

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

617 North Elm Street, Greensboro, North Carolina • fpcgreensboro.org



CHRISTMAS EVE Candlelight and Communion Service

December 24, 2020

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WE ASSEMBLE IN GOD'S NAME

VOLUNTARY: Carols of the Season

John Alexander, organ

WELCOME.....Jill Duffield

CALL TO WORSHIP AND LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

The Compton Family, Advent Wreath Lighters

Leader: Tonight we light the Christ candle as a sign of the coming of Christ into the world.

People: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness, on them a light has shined.


Leader: Come away, come away tonight to Bethlehem.

People: Come adore on bended knee, one whose birth the angels sing.

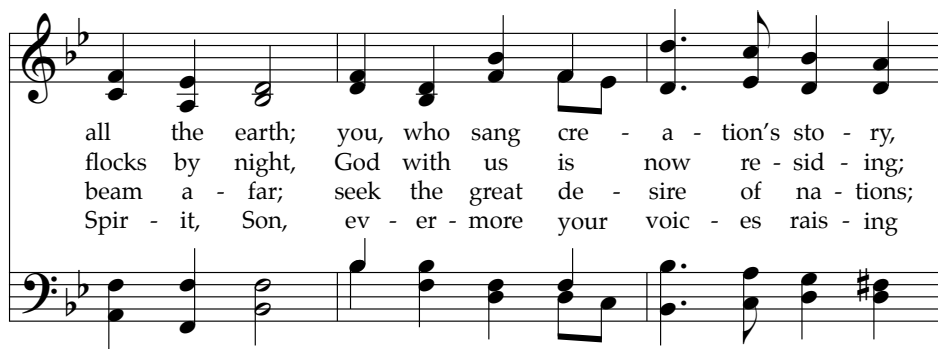
Leader: Come away, come away from your noisy celebration, to a place of quietness and peace.

All: Come with wonder, come with awe, take your place among the shepherds and about the manger. Sing with joy, praise God, for the time of promise has come. Sing the good news of Emmanuel: God with us! The Christ has come!

* CONGREGATIONAL CAROL: Angels, from the Realms of Glory.....REGENT SQUARE



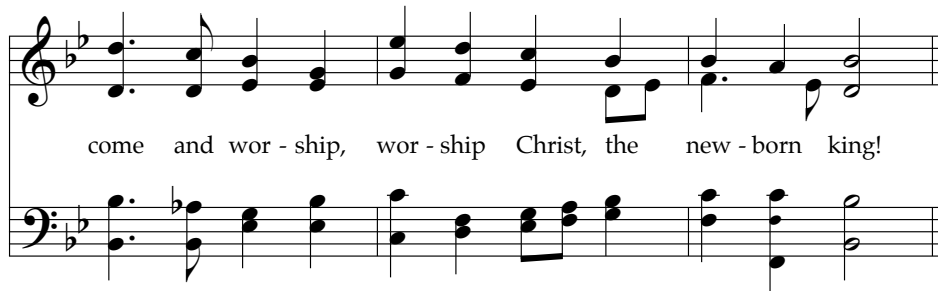
1 An - gels, from the realms of glo - ry, wing your flight o'er
2 Shep - herds, in the fields a - bid - ing, watch - ing o'er your
3 Sag - es, leave your con - tem - pla - tions; bright - er vi - sions
4 All cre - a - tion, join in prais - ing God the Fa - ther,



all the earth; you, who sang cre - a - tion's sto - ry,
flocks by night, God with us is now re - sid - ing;
beam a - far; seek the great de - sire of na - tions;
Spir - it, Son, ev - er - more your voic - es rais - ing



now pro - claim Mes - si - ah's birth:
yon - der shines the in - fant light: come and wor - ship,
you have seen his na - tal star: come and wor - ship,
to the e - ter - nal Three in One:



come and wor - ship, wor - ship Christ, the new - born king!

* CALL TO CONFESSION *and* PRAYER OF CONFESSION Keith Dove

Mighty God, Gracious Lord, we celebrate your coming to us and among us but humbly confess that we are too often blind to your presence and deaf to your speaking. We become so consumed by our own concerns and so distracted by our own busyness that we fail to recognize your presence in our midst, and the song of angels is lost amid the clamor of competing voices. Forgive us, Lord. Open our eyes, unstop our ears, and never cease your singing to us that we may sense your nearness and your love which have been manifest in the gift of the child of Christmas, in whose name we pray. Amen.

* ASSURANCE OF PARDON

* CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

**O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us we pray;
Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels, the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel.**



WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

FIRST SCRIPTURE LESSON: *Psalm 96*

Reader: Keith Dove

O sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth.

Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.

Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples.

For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods.

For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the Lord made the heavens.

Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts.

Worship the Lord in holy splendor; tremble before him, all the earth.

Say among the nations, "The Lord is king! The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved. He will judge the peoples with equity."

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord; for he is coming, for he is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth.

Reader: This is the Word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

ANTHEM: A Hallelujah Christmas.....music by Leonard Cohen, arr. James Keith
Rejoice! Ensemble

I've heard about this baby boy
Whose come to earth to bring us joy.
And I just want to sing this song to you.
It goes like this, the fourth, the fifth
The minor fall, the major lift.
With every breath I'm singing, Hallelujah,
Hallelujah.

A couple came to Bethlehem
Expecting child, they searched the inn
To find a place for You were coming soon.
There was no room for them to stay
So in a manger filled with hay.
God's only Son was born, oh Hallelujah,
Hallelujah.

The shepherds left their flocks by night
To see this baby wrapped in light.
A host of angels led them all to You.
It was just as the angels said,
You'll find Him in a manger bed,
Immanuel and Savior, Hallelujah,
Hallelujah.

A star shown bright up in the east.
To Bethlehem, the wisemen three
Came many miles and journeyed long for You.
And to the place at which You were,
Their frankincense and gold and myrrh,
They gave to You and cried out Hallelujah,
Hallelujah.

I know You came to rescue me.
This baby boy would grow to be
A man and one day die for me and you.
My sins would drive the nails in You.
That rugged cross was my cross, too.
Still every breath You drew was Hallelujah,
Hallelujah.

- words by Cloverton

SECOND SCRIPTURE LESSON: *Luke 2:1-20*

In those days a decree went out from Emperor 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 for them in the inn.

In that 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. But 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.

Reader: This is the Word of the Lord.
Congregation: Thanks be to God.

SERMON: What’s Important Now?Jill Duffield

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

* CAROL OF RESPONSE: It Came Upon a Midnight Clear..... CAROL



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 Yet with the woes of sin and strife the world has suf-fered long;
4 And you, be-neath life's crush-ing load, whose forms are bend-ing low,
5 For lo, the days are has-tening on, by proph-ets seen of old,



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:
be - neath the heaven-ly hymn have rolled two thou-sand years of wrong;
who toil a - long the climb - ing way with pain - ful steps and slow,
when with the ev - er - cir-cling years shall come the time fore - told,



"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,
and we at war on earth hear not the tid - ings that they bring;
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, hush the noise and cease the strife to hear the 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.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH: A Christmas Creed..... Dolly Jacobs

I believe in Jesus Christ and in the beauty of the gospel begun in Bethlehem.

I believe in the one whose spirit glorified a little town and whose spirit still brings music to persons all over the world, in towns both large and small.

I believe in the one for whom the crowded inn could find no room, and I confess that my heart still sometimes wants to exclude Christ from my life today.

I believe in the one who the rulers of the earth ignored and the proud could never understand; whose life was among common people, whose welcome came from persons of hungry hearts.

I believe in the one who proclaimed the love of God to be invincible.

I believe in the one whose cradle was a mother's arms, whose modest home in Nazareth had love its only wealth, who looked at persons and made them see what God's love saw in them, who by love brought sinners back to purity, and lifted human weakness up to meet the strength of God.

I confess my ever-lasting need of God: The need for forgiveness for our selfishness and greed, the need of new life for empty souls, the need of love for hearts grown cold.

**I believe in God who gives us the best of himself. I believe in Jesus,
the Son of the living God, born in Bethlehem this night, for me
and for the world.**

– Walter Russell Bowie

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S TABLEJill Duffield, Dolly Jacobs
and Neil Dunnivant

GREAT THANKSGIVING

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

People: **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Leader: ... Therefore with all creation we sing your praise.



1. Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord,
2. Bless - ed is he who comes



God of pow - er and might, heav - en and earth are
in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the



full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est.
high - est, ho - san - na in the high - est.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

*Please use your communion kits to take communion in your homes. If you
do not have a kit, please substitute with bread and juice from your home.*

COMMUNION OF THE PEOPLE

COMMUNION MUSIC: Infant Holy, Infant Lowly..... arr. Mack Wilberg

Chancel Choir

Infant Holy, Infant lowly,
For his bed a cattle stall;
Oxen lowing, little knowing
Christ the Babe is Lord of all.
Swiftly winging angels singing,
Nowells ringing, tidings bringing:
Christ the Babe is Lord of all.

Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping
Vigil till the morning new
Saw the glory, heard the story,
Tidings of a gospel true.
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow,
Praises voicing, greet the morrow:
Christ the Babe was born for you.

– *Wzlobie Lezy*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION.....Neil Dunnivant

CELEBRATION OF THE LIGHT

Please use the candles from your Advent kit, or other candles you have in your home, to celebrate the light of the birth of our Savior. If you are with others, please pass the light to one another.

* CONGREGATIONAL CAROL: Silent Night, Holy Night..... STILLE NACHT

*Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht,
Alles schläft, einsam wacht,
Nur das traute hochheiliger Paar,
Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar,
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh'
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh'.*

**Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright
round yon virgin mother and child. Holy infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.**

**Silent night, holy night, shepherds quake at the sight;
glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!**

CONGREGATIONAL CAROL continues, over

Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light;
 radiant beams from thy holy face with the dawn of redeeming grace,
 Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

Silent night, holy night, wondrous star, lend thy light;
 with the angels let us sing, Alleluia to our King;
 Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!

* BENEDICTIONJill Duffield

* CONGREGATIONAL CAROL: Joy to the World!ANTIOCH

1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re - ceive
 2 Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let all their songs
 3 No more let sins and sor - rows grow, nor thorns in - fest
 4 He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the na -

her king; let ev - ery heart pre - pare him room,
 em - ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
 the ground; he comes to make his bless - ings flow
 tions prove the glo - ries of his righ - teous - ness

and heaven and na - ture sing, and heaven and na - ture
 re - peat the sound - ing joy, re - peat the sound - ing
 far as the curse is found, far as the curse is
 and won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his
 and heaven and na - ture sing,

and

sing, and heaven, and heaven and na - ture sing.
 joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
 found, far as, far as the curse is found.
 love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

heaven and na - ture sing,

VOLUNTARY: Sortie sur "Adeste Fideles".....Pierre Cochereau (1924-1984)
John Alexander, organ

THIS EVENING'S WORSHIP LEADERS

Jill Duffield, *Senior Pastor*

Dolly Jacobs, *Associate Pastor for Pastoral Care*

Neil Dunnivant, *Executive Pastor*

Keith Dove, *Sid & Cathy Batts Pastoral Resident*

The Compton Family, *Advent Wreath Lighters*

Robert Wells, *Director of Chancel Choir*

John Alexander, *Director of Music Ministry and Principal Organist*

James Keith, *Associate Director of Music for Rejoice!*

Rejoice! Ensemble

Chancel Choir

Cover image: "Holy Nativity" by Jean-Baptiste Marie Pierre.

Second half of 18th century. Oil on canvas, 36.2" x 28"



DECEMBER 27

First Sunday of Christmas, 9 a.m. online worship, with Newton Cowan leading this service of prayer, reflection, and caroling. Music from John Alexander.

JANUARY 3

Epiphany Sunday, 9 a.m. online worship, Jill Duffield preaching, with music from the Rejoice! Ensemble.

JANUARY 10

Baptism of the Lord and Communion Sunday, 9 a.m. online worship, Keith Dove preaching, with music from the Chancel Choir Ensemble.

HOLY COMMUNION

We invite all who trust in the Lord, including children,
to receive communion.

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