



Getting to the Front of the Stable

Who put Joseph in the back of the stable?
Who dressed him in brown, put a staff in his hand,
and told him to stand in the back of the creche
background for the magnificent light of the Madonna?
God chosen, this man Joseph was faithful
in spite of the gossip in Nazareth,
in spite of the danger from Herod.
This man, Joseph, listened to angels
and it was he who named the Child Emmanuel.
Actually, Joseph probably stood in the doorway
guarding the mother and child or greeting shepherds and kings.
When he wasn't in the doorway,
he was probably urging Mary to get some rest,
gently covering her with his cloak,
assuring her that he would watch the Child.
Actually, he probably picked the Child up in his arms
and walked him in the night,
patting him lovingly until he closed his eyes.
This Christmas, let us give thanks to God
for this man of incredible faith
into whose care God placed the Christ Child.
As a gesture of gratitude,
let's put Joseph in the front of the stable
where he can guard and greet and cast an occasional glance
at this Child who brought us life. *(Written by Ann Weems)*



THE SERVICE FOR THE LORD'S DAY
The Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 19, 2021

Gathering

THE CHIMES CALL US TO WORSHIP

“Prepare the Way of the Lord”

**Prepare the way of the Lord. Prepare the way of the Lord,
and all people will see the salvation of our God.**

WELCOME – THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

PRELUDE

“Fourth Sunday Advent Meditation”

-arr. by N. David Stern

OPENING OURSELVES TO GOD

LIGHTING THE CANDLE OF LOVE

Bill & Becky Kimmons

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: I knew joy, but when I heard the laugh of my child,

People: Suddenly, joy was overflowing.

Leader: I knew love, but when you held my hand,

People: Suddenly, love was overflowing.

Leader: I knew God, but when you showed me grace,
when you forgave me,
when you loved me,
when you raised me,

People: Suddenly, God was overflowing.

Leader: So, let us worship Holy God together
as a reminder that God is here and we are never alone.

People: This is community.

Leader: This is the body of Christ.

People: Welcome home.

* PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord of all life and all seasons, help us open our hearts to hear the words of promise and love that you send to us. Like Joseph, may we trust in your abiding love and power. Prepare us to receive your gift of grace and peace. In Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen.

* **OPENING HYMN #40**

“Joy to the World!”

PRAYER OF RECONCILIATION

(Prayer by Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org)

God of Good News,

You say to me, “You are highly favored,” but I struggle to see how that could be.

You say to me, “Do not be afraid,” but I am afraid all the time.

You say to me, “Even the impossible is possible, just look at Elizabeth!”

But hope slips through my hands like water.

The impossible still feels impossible.

So today I pray,

Today we pray:

Teach us to sing like Mary.

Teach us to laugh like Elizabeth.

Teach us to trust like the angels.

Forgive us when we can only do one at a time, or none at all.

(A moment of personal reflection)

And all of God’s people say, **Amen.**

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

RESPONSE #577

Glory be to the Father, to the Son and the Holy Ghost!

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

PASSING THE PEACE

The Peace of Christ be with you

And also with you

Please greet your brothers and sisters with the peace of Christ.

CHILDREN’S TIME

* **HYMN # 41**

“O Come, All Ye Faithful”

JOYS AND CONCERNS

PASTORAL PRAYER and LORD’S PRAYER

“It’s the most wonderful time of the year” – the music swirls toward our ears from countless speakers in stores, on the radio, on TV. But we aren’t so sure about that. We have been so wrapped up in preparation for the “wonderful season” we can’t seem to find the joy. So many people are in need. We have friends and family members who are suffering from illnesses, loss, alienation. We bring the names to you, Lord, for your healing mercy and rest in the assurance of your loving presence. We also stand in need of your healing restoration. We are feeling depleted, discouraged, and exhausted. Slow us down, Lord. Help us to feel the joy of your love from the “inside-out” and in every direction!

Remind us that your gift of love is freely given. Touch our hearts and spirits, so that your joy may spring from our lips and our lives. For we ask it in Jesus' Name.

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.

Listening to the Word

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

(Prayer by Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org)

Holy God,
Before you could speak,
you were speaking –
Leaping in wombs, kicking, stretching,
Jumping for joy.

You have always found a way to show up in our midst,
Particularly on our fearful or lonely days.

So today, as we crack open our Bibles,
Fluttering through these old beloved pages,
We ask that you would move again.
Stir in us.
Speak to us.
Fill us with the Holy Spirit.

And if we are not able to hear your Word clearly,
Then give us Elizabeth's
Who will point out your presence in delight and joy.

Before you could speak, you were speaking,
So here and now, Creator God, we are listening.
Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 1:18-25

Bible Page 835

SERMON

"Salvation in Christ is not Iffy but the Blessed Assurance!"

Dr. Boyd Purcell

* HYMN #22

"Angels, from the Realms of Glory"

Responding to God

* AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

(Prayer by Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org)

**We believe that this world is hard –
Harder than it has to be.
When the world falls apart around us,
We believe in listening for the angels that say, “Do not be afraid,”
And in seeking out the Elizabeths in our lives –
Those who laugh with joy at our arrival
And throw open the doors to their homes.
We believe that healthy relationships can offer healing,
Through the laughter of cousins,
The joy shared between siblings,
And the home found in partnership.
Therefore, we believe in church families,
In chosen families,
And in the love that extends beyond family.
We believe in friendships,
In neighbors,
And in leaning on each other when the going gets tough.
We believe in the Triune God –
Lover, Beloved, and Love itself –
Inherently relational, always connected, and never alone.
We believe that that same belovedness exists for us.
We believe that we are loved and claimed,
Never alone.
Thanks be to God for a love like that. Amen.**

SOLO

“Of the Father’s Love Begotten”

Collin Nelson

Going Forth to Serve

DEDICATION OF OUR LIVES

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

* WORDS OF DISMISSAL

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia! Amen.

* POSTLUDE

Today our Guest Speaker is **Dr. Boyd Purcell**, Honorably Retired Minister of Word and Sacrament with the Presbytery of West Virginia. Boyd has served as the full-time chaplain of Kanawha Hospice Care and as stated-supply pastor for First Presbyterian Church of Whitesville, Dry Creek, Orgas, and Grace Covenant in Charleston. We look forward to his gospel message.



This morning we welcome to our worship service Guest Musician, **N. David Stern**. We are happy to have him here during the month of December.



Christmas Joy Gift Offering
We will receive this special offering Today.

Donate to help church leaders,
past, present, and future,
who have emergency financial needs.

NUTURING FAITH IDEAS **from the Presbytery of West Virginia**

Please use these suggested scriptures, questions, and activities to help you explore your faith.

December 19 – Fourth Sunday of Advent: Read Luke 1:39-46

When Mary greets Elizabeth, her unborn child recognizes that Mary is pregnant with Jesus and leaps for joy in her womb. Do you know Jesus? Do you recognize when Jesus enters your presence, and if so, do you leap for joy? Jesus was sent because God loves each of us, and His mission is to bring hope and salvation to a troubled world. Take some time to reflect on our world and how Jesus gives you hope even during our bleakest moments.

December 26 – First Sunday of Christmas: Read Colossians 3:12-17

Christmas is here. Christ has come! Now we must take the time to think about what that means: to love one another; to forgive; to be compassionate, kind, and faithful; in short, to live our lives following the example Jesus set to the best of our abilities. So, this Christmas, put away old grudges; forgive those who have wronged you; be compassionate and kind to all, especially those less fortunate; and remember to always give thanks to God through Jesus for all these gifts this Christmas!

First Presbyterian Church of South Charleston

Website: www.fpcscwv.org makes available Sunday morning worship bulletins, newsletters, Session information, and youth group videos. Also, posted are the Announcements for the Month, as well as information about upcoming mission projects and many fellowship opportunities.

**REMEMBER IN YOUR
PRAYERS & DEEDS OF LOVE**

Church Family

Nancy Alert
Sandy Bays
Nancy Bennett
George Brown
Ron Bryant
Von Carter
Helen Cobb
Bob Field
Custer Holliday
Kathy McClure
Drew McIlwain
Marsha McIlwain
Barbara Snyder

Care Facilities

Tom Haines
Ray Hoppe
Jean Sibold

Presbyterian Connections

Child Development Center
Bluestone Camp & Retreat Center
Lineweaver Cottage, Davis-Stuart
Fort Liberté, Haiti
Alderson Presbyterian Church
Buffalo Presbyterian Church
Mingo Presbyterian Church
Wandumbi Special School,
Wandumbi Parish, Kenya

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EVERY MEMBER OF THE CONGREGATION

Sharon Gearing, *Pastor*
Collin Nelson, *Worship Assistant*
Becky Smith, *Office Manager*
Charles Yancy, *Custodian*

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7:00 AM - 12:00 PM
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WIFI Password: PresbyGuest

Elders on Session:

Carol Bryan	Bob Kent
Cheryl Eary	Rick Smith
Joe Fuller	Tom Titus

Trustees:

Hersha Brown	(2021)
John Melton	(2022)
Chris Luzier	(2023)



Christmas Eve Service

Friday, December 24th
7:00 pm

Rock Lake Presbyterian Church

Please invite your family & friends and join us!



Staff Christmas Gifts

You have the chance to show your LOVE for the members of our faithful, hardworking Staff of First Presbyterian. Envelopes are available in the pews. Please place your contribution in the offering plate or church office no later than tomorrow. You may also make a donation on our website. Thank you!