



First Presbyterian Church

New Bern,
North Carolina

26 December 2021

1st Sunday after
Christmas

Established 1817
A Congregation of the
Presbyterian Church (USA)

Building Community

Transforming Lives

Engaging the World

Nativity

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Eyekons

Order of Worship

Prayer of Preparation

St. Augustine

*The River of time sweeps on, but there,
like a tree planted by the water, is our Lord Jesus Christ.
He became human, willing to plant himself by the river of time.
If you feel yourself drifting down the rapids, lay hold of the tree;
if you are caught up in the love of the world,
hold on to Christ.
He for your sake entered into time,
but he did not cease to be eternal.*

Welcome

The Chiming of the Trinity

Prelude

What Child is This?

Robert Lau

Introit

Once in Royal David's City

Alexander
/Gauntlett

*Call to Worship

**Let us praise the name of the Lord!
God commanded and we were created.
Leaders and followers, old and young,
all of God's beloved children,
all people everywhere as with the angels,
let us come and praise the exalted name of the Lord.
Let us worship God!**

Confession

Holy God, though we are in awe of the dawn of your light in Jesus Christ, we remain self-centered and cling to the sin of the world. We celebrate the birth of our savior, yet we struggle in our commitment to follow him. We are called to pursue justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you; yet we are content to seek our own comfort and conveniently ignore the cries of those in need. By the light of the Christ child, lead us on a path of goodness and righteousness, as we seek to love all of your bountiful creation.

(We pause for a time of silent confession)

In your name we pray. **Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
And also with you.

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

Anna Pinckney Straight

Lord’s Prayer

Hymnal p. 35

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

Solo

Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light J.S. Bach
From “A Christmas Oratorio”

Prayer for Illumination

Lesson

John 1:1-18

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

Sermon

The Rev. Dr. Anna Pinckney Straight

***Affirmation of Faith**

God has not waited to be discovered. The Lord has taken the initiative and addressed his Word to humankind in many ways. Through the Word of God the world was created. The Word became flesh in Jesus Christ. Through the Word of God the New Creation is being formed. We believe God’s Word is God’s communication to us. Although God is free to speak to us in unexpected ways, we confidently listen for his Word in Jesus Christ, in holy Scripture, in preaching and the sacraments. The Word which was with God from the beginning was embodied in Jesus Christ. We hold that what God says to us and does for us centers in Jesus Christ our living Lord as he is remembered, known, and expected.

Joys and Concerns of the Congregation

The flowers in the Sanctuary this morning are given by Pat K. Rowlett to the glory of God and in memory of Pete Rowlett on his birthday.

A special offering will be received today for Tornado Disaster Relief in Mayfield, Kentucky. The offering will be sent directly to two congregations we are connected with: First Christian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Mayfield.

Checks should be made out to First Presbyterian Church with “Tornado Relief” in the memo line and can be placed in the offering box or mailed to the church office.

Prayers of the People and Lord’s Prayer

O God of Love, **draw us together in peace.**

Benediction

Postlude

Joy to the World

Mier

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 call to worship and prayer of confession are from Call to Worship: *Volume 55.1 Lectionary Aids 2021–2022, Year C* © 2021 Office of Theology and Worship Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Liturgist: The Rev. Dr. Maren Sonstegard-Spray

Organist: Vance Harper Jones

Soloist: Pat Kerr Rowlett

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 8:15 am-12:15 pm. 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 required in the Sanctuary for the time being. At a meeting of the Worship Commission on December 22 it was decided to return to a mask requirement for worship and to put a pause on singing by the choir and the congregation. It is our hope that this will be a short-lived pause until we have a better grasp on the effects of the Omicron variant. As always, if you have had an exposure to someone with Covid-19 or have symptoms that indicate a possible Covid-19 infection, we hope you will either receive a negative test before coming to worship or choose to worship online via the video or podcast.

These changes to our Covid-19 response are communicated by email and will be shared on our website and Facebook page. If you'd like to be added to this email list, please contact cathy@firstpresnb.org or visit firstpresnb.org/communications (scroll to the bottom of the page).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

After Christmas Volunteers Needed

We are looking for volunteers to help with removing Christmas decorations from the church on **Wednesday, December 29**, at 9:00 am. Call the church office with any questions.

Youth Fellowship

Just Older Youth (JOY) Fellowship for middle and high school students will return on Sunday, **January 9!**

Choir Rehearsals will resume in January. We are so appreciative of all the hard work and dedication of our choirs in presenting music for our worship services during the Advent and Christmas seasons.

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 is 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.

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.

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!

Book Donation Thank You

Centenary Methodist Church and Oaks Road Academy would like to thank each of you who donated books for the students at the Academy. Many of these students now hold, in their hands and hearts, some of the first books they have ever owned. Your generosity is greatly appreciated!

Devotional Booklets

The books of the devotions written by members of the congregation and the staff of the church are now printed and available. If you reserved a copy, you can pick it up from Maren in the time between services on December 26, or during the week in the church office. The suggested donation is \$10 per book. We printed a few extra so if you did not reserve one but are interested in one, contact Maren (maren@firstpresnb.org).

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). **Not meeting on December 26.**

Middle & High School – Ministry Center Room 2.23-24 (Follow Me: Biblical Practices for Faithful Living). **Not Meeting on December 26 or January 2.**

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. **Not Meeting on December 26th.**

New Adult Sunday School Offerings Coming in January:

Getting Old – Growing Gracefully: Lloyd Griffith

“The laws of nature that dictate sundown dictate our demise.” This final part of our journey raises inevitable questions: What is our relationship with the younger generation? What is truth? What is the connection between work and vocation? How can I stay engaged with the outer life? How can I stay engaged with the inner life? Where do I go when I die? How we respond to these built-in concerns is ours to choose. We can answer this inevitable aging process with denial or defiance and find ourselves on a passage of decline and inaction. OR...we can collaborate faithfully with this unique section on the arc of life and find ourselves on a different passage of engagement and discovery of a Holy energy holding and guiding us along the path. This Sunday School class on aging gracefully will begin on **January 2** at 9:40 am in room 2.21 (large center classroom on the second floor of the Ministry Center). We will be guided through these challenges of the journey by Parker Palmer’s “On the Brink of Everything, Grace, Gravity and Getting Older.” Please contact the church office or Lloyd Griffith to register for this class. Inquiries welcome!

Law and Religion: James R. Copland

America’s original constitution did not expressly cover the relationship between church and state. But the Bill of Rights—insisted upon by some states, including North Carolina, as a precondition for joining the union—led off with it: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” This course will cover the historical background framing the First Amendment’s religion clauses; the evolution of Supreme Court doctrine interpreting them, and modern cases and controversies. Copland is formerly a Coker Fellow in constitutional law at the Yale Law School, but the course

is intended for a general, rather than a legal, audience. Where appropriate, Biblical interpretation and discussion will be incorporated to augment the discussion of law. This class will begin on Sunday, **January 2** at 9:40 am in the Session House Main Room.

Church Membership Class: Rev. Dr. Anna Pinckney Straight
Ministry Center Conference Room (in the Staff Office Suite)

Whether you have been worshiping with First Presbyterian for one Sunday or one hundred, we'd welcome the opportunity to talk with you about what it means to be a part of a church community-what it might mean for you to take the joyful, faithful step of becoming a member of First Presbyterian Church. To help facilitate these conversations we have scheduled classes to be held on **January 16 and 23** (you are invited and encouraged to attend the class both weeks) during the Sunday School time with the opportunity to join and be welcomed in worship on the 23rd at 11:00 am or the 30th at 8:30 am. If these dates don't work for you, please get in touch with Anna so we can add you to the list for the next time we have these gatherings or so we can meet and find a pathway and timeline that works for you (anna@firstpresnb.org or 252-637-3270).

Guardian Ad Litem Presentation on January 16

If you are interested in helping children in the foster care system, volunteering as a Guardian ad Litem might be right for you! A Guardian ad Litem (GAL) advocate is a trained community volunteer who is appointed, along with a Guardian ad Litem attorney, by a district court judge to investigate and determine the needs of abused and neglected children petitioned into the court system by the Department of Social Services. Throughout North Carolina, the Guardian ad Litem Program seeks to serve the best interests of thousands of children who find themselves the subjects of court cases. The program exists in every county throughout North Carolina, and with the help of more than 5,300 volunteers, serves more than 18,000 children a year. On Sunday, **January 16**, during the Sunday School hour, 9:40-10:40 am in the Session House Main Room. Tracey Brenneman, district administrator for the GAL program, will share information about the program and how you can be involved. For more information visit: volunteerforgal.org

Mid-Week Formation Opportunities

Monday Evening Women's Bible Study

The group meets on Mondays from 7:00 to 8:30 PM via Zoom. Join us as we begin a new book, *It's Not About Me* by Max Lucado, a well-known pastor and prolific author, familiar to many in our congregation. Lucado explores how “me-centric” tendencies natural to all of us (ever watch toddlers navigate their little “it’s all about me” worlds?!) get carried into adulthood where “my agenda”, “my schedule”, “my issues”, the things that make “me” happy may present in more sophisticated forms, but only serve to alienate us in our constrained “me-centric” universes from others and, most importantly, keep us from flourishing and helping others to flourish in the “God-centric” realm in which all of us are called to live and to serve. The group will launch into this “oldie, but goody” book starting **January 3, 2022**, after a two-week holiday break. For more information or to get on our list, please call Marice Debruhl 637-5468 (h), Cathy Wingfield 828-767-0975 (c), or Wendy Moeller 876-7259 (c).

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. **We will not be meeting on December 29th.**

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. **We will not be meeting on December 29th.**

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 10-11 am 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, **January 23**. 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!

Montreat Women's Conference 2022

Join us at the Montreat Women's Connection Conference Friday-Sunday, August 12-14. The keynote speaker is author Sarah Bessey. More information at montreat.org/women. We will register as a group again this year which means instead of registering on the Montreat website, you register with Maren Sonstegard-Spray (maren@firstpresnb.org). Rooms in the Assembly Inn (with air conditioning and elevator) go very quickly so please contact Maren by Sunday, **January 23rd**. The deposit to hold your spot is \$100. Registration cost includes program, room, and meals (single and double occupancy options) and the prices range from \$391 to \$511 per person. Transportation is on your own and many arranged carpools in previous years. We are offering a discount off the cost of the registration from the McClary Scholarship fund to make it easier to attend the conference! Please contact Maren to learn more about the discount.

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.