



John the Baptist preaching in the desert, JESUS MAFA, 1973, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN.

5 December 2021
2nd Sunday of Advent

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Established 1817

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

Order of Worship

Prayer of Preparation

Covenant God, you send us messengers to cleanse and refine us for your coming. Help us endure the mirror of the prophets' message, that we may see you when you suddenly appear among us; through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Welcome

The Chiming of the Trinity

Prelude *Now the Heavens Start to Whisper* Biery

Introit *Comfort, Comfort, Now My People* Olearius/1551

Advent Candle Lighting

*8:30 am Marj Shelton and Louis Foye
11 am Carol and Ed Doty*

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."

Candle lighting

Sung Response from Hymn 106 v.2

**He brings God's rule, O Zion;
he comes from heaven above.**

**His rule is peace and freedom,
and justice, truth, and love.**

**Lift high your praise resounding,
for grace and joy abounding.**

**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 129** *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming* German/1599

Confession

Refining God, you have sent us prophets and we have not listened. We have not always determined what is best or made way for your reign in our lives, our church, and our society. Forgive us, we pray and renew your covenant within us, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Silent Confession

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.’”

(11 am) Children's Moment

Anna Pinckney Straight and Skip Bradley

**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 *On Jordan's Banks the Baptist's Cry* Cherwien

Prayer for Illumination

Lesson Luke 3:1-6

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

Sermon The Rev. Dr. Maren Sonstegard-Spray

***Affirmation of Faith**

From A Declaration of Faith (PCUSA 1991) Chapter 7(6)

The church has its ongoing story with God.

The church's story with God did not end with the latest events recorded in Scripture. Across the centuries the company of believers has continued its pilgrimage with the Lord of history. It is a record of faith and faithlessness, glory and shame. The church has been persecuted by hostile societies, but it has also known times of privilege and power when it joined forces with dominant cultures. It has sought holiness through separation from society, as well as through involvement in the world's affairs. It has experienced life-giving reformations. It has known missionary expansion throughout the world, but also periods of dwindling resources and influence. It has divided into rival orders, sects, and denominations, but it has also labored for cooperation and union. We confess we are heirs of this whole story. We are charged to remember our past, to be warned and encouraged by it, but not to live it again. Now is the time of our testing as God's story with the church moves forward through us. We are called to live now as God's servants in the service of people everywhere.

***Hymn 104** *O Lord, How Shall I Meet You* Gerhardt/Teschner

Minute for Mission Gifts from the Heart
Daewon Goldenbaum-Yang (ECU campus ministry)

Joys and Concerns of the Congregation

The flowers in the Sanctuary this morning are given by Josh and Denise Willey to the glory of God and in celebration of our first Christmas season with the Rev. Dr. Anna Pinckney Straight.

The sympathy of the congregation goes out to Ruth Dettor on the death of her husband Charles Dettor on November 28 in Cary, NC.

Congratulations to Peter and Sarah Moeller on the birth of their son Oliver Hunt Moeller on November 29. Proud grandparents are Mark Moeller and Phoebe Montgomery Moeller.

Prayers of the People and (8:30 am) Lord's Prayer

Benediction

Postlude

Come, Lord, and Tarry Not!

Powell

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.

Cover: JESUS MAFA, John the Baptist Preaching in the Desert.

<http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=58796>JESUS MAFA is a response to the New Testament readings from the Lectionary by a Christian community in Cameroon, Africa. Each of the readings was selected and adapted to dramatic interpretation by the community members. Photographs of their interpretations were made, and these were then transcribed into paintings.

Prayers reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from Feasting on the Word Worship Companion. Copyright 2012.

Liturgist: The Rev. Dr. Anna Pinckney Straight

Organist: Vance Harper Jones

Ensemble: Members of the Daybreak and Sanctuary Choirs

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 (as of November 14) are no longer mandated 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 worshipping 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

Service Opportunity

Please consider volunteering to help make decorations for the Sanctuary and grounds on **Friday, December 10th**, 9:00 am. No experience is necessary! Even if you can't come, your donations of cypress, cedar, arborvitae, magnolia, boxwood, and holly are needed to create beautiful decorations! Call Jackie Pollock or Janelle Haggard if you have questions.

Youth Fellowship

Just Older Youth (JOY) join us TODAY Sunday, December 5th, for a Christmas Outing at Mike's Farm! We will meet at the church to carpool at 3:45 pm. While at the farm, we will enjoy the Christmas lights as well as a bonfire, hot dog dinner, and s'mores. Questions? Contact Marianna (marianna@firstpresnb.org)

Messiah Broadcast

The Craven Messiah Chorus and Public Radio East will broadcast the 2017 35th anniversary performance of Handel's *Messiah* on Monday, **December 6**, from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm on the Classical Music Station. The broadcast is a gift to the community in appreciation for 40 years of support and includes an interview with conductor James Ogle, of Boise, Idaho. Listeners may tune in to 88.5 New Bern, 90.3 Kinston/Goldsboro, and 91.5 Atlantic Beach/Beaufort, and it will stream live on the PRE Classical webstream at PublicRadioEast.org. The performance will also air on Christmas night, December 25, from 7:00 to 9:00 pm. To listen on your computer, find the Public Radio East website publicradioeast.org and click the play button. Then you can select Classical Music. Try it ahead of time so you don't miss any of the broadcasts.

Outdoor Candlelight Service

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 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 the lyrics will be 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.

Outdoor Christmas Eve Service

Friday, **December 24**, at 5 pm 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.

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 9:00 am-5:00 pm 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, sizes 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.

Books Needed for Oaks Road Academy

There is a need at a local school, Oaks Road Academy Elementary School, which is supported by Congregations for Children, at Centenary United Methodist Church. Each year, Centenary provides each student at Oaks Road with a new book. This year the project has fallen short of the goal of one book for each student. We are supporting this good work of our sister church in our community by accepting donations of a book(s) to realize the goal of one book for each child. We will have a bin in the workroom for your donations. We will be collecting from now through Sunday, **December 12**. Questions? Contact Carol Hale.

Education

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

Sunday School for Children

Children and Teachers are asked to wear masks in the classroom.

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 "Celebrating God," looking at passages in both the Old and New Testaments. The class will begin a new study today, December 5, "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

Running for the four Sundays of Advent, Anna Pinckney Straight will be 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 will meet 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 – Advent Book

We are studying a book for Advent, "Advent in Plain Sight: A Devotion through Ten Objects" by Jill Duffield. 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).

Presbyterian (and friends) Wine and Theology Open to anyone interested in wine AND theology! We will meet on the first Sunday

of the month, TODAY, **December 5**, at Cravin' Wine (2500 Trent Rd Suite 16, located in Trent Road Plaza) at 4:00 pm. This will be a casual gathering for fellowship and conversation around topics of theology and faith. Wine will be available for purchase for \$5 a glass with some small bites to go with it. Questions? Contact Maren (maren@firstpresnb.org). The topic for discussion for December 5: Advent is the special season before Christmas that is the start of the Liturgical year which guides the Church calendar. What are the symbols, traditions, practices that guide you through the Advent season? How do the practices change through the season? How has your faith changed through your cycle of life? Do you see the cycles of the church calendar reflected in your life? How do we carry these practices beyond the Advent season and into our daily lives?

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 also 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.

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.