



In response to God's grace, the mission of First Presbyterian Church is to create a community where people seek the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, rejoice in worship, and go forth sharing the love of Christ with Athens and the world!

December 20, 2020
10:00 a.m. Livestream
Fourth Sunday of Advent

GATHERING IN THE NAME OF GOD

Welcome to all who are worshipping with us. As we enter a holy space this morning, please silence your cell phone. Consult an usher if you need a personal hearing device, large-print bulletin or large-print hymnal.

Greeting

Psalm 118:24

This is the day the Lord has made; **let us rejoice and be glad in it!**

Prelude

Noël, pour l'amour de Marie

Nicolas Lebègue

Words of Welcome and Concerns of the Church

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Congregational Response

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.**

Call to Worship

An angel spoke to Mary: "Do not be afraid!"

The child she carries will be God's son, and the world will never be the same.

An angel spoke to Mary: "Do not be afraid!"

God was with her, and God is with us, drawing us into worship and praise.

*Hymn 22

Angels, from the Realms of Glory

REGENT SQUARE

*Call to Confession

*Prayer of Confession

An angel spoke to Mary: "Do not be afraid!" And yet, O Lord, we find ourselves paralyzed by fear of what we do not know. Forgive us of our sins, O Lord, and give us the faith of Mary to respond to your grace with lives of grateful praise. Let us hear the good news that she first heard: Light is breaking. Love is coming. The world is about to turn!

*Silent Prayer

Lord, have mercy. **Amen.**

*Assurance of Pardon

**Those who are able may stand.*

A special word of

welcome: thank you for being with us for worship this morning. We are delighted and hope that you will join us again next Sunday.

The prelude is a setting of a French Christmas carol. The text is translated: *Noël, for the love we bear Mary. We shall sing joyfully, she who bore the fruit of life, all for our salvation.*

Angels, From the Realms of Glory was first published as a poem in the Christmas Eve 1816 issue of a newspaper the author edited in Sheffield, England. The tune name celebrates the location of a prominent Presbyterian Church in London, sometimes called the "Presbyterian cathedral."

***Congregational Response**

PSALM 42

**Comfort, comfort you my people, tell of peace, thus says our God;
comfort those who sit in darkness bowed beneath oppression's load.
Speak you to Jerusalem of the peace that waits for them;
tell them that their sins I cover, and their warfare now is over.**

***The Peace**

Since God has forgiven us in Christ, let us forgive one another.
The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

And also with you.

HEARING THE WORD OF GOD

Prayer for Illumination

First Lesson

Psalm 113

This is the Word of God for the people of God. **Thanks be to God.**

Solo

The Angel Gabriel

Richard Shephard

The angel Gabriel from heaven came,
his wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame;
"All hail," said he, "thou lowly maiden Mary,
most highly favored lady," Gloria!
"For know a blessed Mother thou shalt be,
all generations laud and honor thee,
thy Son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold,
most highly favored lady." Gloria!
Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head,
"To me be as it pleaseth God," she said,
"My soul shall laud and magnify his holy Name."
Most highly favored lady, Gloria!
Of her, Emmanuel, the Christ, was born
in Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn,
and Christian folk throughout the world will ever say
"Most highly favored lady," Gloria!

Second Lesson

Luke 1:26-45

This is the Word of God for the people of God. **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon

The Birth Announcement

Dr. Ryan Baer

RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

***Hymn 600**

Song of Mary

MORNING SONG

***Affirmation of Faith**

The Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God the Father almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell;
the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of
God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church;
the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.**

The solo is a setting of one of the most famous Basque carols in England. It is set in a Baroque style by contemporary English composer Richard Shephard.

Song of Mary is a 20th-century paraphrase based on Luke 1:46-55, commonly known by its opening Latin word, *Magnificat*. This song of praise offers clear reminders that God's purposes often lead to the reversal of human values, exalting the poor and dethroning the mighty.

Next to the Nicene Creed, The Apostles' Creed is the most universally accepted doctrinal statement in Christendom. Although not written by apostles, it reflects the theological formulations of the first century church. Arising from an early baptismal creed, it underwent development, attaining its present form in the eighth century.

Litany of Thanksgiving – The Bicentennial Anniversary of the First Presbyterian Church

Lord, you have been our refuge from one generation to another.

Before the mountains were brought forth, or the land and the sea were born, from age to age you are God.

For the Church universal, and for this congregation of your people,
we give you thanks, O God.

For this place in which we gather for praise and prayer, witness and service, in the name of Jesus Christ,
we give you thanks, O God.

For your presence among us whenever your word has been proclaimed, your sacramental gifts of bread and wine shared,
we give you thanks, O God.

For those who have been made your children by adoption and grace, who in this place were cleansed of sin, buried with Christ in the waters of baptism, and raised to new and eternal life,
we give you thanks, O God.

For disciples young and old who have been nurtured here in faith,
we give you thanks, O God.

For all who have come here asking your blessing in marriage, seeking to love with your love,
we give you thanks, O God.

For deacons, elders, and pastors who have led and loved us, and by the offering of their gifts, equipped us for the work of ministry,
we give you thanks, O God.

For faithful stewards among us who have lived for others, serving you by loving neighbors,
we give you thanks, O God.

For all the saints who have stood among us, whose memory still enlivens our faith and emboldens our witness,
we give you thanks, O God.

For the ministries of worship and mission, nurture and fellowship, and for all whose lives have been touched by them,
we give you thanks, O God.

Receive our gratitude, Holy God, for the years through which you have led us, and open us to the future you promise.

In the years that lie ahead, grant us your encouragement in the work of ministry, your consolation in defeats, and your challenge to our complacency. Give us such trust in your abiding Holy Spirit that we may find joy and peace in our common life, strength and courage to live in the world for your reign, and hope in the gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray:

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.

You may mail your check, set up an automatic payment of your pledge through your bank, or donate online at firstpresathens.org/home/giving. Thank you for your generosity.

The “it” in *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear*, a text by a Unitarian minister, does not refer to the birth of Jesus, but to “that glorious song of old,” the angelic tidings of peace on earth.

Presentation of Our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory *Gabriel’s Message: Dance* Michael Bedford

***Doxology** Hymn 592

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise him, all creatures here below;
praise him above, ye heavenly host;
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

***Prayer of Dedication**

SENDING IN THE NAME OF GOD

***Hymn 38** *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear* CAROL

***Charge and Benediction**

***Congregational Response** VENI EMMANUEL, refrain
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

Postlude *From Heaven Above* Garth Edmundson

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NOTES ON THE SERVICE

WORSHIP LEADERS

Dr. Ryan Baer, *Senior Pastor*
Dr. Carol Strickland, *Associate Pastor*
Dr. John Coble, *Director of Music and Organist*
Kendall Marie Kookogey, *Soloist*

USHERS

Jimbo Laboon, John Simpson

SUNDAY MORNING MANAGER

Rebecca Carlton

AUDIOVISUAL TECHNICIANS

Bryan Owens, Jack Palmer

FLOWERS

The poinsettias and flowers in the Sanctuary are given to the glory of God.

CONGREGATIONAL CARE

Prayer requests can be submitted to the church office, 706-543-4338, or by the Prayer Request link on our church website (firstpresathens.org).

A very special invitation to join us on Christmas Eve:

Thursday, December 24

Night of Wonder Family Christmas Eve Service via Zoom and YouTube

4:00 p.m. (Zoom ID: 706-543-4338, PW: 185185)

This year we are doing this service in a Godly Play way! At the beginning of Advent, all Children’s Ministry Families were given the special gift of the Godly Play Advent Story inside their Advent Goodie Bags. With the help of our wonderful First Pres 5th Graders, we are going to journey together through this story and light our way to Bethlehem during this Night of Wonder Family Christmas Eve Service. Be sure to have your Godly Play Advent story and

Advent candles ready or if you do not have this story at home gather five candles and your very own Nativity set before the service. If you are unable to join us on Zoom, we will also be providing a YouTube link for you to experience this special story at home with your family.

Communion Candlelight Services, 6:00 & 8:00 p.m.

Please plan to join us on Facebook, YouTube, or in-person (limited seating) on this most holy of nights as we celebrate the birth of our Savior. If you would like to join us in-person, please click on the Eventbrite link on the church website. Alternatively, you can contact the church office at (706) 543-4338 and we will add you to the list.

The special offering will benefit the Neighborhood Health Center and Bethlehem Ministry Clinic in Haiti.

Please make sure to read the additional instructions that are posted on the website. If you are over 65 or have underlying health conditions, we encourage you to stay home and join us via Facebook or YouTube.

**Poinsettias are placed in the sanctuary
to the glory of God and in memory of:**

Ken Carr
Marian Carr
Russ and Joyce Coble
Allen & Nan Jo Crowell
Glenn D. Crowell
John M. Crowell
David H. Donnan
Elise Donohue
Edwina Ferguson
Kevin Garrison
Mr. John (Buck) Griffin
Rosevelyn Collins Garrison
Grammi and Papa Hall
Allison Hays
Andrew A. Jones
Everett E. Jones, Jr
Kate Jones
Rev. James Renwick Kennedy, Jr.
Rev. Dr. John Kipp
Rev. Dorothy M. Kipp
Chris Lewis
Dick Lewis
Jim Lindsey

Bob and Sue Marion
Dorothy Matson Merry
Kate Middendorf
Bob Phares
Elmer Pittman
Nancy Pittman
Our Parents
Isabelle W. Quante
John Wesley Reed
Michael Warren Reed
Cornelia W. Scanlon
Nancy Crowell Thames
Jack and Mary Lawson Vandiver
Bill Walker
Jim Walker
M. L. Wendler
Marian Wendler
Joseph Avery Wilfong, Sr.
Genevieve Wilfong
Joseph Avery Wilfong, III
Joseph Avery Wilfong, Jr.
Kathleen H. Wilfong

**Poinsettias are placed in the sanctuary
to the glory of God and in honor of:**

Nathan, Daniel, and Joshua Baer
Roger Burbage
Judy Burch
Danny and Adelaide Coleman
Kate and Aiden Coble
Mrs. Gwen Griffin
Carolyn Hally
Jane W. Mann

R. Kipling Mann
Brian and Max Miller
Peg Phares
Noël and Dean Shepherd
Carol Strickland
FPC Staff and Session
Presbyterian Women's Circle 7
The choirs of First Presbyterian Church

ANNOUNCEMENTS

LIMITED IN-PERSON WORSHIP

If you would like to join us next Sunday for a limited in-person worship, please click on the Eventbrite link on the church website beginning tomorrow at 9:00 a.m. Alternatively, you can contact the church office at (706) 543-4338 and we will add you to the list.

Please make sure to read the additional instructions that are posted on the website. If you are over 65 or have underlying health conditions, we encourage you to stay home and join us via Facebook or YouTube.

“SUNDAY CONVERSATIONS”

Sundays at 11:30 a.m.

Join Dr. Ryan Baer for “Sunday Conversations” as we reflect on the morning worship service and take a deeper dive into the Bible texts read and proclaimed from the pulpit.

Zoom ID: 706-543-4338 (PW: 185185)

Led by Dr. Ryan Baer (ryan@firstpresathens.org)

HOLIDAYS@FIRST 2020

For more information about FPC Holiday Programs, please go to firstpresathens.org and look for the Holidays@First brochure on the home page.

COMMITMENT REMINDER

Thank you to all who have made a financial commitment for 2021. We depend on the generosity of everyone to support our ministries and missions. If you have not yet made your commitment, please do so by **December 30 at noon** so the Session can plan the 2020 budget. You may mail your pledge card to the church office, or make a pledge online at firstpresathens.org/home/giving. If you have any questions, please contact Roger Burbage at rburbage@firstpresathens.org.

2020-21 WEEKDAY SCHOOL

First Pres Weekday School registration for Fall 2021 begins for in-house students on **Tuesday, January 12**. On **Friday, January 15 at noon**, community registration begins. Our Weekday School is a half day church preschool serving 3 months through 5 years. Questions? Call our director, Elaine Johnson, at (706) 206-8180 or e-mail elaine@firstpresathens.org.

200th Birthday Drive-by Party

Today, 5:00-7:00 p.m.

The global pandemic has shifted many of our plans to 2021, but we still want to mark this year. Join your church family for a DRIVE-BY 200th Birthday Celebration in front of the church on Hancock Avenue. We'll provide cupcakes straight to your car and have the steps aglow with 200 luminaries. The Handbell Choir will be playing. You'll also have an opportunity to donate to the Bicentennial/Christmas Eve Offering and pick up candles for Candlelight Christmas Eve Service for those who will worship with us from home. The offering will benefit the Athens Neighborhood Health Center and Bethlehem Ministry Clinic in Haiti.

Service of the Longest Night

Tomorrow, December 21, 7:00 p.m. via Zoom (ID: 706-543-4338, PW: 185185)

Join us via Zoom for the Service of the Longest Night. The service takes its name from the fact that in the Northern Hemisphere in December, there are more hours of darkness than light, and this service acknowledges that many in our community do not find this to be “the most wonderful time of the year.” We will pray with and for those in our community who may be hurting and grieving, while remembering that the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

2020 Holiday Benevolence Market Goes Virtual

Like so much of this year, our 26th annual Holiday Benevolence Market has become a virtual event, but rest assured that your donations to the 27 participating non-profit organizations will provide real-world benefits! You can find the shopping list by visiting our church homepage and clicking on the button labeled “Holiday Benevolence Market.” That will take you to the shopping list so you can print it and fill it out at home. Please mail your completed form and check to Holiday Benevolence Market, P.O. Box 1592, Athens, GA 30601, or drop it by the church office. If you have any questions, please call Denise Horton at 706-247-6027.

THIS WEEK

Sunday, December 20 - Fourth Sunday of Advent, FPC 200th Birthday

- 9:00 a.m. Adult Sunday School (*please check firstpresathens.org for more information*)
- 10:00 a.m. Service Livestream on Facebook and YouTube, Dr. Ryan Baer preaching
Limited in-person worship (please go to firstpresathens.org to register)
- 11:30 a.m. "Sunday Conversations" with Dr. Ryan Baer, (*Zoom ID: 706-543-4338, PW:185185*)
- 5:00 p.m. FPC 200th Birthday Drive-by Party (until 7:00 p.m.)

Sunday, December 20 - Sunday 27 - Family Promise Host Week

Monday, December 21

- 7:00 p.m. The Service of the Longest Night via Zoom (*ID: 706-543-4338, PW:185185*)

Tuesday, December 22

- 1:00 p.m. Staff Meeting via Zoom

Thursday, December 24 - Church Office Closed

- 4:00 p.m. Night of Wonder Family Christmas Eve Service via Zoom (*ID: 706-543-4338, PW:185185*)
- 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. Candlelight Communion Services (limited in-person) and on Facebook and YouTube

Friday, December 25 - Christmas Day, Church Office Closed

- 10:00 a.m. Meals on Wheels Delivery

Sunday, December 27 - First Sunday after Christmas

- 9:00 a.m. Adult Sunday School (*please check firstpresathens.org for more information*)
- 10:00 a.m. Service Livestream on Facebook and YouTube, Dr. Carol Strickland preaching
Limited in-person worship (please go to firstpresathens.org to register)

LOOKING AHEAD

December 31 and January 1 - Church Office Closed for New Year's

January 1 - New Year's Day Meals on Wheels Delivery

January 8 - Food Sunday drop-off (9:30-11:00 a.m.), Church Office parking lot

Angels, from the Realms of Glory

REGENT SQUARE 8.7.8.7.8.7

Stanzas 1-3, James Montgomery, 1816, 1825
Stanza 4, *Salisbury Hymn Book*, 1857

Henry Thomas Smart, 1867

1. An - gels, from the realms of glo - ry, Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
 2. Shep-herds, in the fields a - bid - ing, Watch-ing o'er your flocks by night,
 3. Sa - ges, leave your con - tem-pla - tions, Bright-er vi - sions beam a - far;
 4. All cre - a - tion, join in prais-ing God the Fa - ther, Spir - it, Son,

Ye, who sang cre - a - tion's sto - ry Now pro-claim Mes - si - ah's birth:
 God with us is now re - sid - ing, Yon-der shines the in - fant light:
 Seek the great de - sire of na - tions; Ye have seen His na - tal star:
 Ev - er-more your voic - es rais - ing To the e - ter - nal Three in One:

Come and wor-ship, come and wor-ship, Wor-ship Christ, the new - born King!

Song of Mary

600

Magnificat

MORNING SONG CM

Wyeth's *Repository of Sacred Music*, 1813
Harm. C. Winfred Douglas, 1940

Para. Miriam Therese Winter, 1987

Cm Fm Eb Ab Db Eb Fm Cm Fm

1. My soul gives glo - ry to my God, My
 2. My God has done great things for me: Yes,
 3. From age to age to all who fear, Such
 4. Love casts the might - y from their thrones, Pro -
 5. Praise God, whose lov - ing cov - e - nant Sup -

Db Eb7 Ab Bbm Ab Ab Db Eb Ab

heart pours out its praise. God lift - ed up my
 ho - ly is this Name. All peo - ple will de -
 mer - cy love im - parts, Dis - pens - ing jus - tice
 motes the in - se - cure, Leaves hun - gry spir - its
 ports those in dis - tress, Re - mem - ber - ing past

Eb7 Bbm Ab Db Eb Bbm Eb Fm

low - li - ness In man - y mar - vel - ous ways.
 clare me blessed, And bless - ings they shall claim.
 far and near, Dis - miss - ing self - ish hearts.
 sat - is - fied; The rich seem sud - den - ly poor.
 prom - is - es With pres - ent faith - ful - ness.

Guitar and keyboard should not sound together.

♩=88-96

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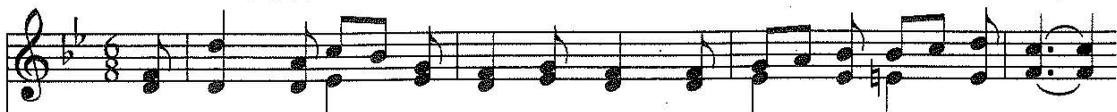
It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

38

CAROL CMD

Edmund Hamilton Sears, 1849

Richard Storrs Willis, 1850



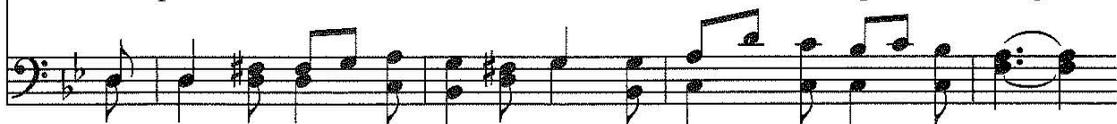
1. It came up-on the mid-night clear, That glo - rious song of old,
2. Still through the clo - ven skies they come, With peace-ful wings un - furled,
3. And ye, be-neath life's crush-ing load, Whose forms are bend-ing low,
4. For lo, the days are has-tening on, By proph-et bards fore - told,



From an - gels bend - ing near the earth, To touch their harps of gold:
 And still their heaven-ly mu - sic floats O'er all the wea - ry world:
 Who toil a - long the climb-ing way With pain - ful steps and slow,
 When with the ev - er - cir - cling years Comes round the age of gold;



"Peace on the earth, good will to all, From heaven's all - gra - cious King":
 A - bove its sad and low - ly plains They bend on hov - ering wing,
 Look now! for glad and gold-en hours Come swift - ly on the wing:
 When peace shall o - ver all the earth Its an - cient splen-dors fling,



The world in sol - emn still-ness lay, To hear the an - gels sing.
 And ev - er o'er its Ba - bel sounds The bless-ed an - gels sing.
 O rest be - side the wea - ry road, And hear the an - gels sing.
 And the whole world give back the song Which now the an - gels sing.

