



Artwork by Carrie Warner, 2021

First Presbyterian Church at Taylor Pavilion



Serving Christ and Neighbor in the Heart of Winchester & Beyond

The Nativity of Our Lord

led by the Youth of First Presbyterian Church

Christmas Eve ★ December 24, 2021 ★ 7 pm

Gathering

CALL TO WORSHIP

Led by Meredith Lineweaver

Leader: An unmarried teenage girl was invited—to carry Christ into this world.

All: An ordinary carpenter was invited—to be a father to a child unlike any other.

Leader: The shepherds were invited—outcast and isolated, included at the manger.

All: The Magi were invited—foreigners and seekers, included at the manger.

Leader: And if she was invited, and he was invited, and they were invited—then we can trust that we too are invited.

All: This story is for us.

Leader: This love is for us.

All: Friends, this is our invitation. Welcome home.

The Lighting of the Christ Candle

Led by Leila Grace Sargent, Allie Swiger, Reese Willingham

A: In God's house, there is hope— For God loves us too much to leave us just as we are.

B: In God's house, there is peace—For all that separates us from God falls away.

C: In God's house, there is joy—Because God created music, and coffee, and dance floors, and laughter that is contagious, and endless rounds of peek-a-boos with babies; and if those things have God's fingerprints, then God's house surely exudes joy.

A: In God's house, there is love—Because God is love, from start to finish, and that love exists for us all.

B: And in the center of our hope,

C: In the center of our peace,

A: In the center of our joy,

B: In the center of our love, is God—who came to this earth to dwell among us.

C: So tonight we light the Christ candle, for God's love just could not stay away.

A: Welcome home. Amen.

OPENING CAROL "O Come, All Ye Faithful"

ADESTE FIDELES

1) O come, all ye faithful,
joyful and triumphant;
O come ye; O come ye to Bethlehem!
Come, and behold him,
born the King of angels!

2) True God from true God,
Light from light eternal,
born of a virgin, a mortal he comes;
very God, begotten, not created!

O come, let us adore him; O come, let us adore him;
O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!

3) Sing, choirs of angels; sing in exultation;
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest!

O come, let us adore him; O come, let us adore him; O come, let us adore him,
Christ, the Lord!

CALL TO CONFESSION

Led by Gavin Way

As a kid, I used to think that confession was a time to air out all the things I did wrong—all the reasons I was a bad person. However, as I have grown, I have realized—that's not what this is. Instead, this is a small moment for all of us to pause and recognize that we aren't perfect, we are still works in progress, and we want God's help to grow. How powerful is that? Where else in the world does a group of people gather and say out loud: "I'm sorry. I want to grow. Help me get there."

So tonight as we pray, remember how powerful this is. This is one small way we accept God's invitation to deeper faith and life-changing love. Let us pray together now . . .

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Led by Owen Way

All: Holy God, you throw open the door and invite us into relationship, day in and day out. However, instead of running toward you, we dip our toes in the water of this faith. We hold our breath. We play it safe. We struggle to believe that a love so unfettered, so unfiltered, could be for us. As a result, we often deny this worth for ourselves and others. Forgive us for ignoring your invitation to be the people you call us to be. Forgive us for the ways in which we hold back from deeper connection to you or withhold your radical love from others. Open our ears to not only hear your invitation, but to trust that this good news exists even for us. Gratefully we pray, amen.

WORDS OF FORGIVENESS

Led by Henry Felix

Family of faith, even when we fail to trust God's love, and even when we fail to love others as we should, God still loves us. That door never closes. So hear and believe this good news: God invites us into a life of faith. God loves us through every season of life. God forgives us when we lose our way and invites us deeper every step of the way. We are loved, invited, claimed, celebrated, and forgiven. Thanks be to God!

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Led by Peter Warner

Holy God, we've heard this story a million times—Mary and Joseph, the angels, the shepherds. We've heard it a million times, but we want to hear it like it's the first. So move among us. Circle back. Draw close. Crack open our hearts and fill them with your goodness. Help us to hear what it is you might be saying to us with curiosity, joy, and hope. This is an invitation. Come be here with us. Gratefully we pray, amen.

MUSIC FOR WORSHIP "Winter's Snow" Allie Swiger, soloist

The Word

Led by Henry Felix and Carrie Warner

LESSON Isaiah 9:2-17

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned. ³You have made the nation great; you have increased its joy. They rejoiced before you as with joy at the harvest, as those who divide plunder rejoice. ⁴As on the day of Midian, you've shattered the yoke that burdened them, the staff on their shoulders, and the rod of their oppressor. ⁵Because every boot of the thundering warriors, and every garment rolled in blood will be burned, fuel for the fire. ⁶A child is born to us, a son is given to us, and authority will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷There will be vast authority and endless peace for David's throne and for his kingdom, establishing and sustaining it with justice and righteousness now and forever. The zeal of the Lord of heavenly forces will do this.

GOSPEL Luke 2:1-20

In those days Caesar Augustus declared that everyone throughout the empire should be enrolled in the tax lists. ²This first enrollment occurred when Quirinius governed Syria. ³Everyone went to their own cities to be enrolled. ⁴Since Joseph belonged to David's house and family line, he went up from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to David's city, called Bethlehem, in Judea. ⁵He went to be enrolled together with Mary, who was promised to him in marriage and who was pregnant. ⁶While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. ⁷She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guestroom. ⁸Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. ⁹The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰The angel said, "Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. ¹¹Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. ¹²This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger." ¹³Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, ¹⁴"Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors." ¹⁵When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go right now to Bethlehem and see what's happened. Let's confirm what the Lord has revealed to us." ¹⁶They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. ¹⁸Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. ²⁰The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.

THE SERMON

Given by Gabriella Sargent and Sara Tyson

The Response

CALL TO OFFERING

Led by Anna Tyson

Jesus was not born in a real home. He was born into poverty. He was born into simplicity. He was born into a manger in Bethlehem. And despite the little he might have had, Jesus still spent the rest of his days on earth giving to others. Generosity is in the DNA of our faith. We give what we can, not because we should or because scripture says to. We give because we're family. We give because we belong to one another. We give because all are invited into God's house. So let us give our offerings now.



Tonight's offering goes to **Katie Teet Bradshaw Comfort House**. The mission of the Katie Teets Bradshaw Comfort House, Inc. is a place where families can spend their last moments with their loved ones in a private setting with all the accommodations that make a house feel like home.

OFFERTORY CAROL "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

MENDELSSOHN

1) Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King:
peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
join the triumph of the skies;
with th'angelic hosts proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

2) Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
late in time behold him come,
offspring of the Virgin's womb:
veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
hail th'incarnate Deity,
pleased with us in flesh to dwell,
Jesus, our Immanuel. [Refrain]

Refrain:

Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn king"

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

led by Lukas Corsnitz

Gracious God, your story is one that forever invites us to be our full selves, to take up space, to go where we feel called, and to allow this community to feel like home. So use these gifts to keep building your home here. With gratitude as tall as the ceiling, we pray. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Led by Leila Grace Sargent

God of shepherds and angels, God of starlight and seekers, God of mangers and unwed teenage mothers: It is almost Christmas. It's almost here. We are close to home. It feels like we have been waiting so long for this night. Amidst the hustle and bustle of this busy season, we have been waiting for a quiet, a calm, a stillness. We have been waiting for good news that changes us and for the undeniable sense that you are near. So in this moment, surrounded by community, in the presence of candle light and hallelujahs, we bow our heads and give thanks:

Thank you, God, for the places and people that feel like home.

Thank you for the hope on the horizon which carries us through.

Thank you for moments of worship that break open our hearts.

Thank you for the joy of children on this night, which reminds us of love.

And thank you for the stars in the sky which remind us of you. We have so much to be grateful for. However, even amidst our prayers of gratitude and joy, we also bring you prayers of concern. For when the music is quiet and the clouds clear, we can finally hear our own thoughts and see sky above us, and that is when there is enough space for hurt to float to the surface. We know we are close to home, God, but we also know we are not home yet and that truth aches in us. So many of us are still seeking, still looking for a place to belong, still searching for a faith that feels like home.

We are closer to home, but we're not there yet.

We are only truly home when we are with you.

So God of starlight and angel choruses, on this Christmas Eve, as you come dwell among us, we pray that you would bring us closer to home. Scoop us up. Draw us in. Build the world you have in mind for us. Hover here. Hear our prayers. Take this grief and pain off of our shoulders and hold our hands as we walk through the dark. It is almost Christmas. It's almost here.

We can feel it—we are close to home. Amen.

The Sending

Please light your candle, or activate a glow stick or flashlight for illumination.

CAROL "Silent Night"

STILLE NACHT

1) Silent night, holy night,
all is calm, all is bright
round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace,
sleep in heavenly peace.

2) Silent night, holy night,
shepherds quake at the sight;
glories stream from heaven afar,
heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ the Savior is born,
Christ the Savior is born!

3) 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.

Please extinguish your light.

Peace on earth, good will to all.

Continue your Christmas with First Presbyterian Church, and join us virtually or in-person on Sunday, December 26 at 10 am, and every Sunday after Christmas—
We invite you to make First Presbyterian Church your spiritual home.

Connect with us!

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fpcwinc.org

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Pastors: The Rev. Dr. Dan McCoig Jr. and The Rev. Amanda Maguire Thomas
540.662.3824 | dan@fpcwinc.org | amanda@fpcwinc.org

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