

THE ORDER OF WORSHIP

3rd Sunday of Advent

December 17, 2023

10:30 AM

Welcome and Announcements

Rev. Dr. Lynn Miller

GATHERING

Prelude "It Came Upon The Midnight Clear" (arr. Cook) Jim Simmons

Advent Candle "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 joy; hallelujah, forevermore.

Lighting the Advent Wreath The Spires & Lail Families
May your hearts be filled with joy as you hear the song of Mary, the mother of Jesus.
Thanks be to God.

***Hymn of Praise #31** "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

***Call to Confession** Bill Wheeler

***Prayer of Confession**
Lord Jesus Christ, you lived as an ordinary man.
You weren't seeking popularity.
You lived simply.
But you caused an uproar wherever you went.
People asked questions of you and about you.
Forgive us, we pray,
when we seek the crowd's approval,
and avoid conflict
for fear of what it will cost us.
Forgive us when we cannot hear the words of Good News.
Forgive us when we cannot share the words of Good News.
We ask for your grace
because of the many ways we can and have
subverted your message of freedom and healing.
Help us hold fast
to the gospel of peace and justice.
And forgive, we pray, the sins we now name silently...

***Assurance of Pardon**
Friends, believe the good news.
In Jesus Christ we are forgiven!

***Assurance of Pardon Response #44**
O Holy Child of Bethlehem descend to us we pray;
cast out our sin and enter in be born in us today.

THE WORD

Prayer for Illumination

Sermon on the Steps Carrie Wyatt

Anthem "Raise a Song of Gladness" (Berthier) Chancel Choir
Raise a song of gladness, peoples of the earth.
Christ has come, bringing peace, joy to every heart.
Alleluia, alleluia, joy to every heart! Alleluia, alleluia, joy to every heart!
Jubilate Deo omnis terra.
Servite Domino in laetitia.
Alleluia, alleluia, in laetitia! Alleluia, alleluia, in laetitia!

First Reading Isaiah 61:1-11 (Pew Bible OT p.691)

Second Reading John 1:6-8, 19-28 (Pew Bible NT p.91)
The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Sermon from the Pulpit "The Puzzle of John the Baptist" Rev. Dr. Lynn Miller

Response "Cloth For The Cradle" (Scottish Tune)
Cloth for the cradle, cradle for the child, the child for our ev'ry joy and sorrow;
find him a shawl that's woven by us all to welcome the Lord of each tomorrow.
2. ***Claimant and queen, wage earners in between,***
Trader and trav'ling preacher,
Weave into one a welcome for the Son,
Whose word brings new life to ev'ry creature.

Cloth for the cradle, cradle for the child, the child for our ev'ry joy and sorrow;
find him a shawl that's woven by us all to welcome the Lord of each tomorrow.

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

***Affirmation of Faith** (A Declaration of Faith, 8.2)
We believe that God sends us
to tell all nations
that Christ calls everyone to repentance, faith and obedience.
We are to proclaim by word and deed
that Christ gave himself to set people free
from sin and self-hatred,
from ignorance and disease,
from all forms of oppression,
and even from death.
We are to offer them in Christ's name
fullness of life now and forever.
We must not distort the gospel
by weakening its promises or demands,
by identifying it with oppressive structures,
by pointing to ourselves instead of Christ.
We must not restrict our proclamation
to persons just like ourselves.
We invite people everywhere
to believe in Christ and become his followers.
We urge them to join us in telling others the good news
and in struggling for justice, compassion, and peace.

***Affirmation of Faith Response #582**
Glory to God, whose goodness shines on me, and to the Son,
whose grace has pardoned me, and to the Spirit, whose love has set me free.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Amen

Prayers of the People concluding with the Lord's Prayer (page 16 in hymnal)

Service of Giving

Offertory "Silent Night" (Fettke) David Thompson

***Doxology #592**
Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen

***Prayer of Dedication**

***Hymn #27** "Gentle Mary Laid Her Child"

***Charge and Benediction** Rev. Dr. Lynn Miller

***Postlude** "Angels We Have Heard on High" (Mansfield) Rita Harmon

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*\*Please stand, in body or in spirit.*

The flowers in worship today are given for the glory of God.

**Please remember in prayer:**  
Abigail Pressley; Audrey Pressley; Family of Bryson Burgess; Helen Lowrey;  
Roberta Byars; Christopher Scott Henry; Patsy Spires; Kathy Miller Evans; Trish  
Tong; Hugh Fincher; Fran Ross; Buck Jolley; Justina Eddy.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Next week's lectionary readings are:**  
Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96:1-16; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14 (15-20).

**Monthly Giving Opportunity**  
The December giving opportunity is the Christmas Joy Offering.

**Wednesday Night**  
This Wednesday (12/20) there is no supper at the church. However, at 6 p.m. in the FLC, Lynn Miller will offer a look into the art of Christmas. We are accustomed to seeing oxen and donkeys and sheep in nativity paintings, but often there are birds. The program will focus on which birds are depicted and what they bring to the nativity story.

**Weaving a Welcome**  
After the sermon, each week in Advent we will be singing a verse of the Christmas song "Cloth for the Cradle." We will be embarking on several projects to remind us that some of our neighbors are in need of warmth. Together we can weave, if not a shawl, then at least some kind of warmth for them. Beginning with making scarves, and serving lunch at the Soup Kitchen on Saturday, December 23. We will be adding other warm things through Advent.

**About the Cover**  
The Feast Day of John the Baptist is observed on June 24, which is the old Roman midsummer day. It is a tradition to light bonfires and beacon fires on St. John's Eve. Luke's gospel tells us that John was born about 6 months before Jesus, which, with the current calendar, would fall around June 25.

## THIS WEEK IN CHURCH HISTORY

**December 18, 1666:** Covenanter minister Hugh McCall is brought into court, found guilty, and condemned to hang for his resistance to the authority claimed by the king over the Scottish church. The verdict will be carried out four days later and on the way to the scaffold, McCall will assure his father that his death will do more good for the cause of God's people than twenty more years in the pulpit.

**December 20, 1560:** The First General Assembly of the Church of Scotland meets in Edinburgh. Its purpose is, "To consult upon those things which are to forward God's glory and the well-being of His Kirk."

**December 21, 1941:** The BBC airs the first play in Dorothy Sayers' cycle *The Man Born to Be King*. Before it goes on air, some Christian groups call it blasphemous because an actor is to speak Christ's lines. However, its reception among Christians will prove generally good.

### Praying for Our Congregation

We are praying for every member of our church family.  
Each week we invite you to pray for particular members.  
This week we are praying for:

Johnny Wyatt

## CALENDAR of EVENTS

### Sunday, December 17

9:45 AM Lectionary Bites – Parlor  
9:45 AM Chancel Choir Practice – Choir Room  
10:30 AM Worship – Chapel & via Facebook Live  
4:00 PM Yoga – FLC

### Tuesday, December 19

Cherokee Co. Special Election held in FLC

### Wednesday, December 20

6:00 PM Wed. night program – NO SUPPER

### Thursday, December 21

Church Office Closed

### Saturday, December 23

10:30 AM Serving at the Soup Kitchen – Bernie St.

### Sunday, December 24

9:45 AM Lectionary Bites – Parlor  
10:30 AM Worship – Chapel & via Facebook Live  
5:30 PM Christmas Eve Service

### Upcoming

Dec 21 - 26 – Church Office Closed for the Christmas Holiday

## NEXT STEPS

- Pick up a hard copy of the LimeLight
- Mark May 18, 2024 on your calendar. We will host Foothills Presbytery that day!
- Check the LimeLight to see the books purchased with your donations
- Pick up Advent Calendar

## MEMBERS OF THE SESSION

| Class of 2023         | Class of 2024 | Class of 2025 |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Larry Sossamon        | Teresa Spires | Nancy McElroy |
| Bill Wheeler          | Dean Wyatt    | Mimi McCully  |
| Renee Wiseman (clerk) | Buck Jolley   |               |

## STAFF

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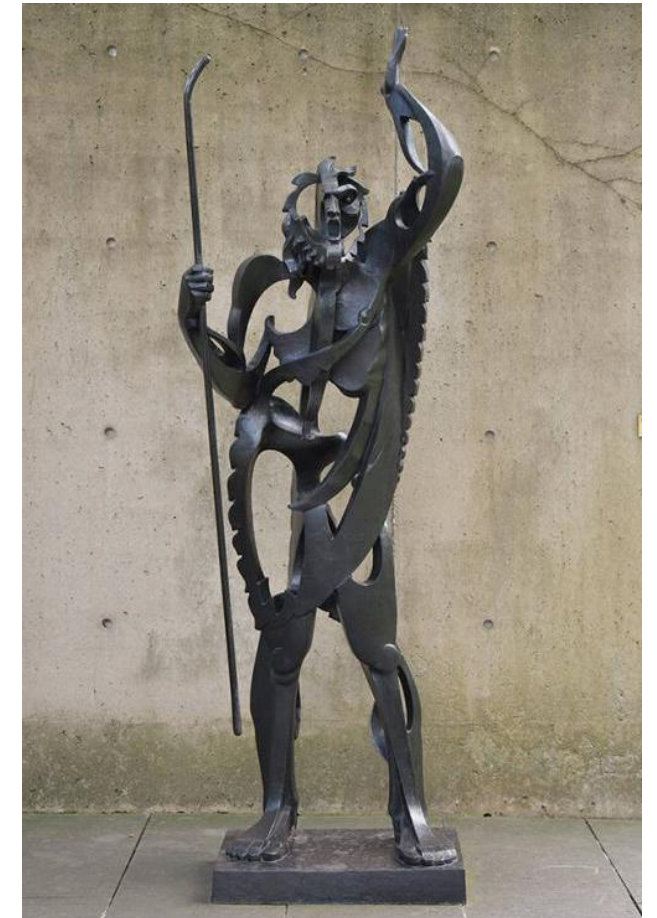
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# LIMESTONE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, PC(USA)

WE ARE THE PEOPLE OF A LOVING GOD,  
GATHERING, GROWING, GIVING, AND GOING TO SERVE,  
TOGETHER



Pablo Gargallo. **The Prophet (St. John the Baptist)**. 1933. Bronze. Baltimore Museum of Art, Alan and Janet Wurtzburger Collection.

**A Sonnet for St. John the Baptist: 1 St. John's Eve**  
Midsummer night, and bonfires on the hill  
Burn for the man who makes way for the Light:  
'He must increase and I diminish still,  
Until his sun illuminates my night.'  
So John the Baptist pioneers our path,  
Unfolds the essence of the life of prayer,  
Unlatches the last doorway into faith,  
And makes one inner space an everywhere.  
Least of the new and greatest of the old,  
Orpheus on the threshold with his lyre,  
He sets himself aside, and cries "Behold  
The One who stands amongst you comes with fire!"  
So keep his fires burning through this night,  
Beacons and gateways for the child of light.  
-Malcolm Guite