

*First Presbyterian Church
Albemarle, North Carolina*



CELEBRATION OF WORSHIP
December 24, 2022
Christmas Eve

GATHERING

PRELUDE

“Angels We Have Heard on High”	Dale Wood
“Still, Still, Still”	Norman Luboff
“What Child Is This?”	Richard Purvis
“The Shepherds”	Wilbur Held
“I Wonder as I Wander”	John Jacob Niles
Ann Crutchfield, Soprano	
“The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came”	Paul Manz
“Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella”	Elmar Arne Hovdesven
“O Holy Night”	Adolphe Adam
Andy Cotton, Baritone	
“Carol of the Crib”	Joanna Forbes L'Estrange

Light to the world, a child is born; dark is the night before the dawn: Day is upon us, darkness is dying, with Mary's child in slumber lying. Christ has come, our life to share; Sorrows and sins and griefs to bear: See where above us the heav'ns are clear, the angels are singing for Christ is here! Light for a world gone far astray, dawn of the hope of God's new day, Songs for our sighing, joy for our weeping, with Mary's child so softly sleeping. Christ has come, our life to share; Sorrows and sins and griefs to bear: See where above us the heav'ns are clear, the angels are singing for Christ is here! Light of the world, God's only Son! now is the day of grace begun: Love is among us, love beyond dreaming, with Mary's child for our redeeming. Christ has come, our life to share; Sorrows and sins and griefs to bear: See where above us the heav'ns are clear, the angels are singing for Christ is here!

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

Leo McLeod, acolyte

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; **those who lived in a land of deep darkness, on them light has shined.** Let us walk in the light of the Lord. **Amen.**

Response:

“The Candle of Hope”

LYONS

(“O Worship the King, All Glorious Above!”)

*The Christ candle's light that shines for us here, tells out the good news that God has come near!
God came, a poor baby, in one time and place, to show all creation the wealth of God's grace.*

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Isaiah 9

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined.

We have beheld Christ's glory, glory as of the only Son of the Father.

For a child is born for us, a Son is given to us.

In him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

*PRAYER OF THE DAY

Living God, on this holy night, we gather – to stand with the shepherd, amazed at your glory; to sing with the angels, rejoicing in your work; to wait with Joseph, trusting in your promise; to sit with Mary, cradling your love. May the good news of this night inspire us to tell the world of our great joy: for to us is born a Savior, the Messiah, the Lord. Glory and praise to you forever! Amen.

*HYMN 123

“It Came Upon the Midnight Clear”

CAROL

*It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heaven's all-gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.*

*Still through the cloven skies they come, with peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heavenly music floats o'er all the weary world:
Above its sad and lowly plains, they bend on hovering wing,
And ever o'er its Babel sounds the blessed angels sing.*

*Yet with the woes of sin and strife the world has suffered long;
Beneath the heavenly hymn have rolled two thousand years of wrong;
And we at war on earth hear not the tidings that they bring;
O hush the noise and cease the strife to hear the angels sing.*

*And ye, beneath life's crushing load, whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow,
Look now! for glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing.
O rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing!*

*For lo! the days are hastening on, by prophet seen of old,
When with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold,
When peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,
And the whole world send back the song which now the angels sing.*

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of grace and truth, in Jesus Christ, you came among us as light shining in darkness. We confess that we have not welcomed the light, or trusted good news to be good. We have closed our eyes to glory in our midst, expecting little, and hoping for less. Forgive our doubt, and renew our hope, so that we may receive the fullness of your grace, and live in the truth of Christ the Lord.

Silent Confession and Reflection

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Hear the promise of the Lord: see, your salvation has come! You are a holy people, redeemed by God; sought out and not forsaken. In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! **Thanks be to God.**

*RESPONSE 115

“Away in a Manger”

MUELLER

(stanza 3)

*Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay close by me forever and love me I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care, and fit us for heaven to live with thee there.*

THE WORD

ANTHEM

“Before the Marvel of this Night”

Carl Schalk

Before the marvel of this night adoring, fold your wings and bow; then tear the sky apart with light and with your news the world endow.

Proclaim the birth of Christ and peace, that fear and death and sorrow cease: Sing peace; sing peace; sing gift of peace! Awake the sleeping world with song: this is the day the Lord has made. Assemble here, celestial throng, in royal splendor come arrayed. Give earth a glimpse of heav'nly bliss, a teasing taste of what they miss: Sing bliss; sing bliss; sing endless bliss! The love that we have always known, our constant joy and endless light, Now to the loveless world be shown, now break upon its deathly night. Into one song compress the love that rules our universe above: Sing love; sing love; sing God is love!

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE LESSON

[Luke 2:1-16](#)

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MEDITATION

Rev. George

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

*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.

RECEIVING OF THE OFFERING

Offertory

“In the Bleak Midwinter”

David Lasky

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Invitation

Great Thanksgiving and The Lord's Prayer

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.** Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.** It is good to give you thanks...that we might become one with you. **Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.** Thank you for Jesus...and our lives in thanks and praise: **Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.** Pour out your Spirit...Now hear us as we pray together the prayer taught to us by our Lord, saying: **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.**

Communion of the People

Carol Singing

On cue from the organ, the congregation is invited to sing the first stanza of familiar carols.

Prayer After Communion

SENDING

*HYMN 122

“Silent Night, Holy Night”

STILLE NACHT

(Soloist, Ann Crutchfield, sings stanza 1)

*Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht! Alles schläft, einsam wacht, nur das traute, hoch heilige Paar.
Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar, schlaf in himmlischer Ruh, schlaf in himmlischer Ruh.*

*Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight; glories stream from heaven afar,
Heav'nly hosts sing, “Alleluia! Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!”*

*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.*

*CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

*CHORAL RESPONSE

“A Christmas Blessing”

Philip W.J. Stopford

May the joy of the angels, the gladness of shepherds, the worship of the wisemen and the peace of the Christ Child be yours this Christmas. May Christ, who by his incarnation gathered into one all things earthly, fill you with joy and peace. And the blessing of God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you and remain with you always. Amen.

*POSTLUDE

“Carol Rhapsody”

Richard Purvis

*Please stand in body or spirit.

Bold print indicates places where congregation reads or sings.

The Christmas Eve offering will go to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and directed to Ukraine Relief.

The Lord’s Table is open to all who trust in Jesus Christ and to those who want to trust him more.

The acolyte this evening is Leo McLeod. Following worship, the acolyte takes the light of Christ out into the world.

Thanks to the Chancel Choir of First Presbyterian Church and the Handbell Ensemble (Martha Sue, Adam Jolly, Katherine Jolly, Liz Jolly, Courtney Niederer, Natalie Niederer) for their music leadership in worship this evening.

Thanks to Ella Averette for her artwork on the cover of bulletin.

There is a nursery tonight for the convenience of preschoolers and their parents. An usher will assist with directions.

The offering this evening will go to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and directed to Ukraine Relief. The Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 was a serious escalation of a conflict that goes back 8 years. As long as the war continues, the situation will be very dynamic and humanitarian needs are likely to change. PC(USA) Humanitarian Aid is provided inside Ukraine through grants to St. Egidio (an ecumenical organization based in Ukraine) and the International Orthodox Christian Charities. Support for refugees in the neighboring countries is being sent to the ACT Alliance due to its ability to provide coordination in the response and reporting for: Hungarian Interchurch Aid, Hungarian Reformed Church Aid, Lutheran World Federation, the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren and others.

Emergency assistance has focused on items such as cash assistance for food, housing and other basic needs, psycho-social support, transitional housing (private and public), registration assistance and information and referrals. PC(USA) partners are also involved in coordination meetings with local and national governments, other non-governmental organizations (local, national and international) as well as with the UN agencies

Please place the extinguished candles in the baskets in the narthexes as you leave.

Worship will be held at 11:00 p.m. tonight. Invite a friend to come back with you.

There will be morning worship on Sunday, December 25 at 11:00 am.

The Annual Community Christmas Dinner will take place on Sunday, December 25 from 11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. (or until plates run out) at First Lutheran Church (230 South 2nd Street, Albemarle). The dinner is drive-thru only.

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