



First Presbyterian Church

of Raleigh, North Carolina

Serving Christ from the heart of the city to the ends of the earth with love, faith, and action.

December 21, 2025

4th Sunday of Advent

We Gather in God's Presence

Gathering Music

Chiming of the Trinity

Welcome and Announcements

The Rev. Dr. Tara W. Bulger

Introit

*Creator of the Stars of Night and
Conditor alme siderum*

Sarum plainsong and
Guillaume DuFay (1400-74)

The lyrics to the Introit may be found on the back page of the bulletin

Lighting of the Advent Candle and Call to Worship

(8:30) Will Robertson and Virginia Riel (11:00) Ralph and Jerrie Dearborn

Mary sang, "My soul magnifies the LORD,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for God has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

The Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is God's name."

Make us people of such abundant love, Emmanuel!



Sing the love of Ad - vent, peo - ple, do not fear: lift your hearts with



won - der, love is draw - ing near. In Je - sus Christ our



God has come to dwell; sing the love of Ad - vent: come, Em - man - u - el!

We light this candle as a sign of God's love and an act of trust, even as we
pray,

Come, Lord of Love, come!

*Hymn 79

Light Dawns on a Weary World

TEMPLE OF PEACE

Welcome to Worship!
Some notes about the
service:

*An asterisk denotes
standing, in body or
spirit.

**Words in bold are
read aloud by the
congregation.**

Today is the last
Sunday in Advent.
Advent is far more
than preparing to
celebrate the first
coming of Christ, the
incarnate Word.
Advent is a season of
hope, during which
we anticipate the
future coming of
Christ to establish his
rule over all things.

We welcome harpist
Laura Byrne to
worship and are
thankful for her
contributions to today's
services.

Each week we are
assured of God's
forgiveness following a
prayer of confession. In
truth, we believe God's
grace to be present even
before we come to God
in prayer or seek God's
mercy.

Prayer of Confession

Jesus our Christ, Prince of Peace, Savior of the Creation, we praise you. We give you thanks for this holy time of preparing for your birth, of renewing our calling as your people. And yet as we get closer to the stable, we acknowledge that we have fallen short of following your way. We have allowed the allure of other gods in this season to draw us in. We have permitted anxiety to rule our lives and fallen victim to the myth of scarcity. We offer our very selves to you this day and pray that you will walk alongside us, O Lord our God, for it is you who is always birthing and renewing.

(Let us continue our confession in silence)

Assurance of Pardon

Response to Pardon

Friends in Christ, in response to this gift of God's grace, how then shall we live?

With gratitude, following after the Lord Jesus Christ, who calls us to love God with heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbors as ourselves.

This is the way of Jesus, in whom we find life!

*Response of Gratitude | Hymn 113 Angels We Have Heard on High

Refrain: Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Gloria in excelsis Deo!

GLORIA

We Listen and Respond to God's Word

Children's Moment (11:00)

Beth Thaxton

After the Children's Moment, children ages 4 - 2nd gr. are invited to the Library for Children's Church and will return to their pews during the hymn following the sermon.

Prayer for Illumination

Barger Jeutter (8:30) and Anne Blake (11:00)

Scripture Reading

Isaiah 7:10-16

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Anthem

Gabriel's Message

Stephen Paulus

The lyrics to the Anthem may be found on the back page of the bulletin

Scripture Reading

Matthew 1:18-25

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Sermon

A Tale of Two Names

The Rev. Laurie Taylor Weicher

Silent Reflection

During our time of
Silent Reflection ask
yourself, "Given what I
have heard and
experienced today, is
God calling me to
change or grow in any
way?"

*Affirmation of Faith: from The Barmen Declaration

As Jesus Christ is God's assurance of the forgiveness of all our sins, so in the same way and with the same seriousness is he also God's mighty claim upon our whole life. Through him befalls us a joyful deliverance from the godless fetters of this world for a free, grateful service to God's creatures. Amen.

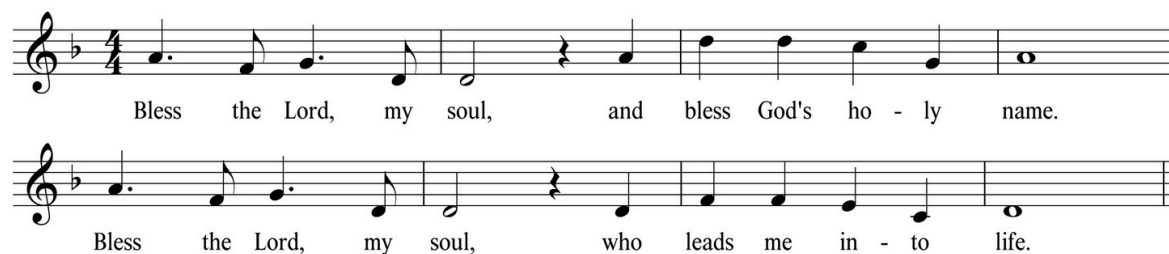
Joys and Concerns of the Church Family

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession and The Lord's Prayer

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.

Response to Prayer | Hymn 544

BLESS THE LORD (Taize)



An Invitation to Generosity

Offertory

Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn

Marty Haugen

*Doxology | Hymn 609

LASST UNS ERFREUEN

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.
Praise God all creatures high and low.
Alleluia, alleluia!
Praise God in Jesus fully known:
Creator Word, and Spirit one.
Alleluia, alleluia!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!**

*Prayer of Dedication

We Carry God's Word into the World

The Barmen Declaration was written in 1934 by a group of Christians seeking to stand against Nazi rule. In the confession, believers are called to return to their faith and allegiance to Jesus Christ, and not to be conformed to an oppressive regime. It is one of the confessions in the Presbyterian Book of Confessions.

The offering is closely tied to the church's calling to serve the poor and to reach out to the community. We offer not just a portion of what we have, but also our entire lives in service to God and God's people.

*Charge and Benediction

During the season of Advent, the congregation is invited to be seated for the Postlude.

Postlude

Toccata on ANTIOCH

Craig Phillips (1961)

*Chiming of the Trinity

The Chancel flowers are dedicated to the glory of God by Hilliard Greene and are given in loving memory of his wife, Sarah McKinnon "Panky" Greene, and in honor of his sons, Mark, David, and John.

Introit Lyrics

Creator of the stars of night,
your people's everlasting light,
O Christ, redeemer of us all,
we pray you, hear us when we call.

When this old world drew on toward night,
you came; but not in splendor bright,
not as a monarch, but the child
of Mary, blameless mother mild.

At your great name, O Jesus, now
all knees must bend, all hearts must bow:
all those on earth with one accord,
like those in heaven, shall call you Lord.

To God the Father, God the Son,
and God the Spirit, Three in One,
praise, honor, might, and glory be
from age to age eternally. Amen

Anthem Lyrics

The angel Gabriel from heaven came,
His wings as drifted snow, his eyes aflame.
"All hail!" said he, "thou lowly maiden Mary,
Most highly favour'd lady." Gloria!

"For known a blessed Mother thou shalt be,
All generations laud and honor thee,
Thy son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold.
Most highly favour'd 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 favour'd 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 favour'd lady, Gloria!

Scan the QR code for
ways to become
connected to our
ministries.



On the Calendar This Week December 21 – December 27

Today – Early Worship 8:30am | Hymn Sing 10:00am | Late Worship 11:00am

Monday, December 22 – Staff Meeting 1:00pm

Tuesday, December 23 – Enough for Today Podcast 8:00am | CDC Chapel 10:30am

Wednesday, December 24 – Children & Family Worship Service 4:00pm | Service of Lessons & Carols 7:00pm
Candlelight Communion Service 11:00pm

Thursday, December 25 – Merry Christmas! | Church Offices Closed

Friday, December 26 – Church Offices Closed

Saturday, December 27 – No events or activities scheduled.

Announcements and Upcoming Events

Hymn Sing

Join us this morning at 10am in Memorial Hall for light breakfast snacks coordinated by the Christian Education Committee, Advent-themed crafts for children to partake in, and, of course, hymns! All are welcome! Bring a friend!

Christmas Eve Worship Services

We invite you to celebrate the birth of our Savior with us at one of our beautiful Christmas Eve services:

4:00 p.m. - Children & Family Service: A joyful service filled with bells, singing, and excitement for all ages! Perfect for families with little ones.

7:00 p.m. - Candlelight Service of Lessons & Carols: Hear the Christmas story come to life through scripture and song, from prophecy to fulfillment. A rich and meaningful service for all.

11:00 p.m. - Candlelight Communion Service: Join us as we usher in Christmas morning with a peaceful candlelight service and the sharing of Communion. A holy and reflective moment to experience the true meaning of Christmas.

We would love for you to be part of this special evening. Bring your loved ones and celebrate the gift of Jesus together. All are welcome!

FPC Congregational Covered Dish Luncheon

Join us for a joyful time of fellowship as First Presbyterian Church celebrates its 210th Birthday! Immediately following the 11:00 a.m. worship service on Sunday, January 11, 2026, the congregation is invited to gather for a covered dish luncheon in Memorial Hall. This special celebration will also include the recognition of incoming and outgoing FPC officers, as we give thanks for faithful leadership and welcome those called to serve in the year ahead.

Dessert will be extra sweet—the 210th FPC Birthday Cake will be provided by the FPC Foundation. All are welcome to attend and bring a favorite dish to share. This event is co-sponsored by Presbyterian Women, the Congregational Life Committee, and the FPC Foundation. We look forward to celebrating God's faithfulness and our shared life together as a church family.

PC(USA) Christmas Joy Offering

Each year during the Advent and Christmas season, we lift up past, present, and future leaders of the church. God has blessed the church with incredible leadership in every time and place, but those leaders often need to be supported by their communities as well. This Offering provides support for Presbyterian church workers and their families in their time of need and leadership development and education for communities of color at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. If you would like to contribute to this special offering, please mail a check to First Presbyterian Church with "Joy Gift" in the memo line.

FPC Shares Item for December

This month's FPC Shares item is Soup! Bring this item and/or your favorite non-perishable food donations to the church. There are FPC Shares receptacles on both sides of the Edge Lobby and in two places in the Lisa Ham Gathering Space outside the sanctuary.

Mission Highlight

Raleigh Rescue Mission (RRM)

In Wake County, there are over 6,000 homeless individuals, over 5,000 homeless school children, and more than 99,000 persons in poverty at risk of being homeless. In Raleigh and Wake County, homelessness is increasing 8% each year. You may or may not notice the men, women, and children who are struggling with homelessness. They may be sleeping in their car or on a friend's couch. Perhaps they're living temporarily with their parents, or in a motel room. Maybe they've found emergency shelter. Many who are homeless have experienced trauma, domestic violence, family tragedy, job loss, addiction, or health issues.

Located at 314 E. Hargett Street and founded in 1961, Raleigh Rescue Mission (RRM) is a 501c3 non-profit dedicated to serving the homeless in the community through the love of Christ. For those who need a second chance and are willing to do the work it takes to rebuild their lives, RRM is a place with a long-term purpose and steadfast strategy to break the cycle of poverty and homelessness.

Most clients spend an average of one year under RRM's roof in The New Life Plan, which has six distinct Phases, each building upon the previous. Clients receive basic needs such as shelter, food, clothing, hygiene, and healthcare before moving through a series of programs that include counseling, parenting classes, financial coaching, and vocational training, with the goal of finding permanent employment and housing. The William E. Mangum Children's Development Center offers health and resource referrals for children and families.

Over the last 60 years, more than 750,000 men, women, and children have found shelter, hope, and the love of Christ at Raleigh Rescue Mission. FPC's Mission budget provides annual financial support for RRM's programs. To learn more, visit <https://www.raleighrescue.org/>.