

John answered, "I baptize with water. Someone greater stands among you, whom you don't recognize. He comes after me, but I'm not worthy to untie his sandal straps." This encounter took place across the Jordan in Bethany where John was baptizing.

This is the word of faith that we proclaim
✠ **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON ***Hope Springs Eternal*** *Rev. Noella Austin Buchanan*

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 give your offering to the usher. You may always send gifts by mail or online.)

OFFERTORY ***Antiphon*** *(Psalm 24:1-3)*

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
O my God, in you I have trusted;
Let me not be put to shame.
Nor let my enemies exult over me;
And let none who hope in you be put to shame.

***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**

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, to build your beloved community.

✠ **Amen.**

PRAYERS of the PEOPLE and OUR LORD'S PRAYER

✠ **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 610** ***O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing AZMON

***MOMENT for REFLECTION**

Where have you seen or experienced Christ in this service?

***CHARGE and BENEDICTION**

RESPONSE ***Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending*** HELMSLEY

Yea, amen, let all adore thee, high on thy eternal throne; Savior, take the power and glory; claim the kingdom as thine own. Come, Lord Jesus; come, Lord Jesus; come, Lord Jesus. Thou shalt reign, and thou alone.

POSTLUDE

GREETER: Lynda Savage
USHERS: Lynn Usher, *Lead Usher*
Tim Usher, *Hospitality Usher*
SOUND ENGINEERS: Dan Direen, Brent Nord, Brandon Turner
LIVESTREAM TEAM: James Welte, Kevin Lamb,
Oliver Lamb, Lynn Usher, Axel Gaeta-Symonds

REMEMBER IN PRAYER THIS WEEK
Donna Feit, Marianna Fowles
Elders: **Katie Smith, Neal Williams, Robin Edwards**
Deacons: **Brent Nord, Amy Gano, Dave Thomas**

This Weeks' Celebrations
Nov 29 **Norm Wallis**
Nov 30 **Sanai Wright**
Dec 2 **Sarah Godby**
Dec 3 **Cindi Pringle**
Dec 5 **Bobbie Terrell**
Curtiss & Rebecca Allen

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"O Come O Come Emmanuel" is a modernized version of the so called "O Antiphons", a set of pieces traditionally sung at Vespers (evening service) for the seven days leading up to Christmas Eve. Each highlights a different aspect of the Christ, and all are taken from the Book of Isaiah:

December 17: O Sapientia (O Wisdom, Isaiah 28:29)
December 18: O Adonai (O Lord, Isaiah 11:4-5, 33:22)
December 19: O Radix Jesse (O Root of Jesse, Isaiah 11:1, 10)
December 20: O Clavis David (O Key of David — that is, the key to the house of David, Isaiah 22:22)
December 21: O Oriens (O Dayspring, Isaiah 9:2)
December 22: O Rex Gentium (O King of the Nations, Isaiah 2:4, 9:6)
December 23: O Emmanuel (O God With Us, Isaiah 7:14)

The first letters of the titles taken backwards form a Latin acrostic of "Ero Cras" which translates to "Tomorrow, I will be there" — the whole point of the antiphon series.

(An 'antiphon' is a piece characterized by 'call and response' — we do 'call and response' every Sunday when we work through a text with the reader reading a phrase and the congregation responding with a phrase.)

The exact origin of the "O Antiphons" is not known. The Christian philosopher Boethius (480–524/5, who also wrote a treatise on music theory that was the foundation of music through the Middle Ages) used language which may refer to them, suggesting their presence in the sixth century. By the eighth century, they were definitely in use in the liturgical celebrations in Rome. The usage of the "O Antiphons" was so prevalent in monasteries that the phrases "Keep your O" and "The Great O Antiphons" were common parlance. So one may conclude that in some fashion the "O Antiphons" have been part of Western liturgical tradition since the early Church.

The earliest surviving evidence of the hymn's Latin text is in the seventh edition of *Psalteriolum Cantionum Catholicarum*, published in Cologne in 1710. It was also included in the second volume of *Thesaurus Hymnologicus*, a monumental collection by the German

hymnologist Hermann Adalbert Daniel, and thence translated into English by John Mason Neale in 1851.

The familiar tune (*Veni Emmanuel*) was first linked with this hymn in 1851, when Thomas Helmore published it in the *Hymnal Noted*, paired with an early revision of Neale's English translation. The volume listed the tune as being "From a French Missal in the National Library, Lisbon." However, Helmore provided no means by which to verify his source, leading to long-lasting doubts about its attribution. There was even speculation that Helmore might have composed the melody himself.

The mystery was settled in 1966 by British musicologist Sister Mary Berry (also an Augustinian canoness and noted choral conductor), who discovered a 15th-century manuscript containing the melody in the National Library of France, a manuscript consisting of processional chants for burials.

In my piece I've broken up the 'O Come O Come" melody into seven segments, a nod to the original seven "O Antiphons" verses. Each fragment has its own 'call and response': a simple statement of the hymn tune fragment for the 'call', and then a more elaborate version of the same for the 'response'. -- *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:

Sue Alexander, Jeanne Clark, Kathy Showman, Norm Wallis,
Pat Morris, Susan Skoglund, Katie Smith, Neal Williams,
Robin Edwards, John-Paul Fletcher, Jon Horstmann, Lynda Savage,
and Clerk of Session Amy Smith

and supported by our Board of Deacons:

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