



*Foreground Art by
Audrey Fullerton (age 9)*

**FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**
COVINGTON, GA



How does a
weary world
rejoice?

December 17, 2023 Third Sunday of Advent

✠ *You are invited to stand in body or spirit*



Gathering As God's Beloved People

Gathering Music

<i>Away in a Manger</i>	Douglas E. Wagner
<i>Sing We Now of Christmas</i>	NOEL NOUVELET
<i>The First Nowell</i>	John Carter

Prelude

<i>What Child Is This?</i>	John Behnke
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Chiming of the Hour

Welcome and Announcements

✠ Call to Worship

Our God can part the sea.

God can bring water from a rock, and provide bread in the desert.

Our God can walk on water.

**He can heal the sick,
and turn water into wine.**

Our God sets the stars in the sky.

God hears our voice when we cry, and is closer than our own breath.

There is nothing our God cannot do.

Let us stand in awe. Let us worship God with wonder.

✠ Hymn of Praise 82

<i>Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus</i>	HYFRYDOL
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✠ Call to Confession

If you spend any time with a child,
you will quickly notice that children see the world differently.

For a child, a ladybug is a miracle.

A pine tree is a wonder.

Curiosity is a love language,
and water is not only for survival, but for joy.

As adults, we forget this language of awe and wonder,
and when we do, we distance ourselves from God.

In confession, we have the opportunity to close that distance.

So let us return to God with hearts wide open.
Let us return to God in prayer.
Join me in the prayer of confession:

✠ **Community Confession**

Holy God,

Somewhere in our childhood we face pressure to outgrow awe.

We turn into adults who obsess over data and facts.

**We praise those who have answers,
and assume that wonder is an answerless game.**

Forgive us for closing that door to you.

Remind us that the kingdom of God belongs to children.

**Teach us the ways of awe and wonder,
so that like Zechariah,**

**when we find ourselves speechless,
our first words will be words of praise.**

With hearts open wide, we pray, amen.

✠ **Assurance of God's Love and Forgiveness**

Family of faith,

Just as we marvel at mountains and newborns, at sunrises and sunsets,
God marvels at us.

There is nothing you could do or leave undone
that could prevent God from loving you.

So hear and believe the good news of the gospel:

We are loved.

We belong to God. Amen.

Church, we are forgiven!

We are free to try again.

✠ **Response to God's Grace 88** *O Come, O Come Emmanuel* VENI EMMANUEL

***O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.***

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

✦ **Passing of the Peace**

May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

And also with you!

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Candle of Joy

The Usry Family

How does a weary world practice joy?

By dancing, and throwing birthday parties.

By hanging Christmas lights, and holding sleepy babies.

By singing loudly, and looking for good news.

By telling the story of Jesus, and showing up for our community.

There are a million ways to practice joy.

So today we light the candle of joy as a reminder and a charge.

With God's help, may we bring joy into a weary world. Amen.



Proclaiming the Word

Prayer for God's Wisdom and Understanding

Scripture Reading

Luke 1:57-66

Pew Bible page 57

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Reflection

We allow ourselves to be amazed

Rev. Neeley Rentz Lane

Children's Christmas Pageant *'Twas the Evening of Christmas!* by Glenys Nellist

Please see your insert to follow along with the Pageant!

Lorene Atkins

Elizabeth Fraser Browning

Amelia Evans

Parker Firkus

Audrey Fullerton

Greer Holder

Harper Holder

Thornton Holder

Kora Howell

MaryRentz Lane

Paisley Lane

Valerie Morgan

Chelsea Peters

Rose Ralston

Ruth Ralston

Emma Stillerman

Emmeline Usry

Alexander Whisnant

Emmalin Whisnant

William Whisnant

Palmer Wilson

Our FPC Kids will sing the first verse of each song, then we invite you to join in for the rest where the words are bolded!

1 O COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL

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!

O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,

O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

Sing, alleluia, All ye choirs of angels;

Sing, all ye blissful ones Of heav'n above.

Glory to God - 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.

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee,

Born this happy morning; Jesus, to Thee be the glory giv'n;

Word of the Father, Now in the flesh appearing,

O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,

O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

2 SILENT NIGHT

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.

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.

Silent night, holy night! Son of God love's pure light.

Radiant beams from Thy holy face

With dawn of redeeming grace,

Jesus Lord, at Thy birth. Jesus Lord, at Thy birth.

3 AWAY IN A MANGER

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,

The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.

The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,

The little Lord Jesus asleep in the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,

But little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.

I love Thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky

And stay by my cradle, 'til morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay

Close by me forever, and love me, I pray.

Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,

And take us to heaven, to live with Thee there.

4 GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN

Go tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere,

Go tell it on the mountain, Our Jesus Christ is born.

When I was a seeker, I sought both night and day

I asked the Lord to help me, And he showed me the way.

Go tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere,

Go tell it on the mountain, Our Jesus Christ is born.

The shepherds feared and trembled, When, lo! Above the Earth

Rang out the angel chorus, That hailed our Savior's birth

Go tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere,

Go tell it on the mountain, Our Jesus Christ is born.

Down in a lowly manger, our humble Christ was born

And brought us all salvation, That blessed Christmas morn.

Go tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere,

Go tell it on the mountain, Our Jesus Christ is born.



Responding to the Word

✦ Affirmation of Faith

**We believe in a God who knows our names,
 who counts the hairs on our heads, and carries the dreams in our hearts.
 We believe that God’s fingerprints are all over creation,
 and that God is forever speaking to us in a million different ways.
 We believe that awe and wonder,
 goosebumps and laughter,
 telling stories and paying attention,
 are all ways that we can say thank you
 to our creating, sustaining, and loving God.
 Therefore we commit ourselves to moving through this world
 with eyes wide open, with porous hearts, and grateful spirits.
 We commit ourselves to living lives of awe, wonder, and gratitude,
 trusting that these things will forever draw us deeper
 into God’s loving arms.
 We believe.
 We stand in awe. Thanks be to God!**

Offering Our Gifts: An Invitation to Generosity

*You are invited to “Text to Give” your offering!
 Text* FPCCOV followed by your donation amount to: 73256 and follow the
 link to give online! Or scan the QR Code to visit the giving page!*



Offertory

Hine Ma Tove

by Allan Naplan

Text translation: How good it is for all of us to dwell together in peace.

Psalm 113:1

✦ Hymn of Response 137

He Came Down

HE CAME DOWN

***He came down that we may have joy; he came down that we may have joy;
 he came down that we may have joy; hallelujah forevermore.***

Poetry Prayers

All the Way to Joy

by Rev. Sarah Speed

You are invited to lift up a one word prayer of what amazes you this day!



Being the Church in the World

✦ **Sending Hymn 126** *Jesus, Jesus, O What a Wonderful Child* WONDERFUL CHILD

First time: soloist

Second & third time: ALL

✦ **Charge and Benediction**

First Presbyterian Church Covington is a Christian community existing to glorify God by welcoming all of God's children. We celebrate through serving, teaching, praying, eating, crying, singing, and dancing with the Holy Spirit. As works in progress, we seek to respond to God's presence in our church, lives, and community.

✦ **Postlude**

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice

Paul Laubengayer



Advent

How does a weary world rejoice?—When our world is hard, when days are long and cumbersome, when our bodies and spirits are weary, it proves challenging to see JOY, be JOY, experience JOY. Thus, we need one another to remember the joy! So this Advent season we will join in the rituals of our faith – telling the story of God with us – and in doing so explore the question – How does a weary world rejoice?

Worship Art—This week's worship guide cover art is composed of art from some of our FPC Kids! Last year we combined pieces from Kora H. and Paisley L. which can be seen in the upper right corner of the cover. This year we have added to the growing nativity with a sheep drawing from Audrey Fullerton (age 9) which is highlighted in the foreground of the worship guide cover. We have multiplied Audrey's sheep and set them on the path to the stable in which the Lord Jesus Christ was born.



Worship Practices

Children in Worship—We have a "Children in Worship" guiding brochure available in the Narthex! This brochure is intended to serve as an aid to parents and other members of our congregation in welcoming our children to worship. Children are always welcome to wiggle and giggle in the pews at FPC! During worship children are invited to join us at the front of the Sanctuary for a time of Wondering with God's Children. Afterwards, children planning to go to the nursery will be escorted downstairs by

Pastor Neeley or Pastor Erin. This is to help you stay in worship and us get them to the nursery safely. If you need help finding the nursery, you are invited to ask an usher to point the way.

Friendship Registers—In each pew there is a pad with a black cover that we invite everyone to fill out. If the Friendship Register is nearest to you, please fill it out and pass it down the pew so it can reach everyone. When you pass it on, we invite you to introduce yourself to your pew friends! We encourage visitors and newcomers to connect with us by filling out the Friendship Register so we can be sure to send you a message to thank you for joining us.

Sound System—We are excited to announce that the new sound system has been installed in the Sanctuary! The new system is designed to improve the sound in the space, not only in volume but in clarity and includes a Bluetooth hearing aid connectivity option. We are still testing and figuring out the settings and we appreciate your patience during this adjustment period. Once we fully understand the settings and capabilities, we will hold lessons on how to connect with the Bluetooth.

Use—One License #A-728728 authorizes the use of music printed in our worship guide and streamed online. *Messages and data rates may apply when using Text to Give. Message frequency varies. Text HELP to 73256 for help. Text STOP to 73256 to cancel.

How Does a Weary World Rejoice | Poetry “All the Way to Joy” by Rev. Sarah Speed | Liturgy by Rev. Sarah Speed | Graphic Design by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org



Serving Today

Tech Team | Dan Walden, Kenny Compton, Jonny Atkins, Brad Hawley, Kraig Howell
Usher Chair | Doug Bolton



fpccov.org | 770.786.7321

1169 Clark Street SW, Covington, GA 30014

First Presbyterian Church Staff

Neeley Rentz Lane	<i>Senior Pastor</i>	<i>Nursery Staff</i>
Erin Morgan	<i>Associate Pastor</i>	Hattie Bellinger
Alice Walker	<i>CAGO, AAGO Organist</i>	Sierra BlackShear
Catherine Laseter	<i>Dir. of Communications & Operations</i>	Catrina Crowe
Peni Kehoe	<i>Finance Administrator</i>	Jahniyah Greene
Krista Firkus	<i>Interim Choir Director</i>	Laina Lalane

Officers

Curtis Watson	Reaching Out	<i>Witness (2024)</i>
Charles Ardis	Engaging	<i>Faith Formation (2025)</i>
Pat Harper		<i>Worship (2024)</i>
Nichole Howell		<i>Worship (2025)</i>
Mary Catherine Whisnant		<i>Faith Formation (2024)</i>
Doug Bolton	Belonging	<i>Welcome (2025)</i>
Louly Hay Kapp		<i>Marketing (2023)</i>
Bob Tabb		<i>Finance (2023)</i>
Tom Crews	Connecting (Deacons)	<i>Pastoral Care (2025)</i>
Dana Hall		<i>Faith & Fellowship (2025)</i>
Eleanor Scarborough		<i>Pastoral Care (2023)</i>
Darcel Tabb		<i>Faith & Fellowship (2024)</i>
Billy Fortson	More	<i>Personnel (2024)</i>
Stan Hall		<i>Facilities (2023)</i>
John McCarthy		<i>Clerk of Session</i>
Ed Perkerson		<i>Strategic Planning (2023)</i>

Advent Poinsettias

The poinsettias that are decorating the Sanctuary this Advent season were provided through donations in memory and in honor of the following people.

In memory of:

◇ Clayton W. Bailey Sr.

Bernice Bailey

◇ Our father: Clayton W. Bailey Sr.

Betty Bailey, Clay Bailey, & family

◇ Blair Brown

Doug & Sherri Bolton

◇ Howard & Madelle Boteler,

Ray & Edy Moy

Gary & Susan Boteler

◇ JoAnn Crews

Tom Crews

◇ John Fish

Jo Anna Fish

◇ Our parents: Lois & S.A. Ginn,

Dot & Bill Fortson

Stephanie & Billy Fortson

◇ Anne Bouchillon

Bart & Ruth Frankena

◇ Our grandparents *Kraig & Nichole Howell*

◇ Beverly Star Edmonds &

Samuel Burney Hay, Jr.

Louly & Steve Kapp

◇ Papa & Grammie

Robert & Neeley Lane

◇ Guy McGiboney, Jr.

Carol McGiboney

◇ Logan & Willena Powell,

Lucy Perkerson

Ed & Susanne Perkerson

◇ Mamie Lou & Wallace Scarborough,

Calvin & Georgia Floyd

The Scarborough Family

◇ Jim Stillerman

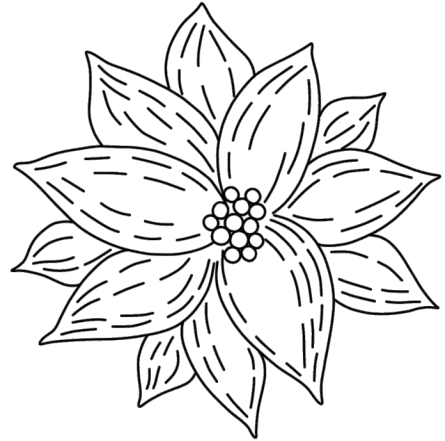
Pam Stillerman

◇ Arnold & Bonnie Tingler

Roger & Tootles Tingler

Given by:

Donations above the cost of flowers goes to support Thornwell Home for Children.



In honor of:

◇ Our mother: Bernice Bailey

Betty Bailey, Clay Bailey, & family

◇ Alice & Ken Walker

Doug & Sherri Bolton

◇ Our sisters

Stan & Dana Hall

◇ Louly Fowler Hay &

William Karl Kapp, Jr. *Louly & Steve Kapp*

◇ Memama, Bamma &

Our Church Family *Robert & Neeley Lane*

◇ Lisa, Yvonne, Emily, Donna & Chris

Carol McGiboney

◇ Penelope Blakeney

Cynthia & Dave Noble

Given by:

Fill out the form available in the Narthex and at fpccov.org/advent and submit it to the office by the end of the day on Wednesday to have your dedication included in the following Sunday's Worship Guide.

In Our Thoughts and Prayers

- ✦ Roudy Hughes - friend of church member
- ✦ Angelic Bellingier - health concerns
- ✦ Ken Fullerton, father of Scott Fullerton - settling into life at Westbury McDonough
- ✦ Patsy Freeman, sister of Judy Davis
- ✦ Grant Moss & Chris Mattice, family of Louly Fowler Hay - cancer and care
- ✦ Joyce, sister of Faye Kitchens
- ✦ Shelvie Belser, grandmother of Neeley Rentz Lane
- ✦ Carolyn Watson
- ✦ Bernice Bailey - cancer treatment
- ✦ Bob and Beverly Beasley, friends of Jean Elder - health concerns and care
- ✦ Brenda Buckelew, mother of Jennifer Buckelew
- ✦ Patrick Carmichael

- ✦ Larry Cox, brother-in-law of Randy Layton - cancer
- ✦ Bob Darby, friend of Jeff MacKenzie - leg amputated, kidney problems
- ✦ Karla Ensminger, sister of Perri Walden
- ✦ Randy Jones, nephew of Faye Kitchens - lung cancer
- ✦ Karen Lein Kaasa, sister-in-law of Julie MacKenzie - home health care
- ✦ Rosalia Meadors, friend of Tom Crews - three year old with bone marrow failure
- ✦ Meredith Nash, friend of Barbara Martin - four year old with stage IV kidney cancer
- ✦ Donald Vining, brother of Danny Vining - vision loss
- ✦ Joyce Williams, sister of Danny Vining - Alzheimer's

Military Service

- ✦ Billy Scarborough - Marines
- ✦ Koen Ardis - Navy
- ✦ Clint Williams - Army
- ✦ Daryl Williams - Army

Independent and Assisted Living

- ✦ Penny Blakeney - Oaks Assisted Living
- ✦ Homer Borders - Presbyterian Village
- ✦ Jean Elder - Florida with her daughter
- ✦ Dot Fincher - Merryvale
- ✦ Louly Hay - Presbyterian Village Athens
- ✦ Travis Moss - Westbury, Conyers
- ✦ Louise White - Merryvale

All **prayer requests** should be sent to:
catherine@fpccov.org
 Requests may be removed after three weeks if not updated.



OFFICE HOLIDAY HOURS

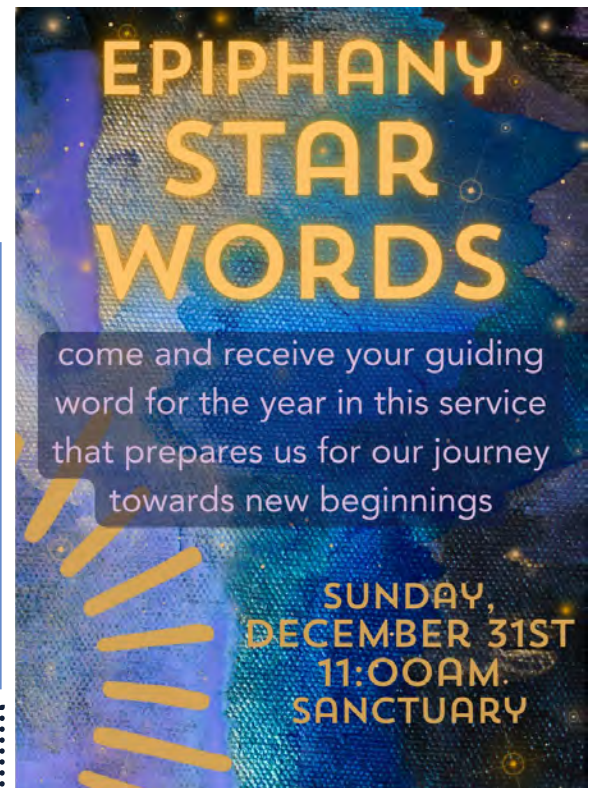
Friday, Dec. 22	OPEN 9:00am-12:00pm
Monday, Dec. 25	CLOSED
Tues, Dec. 26—Thurs, Dec. 28	OPEN with Limited Staff
Friday, Dec. 29	CLOSED
Monday, Jan. 1	CLOSED

Each year during the Christmas Season, we at FPC Covington, like to show our appreciation and gratitude to our church staff members who give so much of themselves on our behalf throughout the course of each year.

We ask for your participation in this effort by making a contribution to a special **"Staff Love Gift" fund by TODAY, Sunday, December 17, 2023.** Your generosity is much appreciated, in helping us to show our love to our devoted Church Staff Members.

Sincerely,
 John McCarthy, Clerk of Session

You are invited to **"Text to Give"** your offering! Find more details in the worship guide under "Offering Our Gifts: An Invitation to Generosity."





How does a weary world rejoice?

Services this Advent at FPC
IN PERSON AND ON FACEBOOK

Sundays at 11:00am

Dec. 17 we allow ourselves to be amazed with the Christmas Pageant!

Dec. 24 we sing stories of hope

Dec. 31 STAR WORDS

Jan. 7 we trust our belovedness

Evening Services

Christmas Eve
Sun. Dec. 24 at 6:00pm
we make room

The Longest Night
Wed. Dec. 20 at 5:30pm

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
COVINGTON, GA

A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

Visit fpccov.org/advent for more!

Sunday, December 17
Third Sunday of Advent

Deadline to bring Angel Tree gifts

Deadline for Staff Love Gift

9:45am Sunday School

11:00am Worship—Children’s Pageant

12:00pm Petting Zoo on the Lawn

Tuesday, December 19

3:30pm Staff Meeting

Wednesday, December 20

10:00am Coffee Club

5:30pm The Longest Night Service

Sunday, December 24
Fourth Sunday of Advent
Christmas Eve

9:45am Sunday School

11:00am Worship—Fourth Sunday of Advent

6:00pm Worship—Christmas Eve

End-of-Year Giving for 2023

As we approach the end of the fiscal year, some of you may be planning to make donations to the church for the **2023 tax year** or to fulfill your pledge and giving for the year. If you wish your donations to be credited for this year they must reach the church or be postmarked **no later than December 31st**. Contact our finance administrator, Peni Kehoe, with your questions of to learn about fulfilling your minimum IRA distribution.

Peni Kehoe: (770)786-7321, ext. 1011 | peni@fpccov.org



PETTING ZOO
ON THE LAWN

FOLLOWING WORSHIP AND THE CHRISTMAS PAGEANT ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17TH!