



A CHRIST-CENTERED CHRISTMAS

Told by the children of First Presbyterian

First Presbyterian Church 1573 N. Highland Avenue 731-422-1591 fpcjacksontn.org

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 24, 2023

GATHERING

PRAYER FOR MEDITATION: *God of grace, your eternal Word took flesh among us when Mary placed her life at the service of your will. Prepare our hearts for his coming again; keep us steadfast in hope and faithful in service, that we may receive the coming of his kingdom for the sake of Jesus Christ, the ruler of all, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

RINGING OF THE CHIMES

OPENING SENTENCES

Rev. John White

One: Look! The young woman is with child.
ALL: *She will call him Emmanuel, for God is with us.*
One: A ruler will come from Bethlehem.
ALL: *He will be the shepherd of peace.*

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

Variations on a German Carol
Dr. Terry McRoberts

Jones

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Rev. Courtney Bowen

One: There is a surprise coming.
ALL: *What surprise?*
One: Look in a town too small to be noticed.
ALL: *What town?*
One: Look in a stable instead of a house.
ALL: *What stable?*
One: Look in a feed box instead of a crib.
ALL: *What feed box?*
One: Look for a poor baby, not a great king.
ALL: *What baby?*
One: God's surprise is coming in an unexpected place. The town is called Bethlehem with a stable therein. It houses three people who couldn't find an inn. The feed box cradles a newborn. The boy who is king of us all. Emmanuel! Jesus!
ALL: *Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!*
One: Praise God for the blessings given to us!
ALL: *Alleluia!*

***HYMN: 133** *O Come, All Ye Faithful*

ADESTE FIDELES

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

Bill, Dana + Rus Hardy

One: We light the first candle.

ALL: *The candle of hope.*

One: We light this candle to remind us that there is room for every story, to remind us that God is at work in this world.
(the first purple candle is lit)

One: We light the second candle.

ALL: *The candle of peace.*

One: We light this candle to remind us that God meets us in our fear. Because we need God's peace when we feel afraid.
(the second purple candle is lit)

One: We light the third candle.

ALL: *The candle of joy.*

One: We light this candle to remind us we can choose a better way. May its light remind us of the many sources of joy in our lives and may that joy not only draw us closer to one another, but closer to God.
(the third pink candle is lit)

One: We light the fourth candle.

ALL: *The candle of love.*

One: We light this candle to remind us that we see God in each other. May we remember that from the very first generation, God has surrounded us with love.

ALL: *Let us walk in the light of the Lord.*

RESPONSE *(all singing, refrain only from Hymn: 88 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel)*
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

TELLING THE CHRISTMAS STORY

*(Readings from Celebrating a Christ Centered Christmas - Children's Edition
by Emily Bell Freeman and David Butler)*

THE INNKEEPER

JOSEPH

***HYMN: 121** *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

ST. LOUIS

MARY

ANGELS

***HYMN: 113** *Angels We Have Heard on High*

GLORIA

SHEPHERDS

WISEMEN

***HYMN: 151** *We Three Kings of Orient Are*

KINGS OF ORIENT

JESUS

***HYMN: 115** *Away in a Manger*

MUELLER

RESPONSE

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH** (from *A Declaration of Faith*)

Rev. John White

Jesus, the long expected Savior, came into the world as a child, descended from David, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of Mary, a virgin. He lived as a Jew among Jews. He announced to his people the coming of God's kingdom of justice and peace on earth. We affirm that Jesus was born of woman as is every child, yet born of God's power as was no other child. In the person and work of Jesus, God himself and a human life are united but not confused, distinguished but not separated. The coming of Jesus was itself the coming of God's promised rule. Through his birth, life, death, and resurrection, he brings about the relationship between God and humanity that God always intended.

(At this time, please find the red friendship pad located toward the center isle on each pew, sign it, pass it down your row and back again, taking note of those who worship with you.)

OFFERING

Rev. John White

OFFERTORY

Gloria for the Flutes

Jordan

Dr. Terry McRoberts

***Doxology** (Tune: 606)

OLD HUNDREDTH

*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.*

***Dedicatory Prayer**

Rev. John White

SENDING

***HYMN: 126** *Jesus, Jesus, O What a Wonderful Child*

WONDERFUL CHILD

***CHARGE AND BENEDICTION**

Rev. John White

POSTLUDE

O Come, All Ye Faithful

arr. by McDonald

Dr. Terry McRoberts

(We request that you remain seated until after the Postlude and ask that you use the Postlude as a time to reflect upon the scripture that was read in today's service.)