



FIRST  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH  
COVINGTON, GA



How does a  
weary world  
rejoice?

*Christmas Eve*  
*December 24, 2023*

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



# *Gathering As God's Beloved People*

## **Gathering Music**

*Jesus -Noel* French Carol/J.S. Bach  
*Christmas Medley* Albin C. Whitworth  
*Go, Tell It on the Mountain* Jack Schrader  
Loucy Hay, piano; Alice Walker, organ

*Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne* MARGARET  
Alice Walker, organ

## **Prelude**

*O Beautiful Star of Bethlehem* R. Fisher Boyce  
Dan and Perri Walden

## **Christmas Greeting**

## **Introit**

*Once in Royal David's City* IRBY  
Ansley Stewart

## ✦ **Call to Worship**

There is room for you here. If you're weary and worn, or hopeful and patient.

If you're tired and lost, or wrapped up in hope.

If you're new to this place, or have been here before. Come in, come in.

There is room for you here. The angels are singing,

"Be not afraid."

The angels are singing,

**"Good news and great joy!"**

So come in, come in!

**There is room for us here.**

## **Lighting of the Advent Wreath**

*Christ Candle* Erin, Jeff and Valerie Morgan  
Neeley, Robert, Kately, Paisley and MaryRantz Lane

How does a weary world hold onto hope, practice peace, spread joy, or know love? How does a weary world combat cruelty? How does a weary world shine a light into our bleakest night?

We do all these things with God's help.

For tonight, a child is born in Bethlehem.

**Tonight, Christ draws near.**

Tonight, we light the Christ Candle.

**Tonight, we are not alone.**

God is near. Love has drawn close.

**Rejoice! For God loves this weary world. Amen.**

## ✠ **Hymn of Praise 133**

*O Come All Ye Faithful*

ADESTE FIDELES

## ✠ **Call to Confession**

## ✠ **Community Confession**

**Loving Christ,**

**Scripture tells us that you were born in a stable  
because there was no room in the inn.**

**There was no room in the inn for a woman in need,  
no room in the inn for an innocent baby.**

**Forgive us.**

**We should have learned our lesson by now,  
but just as others turned their backs on you,  
we continue to turn our backs on one another.**

**Teach us how to make room for one another.**

**Teach us how to make room for you.**

**Carve out space in our hearts to love as you love,  
for we do not want to build hostility here.**

**We want to build your promised day. Guide us forward.**

**With hope and honesty we pray, amen.**

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

Friends, the angels say, "Be not afraid,"  
but they also say, "Unto you a child is born."

Christ is born for you.

Christ walked this earth for you.

Christ forgives you.  
That's what love does.  
It makes room. It offers grace. It learns your name.

So repeat these words of hope after me:

Unto us a child is born.

**Unto us a child is born.**

Unto us grace is given.

**Unto us grace is given.**

May this good news change the very fabric of our lives.

**Christ has made room for all of us. Amen.**

Church, we are forgiven!

**We are free to try again.**

✠ **Response to God's Grace 113**     *Angels We Have Heard on High*     GLORIA

*Angels we have heard on high,  
sweetly singing o'er the plains,  
and the mountains in reply  
echoing their joyous strains.*

*Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!*



## *Proclaiming the Word*

### **Scripture Reading**

*Luke 2:1-20*

Pew Bible page 58

*Children are invited to come forward to hear the scripture.*

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **Anthem**

*O Holy Night*  
Ansley Stewart

CANTIQUE DE NOEL

### **Christmas Reflection**

*We make room*

Rev. Neeley Rentz Lane



# Responding to the Word

✠ **Response 119**

*Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*

MENDELSSOHN

## A Christmas Prayer

### The Sharing of the Light of Christ

*At this time you are invited to move to the outer aisle of the sanctuary for the Sharing of the Light. Please bring your candle and your worship guide with you.*

✠ **Hymn 122**

*Silent Night, Holy Night!*

STILLE NACHT

***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 "Allelujah:  
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 the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.***

*Raise candles.*

***Silent night, holy night! Wondrous star, lend thy light;  
with the angels let us sing  
Alleluia to our King:  
Christ the Savior is born; Christ the Savior is born.***



# Being the Church in the World

## ✦Benediction

### ✦Sending Hymn of Response 134

*Joy to the World*

ANTIOCH

***Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her king;  
let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven and nature sing, and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.***

***Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ,  
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.***

## ✦Postlude

*Salvation Now Is Come to Earth*

J.S. Bach



# 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**—Today’s worship guide cover art features a charcoal and chalk on paper drawing by Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity titled *She Pondered*. The artist’s statement is as follows:

*When the shepherds see the newborn Messiah (confirming that their angelic night vision wasn’t just a sleep-deprived hallucination), they deliver the angel’s words to the new family. All are amazed by this pronouncement, except for Mary. She takes it all in, rolling the words over and over in her head, planting them deep in*

her heart: “Good news . . . great joy . . . all people . . . a savior . . . the Messiah . . . a sign . . . wrapped in cloth . . . lying in a feeding trough.” Why does she ponder these things if she already knew them?

I imagine Mary committing these words to muscle memory; she internalizes them so deeply within herself so that the words won’t leave her—especially when the time comes for her baby son to be tested and tried and executed. Like the baby in her arms, these words become apart of her, filling like breath in her lungs.

I began this piece with a chaos of dark marks, smudging the entire paper black with charcoal. Then, starting from the middle, I began to draw with an eraser, etching the faces of Mary and her baby from the shadows. The result displays mother and child inextricably intertwined as light radiating amidst the darkness.

—Lisle Gwynn Garrity



## The Advent Wreath

The symbolism of the Advent wreath is beautiful. The circle of the wreath, which has no beginning or end, represents the *unending love of God*. Evergreens adorning the wreath symbolize the *hope of eternal life* that God’s people share. Even more, the various parts of evergreens have special Christian symbolism: the prickly leaves of holly remind us of the *crown of thorns*; cedar represents *strength and healing*; ivy reminds us of God’s continuing *support and love* for us; the red berries remind us of *Jesus’ sacrifice for us*; and pine cones, berries, nuts or seed pods used also symbolize *the life and the resurrection*. Finally, the four candles, 3 blue and 1 pink, set in the wreath represent the *four weeks until Christmas Day*, as well as the *thousands of years people awaited the coming of the Messiah*. The lighting of an additional candle each week in Advent marks the growing anticipation for the Light who came into the world at Jesus’ birth. On Christmas an additional white candle is added for *Jesus as the light of the world*.



**All together the Advent wreath stands for the new, everlasting life promised to us through Jesus Christ, who truly is Emmanuel, “God with us.”**



# The Chrismon Tree

The word "Chrismon" is a combination of parts of two words: Christ and monogram...a monogram of Christ. They are made in white and gold. White refers to our Lord's purity and perfection; gold to his majesty and glory. The white lights on the tree point to Christ as the Light of the World.



The **crosses** symbolize our redemption through the crucifixion of our Lord. The two kinds of crosses we have used are the Latin cross and the Greek cross which has equal arms.



The **shepherd's crook** refers to the eternal one, "the Lord is my Shepherd."



The **five-pointed star** is symbolic of the divinity of Jesus, the **rose** in the center symbolizes his humanness.



The **crowns** are symbols of the kingship of our Lord; his victory over sin and death.



An **equilateral triangle**, or three-part figure symbolizes the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit.



The **fish** was used by early Christians as a password during times of persecution. A fish that carries a basket of bread evokes a recollection of Jesus' miracles when he fed the multitude.



The **manger** symbolizes the baby Jesus and God as protector. A cross inside a circle is a symbol of eternity.

A circle symbolizes eternity. **Three entwined circles** are a symbol for the Holy Trinity, one God in three persons.



A **cross over an orb** (a ball) symbolizes our Lord's dominion over the earth. Does it remind you of the song, "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands"?

**IHS** stands for the first three letters of Jesus in the Greek alphabet.



**Alpha and Omega**, are the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet. Since only God is before and after all things, it's a symbol of divinity.





## *Worship Practices*

**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.

**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. A nursery is available downstairs for children to be taken to at any time during worship. If you need help finding the nursery, you are invited to ask an usher and they’ll 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.

**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** | Art: “She Pondered” by Lisle Gwynn Garrity | 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

# Advent Poinsettias



## In memory of:

- ✦ Clayton W. Bailey, Sr.
- ✦ Our father:  
Clayton W. Bailey, Sr.
- ✦ Blair Brown
- ✦ Howard & Madelle Boteler,  
Ray & Edy Moy
- ✦ JoAnn Crews
- ✦ John Fish
- ✦ Our parents: Lois & S.A. Ginn,  
Dot & Bill Fortson
- ✦ Anne Bouchillon
- ✦ Our grandparents
- ✦ Beverly Star Edmonds & Samuel  
Burney Hay, Jr.
- ✦ Papa & Grammie
- ✦ A friend, Vickie Allen
- ✦ Guy McGiboney, Jr.
- ✦ Logan & Willena Powell,  
Lucy Perkerson
- ✦ Calvin & Georgia Floyd,  
Mamie Lou &  
Wallace Scarborough
- ✦ Jim Stillerman
- ✦ Arnold & Bonnie Tingler
- ✦ Gene Ensminger, Jerry Walden,  
Jackie & Howard Barton

## Given by:

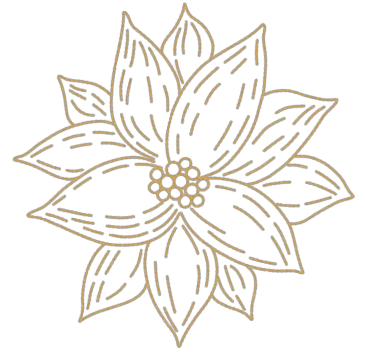
- Bernice Bailey*
- Betty Bailey, Clay Bailey,  
& family*
- Doug & Sherri Bolton*
- Gary & Susan Boteler*
- Tom Crews*
- Jo Anna Fish*
- Stephanie &  
Billy Fortson*
- Bart & Ruth Frankena*
- Kraig & Nichole Howell*
- Louly & Steve Kapp*
- Robert & Neeley Lane*
- Jeff & Julie MacKenzie*
- Carol McGiboney*
- Ed & Susanne Perkerson*
- The Scarborough Family*
- Pam Stillerman*
- Roger & Tootles Tingler*
- Dan & Perri Walden*



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

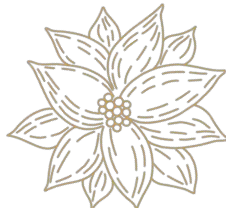
Donations above the cost of flowers goes to support Thornwell Home for Children.

*Following tonight's service we ask for those who gave to collect their poinsettias and enjoy them at home.*



**In honor of:**

- ✦ Our mother:  
Bernice Bailey
- ✦ Alice & Ken Walker
- ✦ Our sisters
- ✦ Louly Fowler Hay &  
William Karl Kapp, Jr.
- ✦ Memama, Bamma &  
Our Church Family
- ✦ Our siblings who recently turned  
80: Jeff's brother Dickie Knox-  
Dick, Julie's sister Betty Wolf
- ✦ Lisa, Yvonne, Emily,  
Donna & Chris
- ✦ Penelope Blakeney
- ✦ Our children &  
grandchildren



**Given by:**

- Betty Bailey, Clay Bailey,  
& family*
- Doug & Sherri Bolton*
- Stan & Dana Hall*
- Louly & Steve Kapp*
- Robert & Neeley Lane*
- Jeff & Julie Mackenzie*
- Carol McGiboney*
- Cynthia & Dave Noble*
- Curtis & Carolyn Watson*





# Worship Notes & Doodles

**We invite you to fill the space below with the thoughts, reminders, and doodles that you may be blessed with during and after worship.**

A large grid of 10 columns and 15 rows of small grey dots, intended for writing notes or doodles.



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COVINGTON, GA

**fpccov.org | 770.786.7321**

**1169 Clark Street SW, Covington, GA 30014**

## First Presbyterian Church Staff

Neeley Rentz Lane  
Erin Morgan  
Alice Walker  
Catherine Laseter

*Senior Pastor*  
*Associate Pastor*  
*CAGO, AAGO Organist*  
*Dir. of Communications*  
*& Operations*  
*Finance Administrator*  
*Interim Choir Director*

*Nursery Staff*  
Hattie Bellinger  
Sierra BlackShear  
Catrina Crowe  
Jahniyah Greene  
Laina Lalane

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### Reaching Out

Curtis Watson *Witness (2024)*

### Engaging

Charles Ardis *Faith Formation (2025)*

Pat Harper *Worship (2024)*

Nichole Howell *Worship (2025)*

Mary Catherine Whisnant *Faith Formation (2024)*

### Belonging

Doug Bolton *Welcome (2025)*

Louly Hay Kapp *Marketing (2023)*

Bob Tabb *Finance (2023)*

### Connecting (Deacons)

Tom Crews *Pastoral Care (2025)*

Dana Hall *Faith & Fellowship (2025)*

Eleanor Scarborough *Pastoral Care (2023)*

Darcel Tabb *Faith & Fellowship (2024)*

### More

Billy Fortson *Personnel (2024)*

Stan Hall *Facilities (2023)*

John McCarthy *Clerk of Session*

Ed Perkerson *Strategic Planning (2023)*