



12 December 2021
3rd Sunday of Advent

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Established 1817

A Congregation of the Presbyterian Church (USA)
Building Community ▪ Transforming Lives ▪ Engaging the World

Trusting that God's grace embraces and makes a covenant with all believers, First Presbyterian Church intends to be an inclusive place of spiritual growth for all people. All persons are welcomed into this fellowship and membership regardless of age, sexual orientation, gender, ethnic or racial identity, economic or educational status, or political affiliation.

Order of Worship

Prayer of Preparation

Margaret Anne Huffman

*Into the bleakest winters of our souls, Lord,
you are tiptoeing on tiny Infant feet to find us, hold our hands.*

*May we drop whatever it is we are so busy about these days
to accept this gesture so small that it may get overlooked
in our frantic search for something massive and overwhelming.*

*Remind us that it is not you who demands
large, lavish celebrations and enormous strobe-lit displays of faith.*

*Rather, you ask only that we have the faith of a mustard seed
and willingness to let a small hand take ours.*

We are ready. Amen.

Welcome

Minute for Mission

Gifts from the Heart

Lainy White (Reviving Lives)

The Chiming of the Trinity

Prelude

Mary, Did You Know? Lowry and Greene

Introit

How Great Our Joy! arr. S. Pethel

Advent Candle Lighting

8:30am Craig and Susan Qualls

11:00am Helen Robinson and Sue Peine

On this day we bear witness to the light of Christ
with all the faithful of every time and place:

With Isaiah and Jeremiah,

prophets of Israel,

we await the promised salvation of the Lord,

and look for the coming of the one

who will bring justice and righteousness to the earth?

With John the Baptist, calling from the wilderness, we cry:

"Prepare the way of the Lord!

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

With the writers of the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,
**we tell the good news of Jesus Christ, the child of Bethlehem,
who came to save us, and is coming again to rule in glory.**

Candle lighting

Sung response from Hymn 106 v.3

**Fling wide your gates, O Zion;
your Savior's rule embrace,
and tidings of salvation
proclaim in every place.
All lands will bow rejoicing,
their adoration voicing.
O blest is Christ who came
in God's most holy name.**

The Word became flesh and lived among us,
and we have seen his glory.

Alleluia!

***Hymn 93** *Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates* Weissel/1178

Confession

**In your presence, Holy God,
we confess that we need repentance.
We have broken your commands against idolatry.
We do not live in peace with your creation or your people.
We have not trusted your word, and we are afraid.
Forgive us, restore us, and turn our very lives into praise,
for the sake of the One who proclaims the good news
and for the sake of all the world.**

(We pause for a time of silent confession)

Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Summary of the Law

Matthew 22:37-39

**“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and
with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the
greatest and the first commandment. And a second is like it,
‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”**

(11am) **Children's Moment**

Maren Sonstegard-Spray

**Hymn 95 Prepare the way of the Lord.
 Prepare the way of the Lord,
 and all people will see the salvation of our God. (repeat)**

Lord's Prayer

Hymnal p. 35

*2nd-grade children or younger may depart for Children's
Worship and Wonder in the Ministry Center*

**Hymn 95 Prepare the way of the Lord.
 Prepare the way of the Lord,
 and all people will see the salvation of our God. (repeat)**

Anthem

Come, Jesus, Prince of Peace D. Hannibal/Nix

Prayer for Illumination

Lesson

Luke 3:7-18

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon

The Rev. Dr. Anna Pinckney Straight

***Affirmation of Faith**

from Romans 8

**We believe there is no condemnation
for those who are in Christ Jesus;
for we know that all things work together for good
for those who love God,
who are called according to God's purpose.
We are convinced that neither death, nor life,
nor angels, nor rulers,
nor things present, nor things to come,
nor powers, nor height, nor depth,
nor anything else in all creation,
will be able to separate us from the love of God
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.**

***Hymn 82** *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus* Wesley/Prichard

Joys and Concerns of the Congregation

*The flowers in the Sanctuary this morning are given by
George & Lynn Moore to the glory of God and in honor
of their parents, Mr. & Mrs. James P. Price
and Mr. & Mrs. George Horace Moore.*

Prayers of the People and Lord's Prayer

In your great mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Benediction

Postlude

The Huron Carol

arr. M. Hayes

**If you have not already done so, please place your offering in
the wooden collection boxes nearest the exit you use. We look
forward to seeing you again next week.**

The prayer of confession reprinted by permission from *Feasting on the
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Liturgist: The Rev. Dr. Maren Sonstegard-Spray

Pianist: Cindy Sutton

Flutist: Ann Courtney

Bass: Winston Dixon

Ensemble: Members of the Resurrection Singers

WELCOME VISITORS! Please write your name on a visitor's badge for your blouse or lapel. Along with our members, please sign the Friendship Pad when passed to you during the service.

CHILDREN are welcome at First Presbyterian Church. The nursery is available for infants and preschool children in Room 1.23 in the Ministry Center from 8:15am-12:15pm. Following the Children's Moment, those in the 2nd grade or younger may depart for Children's Worship and Wonder in the Ministry Center. For all children in worship, there are worship bags available at the front and back of the Sanctuary.

RESTROOMS are available in the Ministry Center, (including a family restroom), the Session House, and the Fellowship Center.

HEARING ASSISTANCE DEVICES with ear coverings are available. Please ask an usher if you have need.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBILITY is provided by ramps between the Ministry Center and the Sanctuary, in the back of the Ministry Center, along the side of the Session house, and at the front and side entrances of the J. Murphy Smith Fellowship Center.

MASKS are no longer required in our worship services here at First Presbyterian Church, however we hope that each person will make their own decision as to what is wise and safest for them in terms of wearing a mask or worshiping in person (the video service and podcast can both be accessed through the website). There may be some classes or rehearsals who choose to remain masked, and we are leaving that to their discretion. This move was made in response to rising vaccination rates and lowering infection and hospitalization rates in Craven County. The Worship Commission and Session will continue to monitor the data and consult with our wonderful physician members for advice on how to proceed. If a change is made, we will communicate this on our website and by email.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Youth Fellowship

Due to Candlelight Service, there will be no regular Youth meeting tonight.

Outdoor Candlelight Service Today

Sunday, **December 12**, at 5:00 pm in front of the Session House. You may drive up on New Street and sit in your car with the windows down and sing along or just listen or bring a lawn chair. We will have some chairs already set out. Members of our choirs will be singing and playing handbells, and Vance and Cindy will play the piano from inside the Session House. It will all be amplified so you can hear. We'll have candles to light and lyrics will be available in the bulletin. Childcare for infants and preschool children will be available in the nursery. In the case of inclement weather, the service will be held in the Sanctuary.

Just Older Youth (Middle and High School)

Next Sunday, December 19 will be our Youth Christmas Party! We'll start at 5:30 like normal and will be playing Christmas Bingo, Minute to Win It Games, *and* having a Dirty Santa Gift Exchange. Each youth wanting to participate in the exchange needs to bring a wrapped gift (\$20 limit). Also, please bring a dish to share for dinner (heavy hors d'oeuvres).

SALT (3-5th grade)

Next Sunday, December 19 will be our SALT Christmas Party! We'll start at 5:30 like normal and will have a short lesson, play Christmas Games, *and* have a Dirty Santa Gift Exchange. Each youth wanting to participate in the exchange needs to bring a wrapped gift (\$10 limit). Also, please bring a dish to share for dinner (heavy hors d'oeuvres).

Outdoor Christmas Eve Service

Friday, **December 24**, at 5pm in front of the Session House. You can park on New Street and remain in your car with the windows down, bring a lawn chair, or be prepared to stand. We will have some chairs already set out. Communion will be served, and an offering will be taken to benefit RCS and MERCI free

medical clinic. Childcare for infants and preschool children will be available in the nursery. In the case of inclement weather, the service will be held in the Sanctuary. We will also have an online Christmas Eve service available on our website.

Time and Talents Survey – For Everyone!



How are you giving of your time and your talents? Where is God calling you to serve? The time and talents survey will soon be (and might already be) in the mail and on its way to you. If you would like to complete the survey online, you can find it firstpresnb.org/time-and-talent-survey-2022.html or use the QR code to the left.

Donations of Teacups and Saucers Needed

Habitat for Humanity of Craven County is hosting a Women's Tea Fundraiser for International Women's Day on March 8, 2022. Currently, they are looking for donations of teacups, saucers, teapots, and tiered trays. Before donating, please check your items for chips and cracks; cups and saucers do not have to be matching. Donations can be dropped off Wednesday-Saturday from 9:00am-5:00pm at their ReStore located at 930 Pollock Street. For questions about donations, please reach out to Volunteer Coordinator, Catherine Campbell, at ccampbell@cravencountyhabitat.org or (252) 633-9599, ext. 104. A small donation like this can help build homes, communities, and hope in big ways!

Sock Tree

During December, the Sock Tree will be in the narthex. Church members and friends are encouraged to donate new socks for men, women, and children. The socks do not need to be Christmas socks. After the holiday season the socks are donated to the homeless shelter at RCS. The staff at the shelter appreciates new socks as socks are seldom ever donated. Questions--please phone Norma Morra 636-1010.

Operation Jammies for Coastal Women's Shelter

Each year we collect "new" pajamas for every mother and child receiving services from the Coastal Women's Shelter. For the children, size 6 months to 16 for both boys and girls are needed. The sizes needed for women range from small to XXL. There is a collection bin inside the main entrance to the Ministry Center. You can also drop off the pajamas on Sunday morning. Pajamas will be collected until **December 20, 2021**. Also, remember that you can always donate to Coastal Women's Shelter through Gifts of the Heart.

Serve at Religious Community Services Soup Kitchen

Members and visitors at First Presbyterian Church New Bern consider whether you might be able to fit in several morning hours, one time, or more than once if it feels right to you, to volunteer at the RCS Soup Kitchen.

For those who are not yet familiar with it, RCS is at 919 George Street, and includes an emergency shelter, a food pantry, a Clothes Closet, and the Soup Kitchen. Our church has actively supported the organization financially and through volunteerism, since its inception in 1982.

Our commitment at this time is for a team of five to be in their kitchen from 8:00am-noon, once or twice a month. Our days are the second Monday of each month, and in any month that has a fifth Thursday. During those times, we assist the cook in the preparation of a nourishing meal. This commitment was fulfilled in the past year, by a small group of people of faith, who helped prepare, then pack, the meals "to go". At this point, the meals are still packed to take out. However, as soon as it is deemed safe, the diners will be welcomed back into the relatively new dining room. When that time comes, our teams may need to be larger. We often served 70 to 200 hot meals. If your faith, and your benevolent spirit, lead you to want to try this even once, we'd love to hear from you. Contact Prudence Wing, Volunteer Coordinator from First Pres New Bern to RCS, 1-207-457-5535

Education

Sunday School classes meet Sundays 9:40-10:40 am

Sunday School for Children

Preschool – active play in the Nursery

Kindergarten-5th Grade – Ministry Center Room 1.27 (Follow Me: Biblical Practices for Faithful Living)

Middle & High School – Ministry Center Room 2.23-24 (Follow Me: Biblical Practices for Faithful Living)

Sunday School for Adults

The Present Word/George Evans – Session House Parlor

The class is currently studying the series “Justice, Law, History” in Old Testament texts. Please contact George Evans (gkevans4@gmail.com) with questions. The book is available in the church office.

Advent Sunday School Class – Session House Main Room

Running for the four Sundays of Advent, Anna Pinckney Straight is teaching a class based on New Testament scholar AJ Levine’s book “Light of the World: A Beginner’s Guide to Advent.” Books are available in the church office or can be ordered from Amazon. The class meets in the Session House main room.

Mid-Week Formation Opportunities

Monday Evening Women’s Bible Study

The group meets on Mondays from 7:00-8:30 pm, via Zoom. Join us as we accompany Amy-Jill Levine, one of our favorite authors and teachers, and author of “The Difficult Words of Jesus,” as she guides us through that struggle to a place of greater understanding of what it is that our Lord is requesting of us. For more information, call Wendy Moeller 252-876-7259 or Marice Debruhl 252-637-5468 or Cathy Wingfield 828-767-0975.

Tuesday Afternoon Grief Support

The group meets every 2nd Tuesday of the month from 12:00 to 1:00 pm in the Chapel. This ongoing group provides its members with companionship, understanding, support, and guidance as we

seek to go on living when someone we love dies. All are welcome. Come and bring a friend. Contact Lloyd Griffith for more information.

Life of Prayer: The Practice of Contemplative Living

Led by Lloyd Griffith on Wednesdays noon-1:00 pm and meets in Ministry Center Room 2.21 and by Zoom in a hybrid format. The group will be studying “Soul Force” by Lloyd Griffith and “Immortal Diamond” by Richard Rohr.

Wednesday Evening Contemplative Worship

Led by Lloyd Griffith and meets in the Chapel in the Ministry Center. This contemplative, or reflective, approach to worship is offered each Wednesday from 5 to 5:30 pm. This quiet service is focused on silence, prayer, and reflection on the Biblical text chosen for preaching the coming Sunday. The Lord’s Supper is observed on the 4th Wednesday of the month. Come when you can and bring a friend.

Thursday Morning Women’s Bible Study – New Book

We will be starting a new book on Thursday, **January 6**, “Honoring the Body: Meditations on a Christian Practice” by Stephanie Paulsell. Our Thursday Morning Women's Bible Study meets weekly 10-11am by Zoom. The book is available for purchase on Amazon (Kindle version also available). If you need help acquiring the book or want to be added to the email list for the class, please contact Maren (maren@firstpresnb.org).

Sunday Afternoon Men’s Beer and Theology led by Ken Wilkins at Brewery 99 (1014 Pollock St) at 4:00 pm, Sunday, **December 19** (on the third Sunday of the month). This will be a casual men’s gathering for fellowship and conversation around topics of theology and faith. Don’t let any bad weather stop you from coming – there is a nice indoor space for gathering!

Church Nursery

Our Nursery, located on the first floor of our Ministry Center, has resumed regular hours (8:15 am-12:15 pm). We have a team of paid, trained, and background-checked nursery workers to care for infants and preschool-aged children during Sunday school and both

worship services. Stop by and say hi to our new nursery workers Cindy and Kimberly and Carolyn, and our nursery coordinator Bailey.

Fellowship Café

Join us from 9:30 until 10:45 am in the Fellowship Café (on the first floor of the Ministry Center) for a cup of coffee, a bite or two, and to renew your church friendships, or stop by and grab a coffee on your way to Sunday School!

Church Email List and Church Newsletter

We communicate a lot of things happening in the life of the church through emails through Constant Contact. If you would like to receive regular announcements or the newsletter, or both, please contact Cathy Wingfield (cathy@firstpresnb.org) or sign up on the church website!

Nametags

We want to encourage everyone to get in the habit of wearing their nametags again! If you have misplaced yours, Marcy, our Office Administrator, is happy to make you another one (marcy@firstpresnb.org). There is a board in the Narthex where you can leave your nametag at the end of the service, and it will be waiting for you the next Sunday.