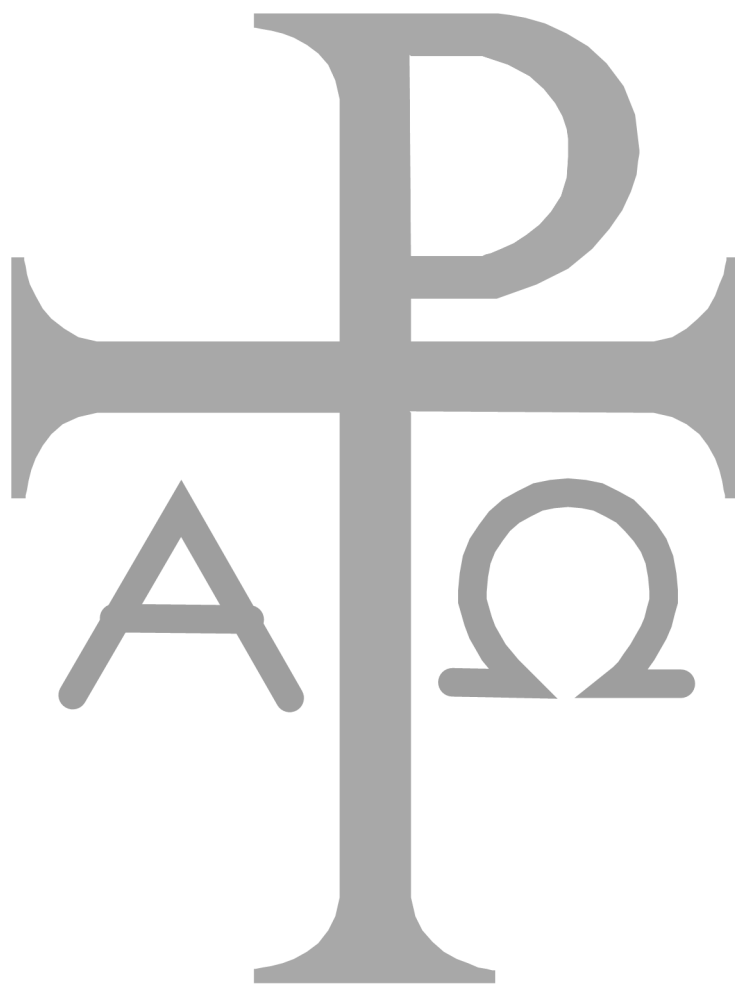


FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
RALEIGH, NC

ORGANIZED MARCH 8, 1812



December 20, 2020

*"I am the Alpha and Omega," says the Lord God,
who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.*

Revelation 1:8

THE CHURCH IN WORSHIP
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 20, 2020

Eleven o'clock

About our Worship: Today is the fourth Sunday of Advent, a season of reflection and preparation for the coming of the Messiah. We begin, as we have each week in this season, with the lighting of an Advent candle, a sign of hope and expectation. We make time for confession, as we realize we are not fully ready to welcome the Christ into our lives and world. We reflect on Mary's role in this story — a much more arduous and earthy role than we often envision — and ponder what this says to us about our role. And ultimately we sing hymns of praise to the God who works through courageous women like Mary and enters this world in the form of a fragile child. If we understand the message of this season, how can we keep from singing, and from serving the One who envisions all of this for us?

GATHERING FOR WORSHIP

The Greeting of Worshipers

The Prelude

“Joy to the World”
Sue Crocker, organ

arr. Hugo Gehrke

The Trinity Chimes

Three chimes are sounded, awakening us to the presence of God, alerting us to the voice of Christ, centering us in the embrace of the Spirit. As we gather, we present ourselves “as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is our spiritual worship.”

The Lighting of the Advent Candle†

Anna and Daniel Yerxa

Reader 1: This is the fourth Sunday of Advent, the time of preparing for the coming of Christ our Savior. Today our words are *Let it be*. We remember that we are called to prepare for Christ's coming, to give witness to our experience and to wait in patient trust for God to act. Now, as Christ's arrival draws near, we are reminded of Mary's words, “Let it be with me according to your word (Luke 1:38).” It is not up to us to dictate how Christ will come into the world, for God continually surprises us. Thus, we pray for God's will to be done.

Reader 2: The prophet Isaiah describes the surprising way God works with these words (Isaiah 7:10–14).

¹⁰ Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. ¹²But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test. ¹³Then Isaiah said: ‘Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? ¹⁴Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.’

Reader 1: The first Advent candle burns as a sign of our willingness to prepare for the coming of God's reign in Christ. The second candle reminds us of our calling to give witness to our experience. The third candle offers a symbol of our commitment to wait patiently for God's new age. Today we light the fourth candle as a form of testimony to our resolve to let it be according to God's word.

(Light candle)

Reader 2: (Let us pray) Holy God, our time of waiting is almost over. We have prepared the best we know how and proclaimed the Good News of Christ's coming with our words and deeds. We open our hearts to you now and ask that your will be done in and through our lives. In the name of the Christ who comes, Immanuel, God-With-Us, we pray, amen.

1. Joy to the world! the Lord is come; let earth re-
 2. Joy to the earth! the Sav - ior reigns; let all their
 3. No more let sins and sor - rows grow, nor thorns in -
 4. He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the

ceive her King; let ev - ery heart pre - pare him room,
 songs em - ploy; while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
 fest the ground; he comes to make his bless - ings flow
 na - tions prove the glo - ries of his right - eous - ness,

and heaven and na - ture sing, and heaven and na - ture
 re - peat the sound - ing joy, re - peat the sound - ing
 far as the curse is found, far as the curse is
 and won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his
 (1.) and heaven and na - ture sing,

(1.) and

sing, and heaven, and heaven and na - ture sing.
 joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
 found, far as, far as the curse is found.
 love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

heaven and na - ture sing,

CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE

The Call to Confession

Lynn Lingafelt

As we draw closer to the manger, we tend to become even more impatient. Like children on a long journey, we just want to get there. Like a world waiting for a vaccine in the midst of a pandemic, we desperately want to experience something hopeful. Yet God still calls us to wait a little longer. We confess now our struggle, with the assurance that the One on whom we wait hears us with compassion and understanding.

The Prayer of Confession (unison)

God of Advent and Christmas, of hope and fulfillment, we openly acknowledge our impatience which may point to excitement but also betrays a lack of trust. As time passes, we begin to question and doubt. As suffering continues, we begin to wonder if justice will ever be experienced. Show us the value of waiting, of allowing your will to be done in your good time. Remind us that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now. Enable us to realize that while we may be waiting for you, you are waiting for us to embrace the mystery of your love for the world.

The Silent Confession

The Assurance of Pardon

Hear the Good News! Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. The mystery of God's love, kept secret for long ages, is now disclosed in the birth of a child. Mercy and peace are extended to us all, thanks be to God!

The Act of Praise

PUER NOBIS

To you, O Christ, all praises be,
whose advent sets your people free;
whom with the Father we adore
and Holy Spirit evermore!

LISTENING FOR GOD'S WORD

The Hebrew Bible

2 Samuel 7:1–11, 16

Michael Hood

¹Now when the king was settled in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ²the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." ³Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the Lord is with you."

⁴But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: ⁵Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? ⁶I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. ⁷Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" ⁸Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; ⁹and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. ¹⁶Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

LEADER: This is the Word of the Lord.

PEOPLE: **Thanks be to God.**

²⁵Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— ²⁷to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

LEADER: This is the Word of the Lord.

PEOPLE: **Thanks be to God**

The Morning Prayer

Leah Reed

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father,
who art in heaven.
Hallowed be thy Name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, forever. Amen.**

The Gospel

Luke 1:26–38

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

LEADER: This is the Gospel of Christ.

PEOPLE: **Praise be to you, O Christ.**

1. Gen - tle Ma - ry laid her Child low - ly in a man - ger;
 2. An - gels sang a - bout his birth; Wise Men sought and found him;
 3. Gen - tle Ma - ry laid her Child low - ly in a man - ger;

there he lay, the un - de - filed, to the world a stran - ger:
 heav - en's star shone bright - ly forth, glo - ry all a - round him:
 he is still the un - de - filed, but no more a stran - ger:

Such a Babe in such a place, can he be the Sav - ior?
 Shep - herds saw the won - drous sight, heard the an - gels sing - ing;
 Son of God, of hum - ble birth, beau - ti - ful the sto - ry;

Ask the saved of ev - ery race who have found his fa - vor.
 all the plains were lit that night, all the hills were ring - ing.
 praise his name in all the earth, hail the King of glo - ry!

RESPONDING IN FAITH

The Musical Reflection

“Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming”
Kimberly and Emily Taylor, ringers

arr. Douglas Wagner

DEPARTING TO SERVE

The Benediction

The Chimes

Three chimes are sounded, sending us into the world with the love of God, the Good News of Jesus Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit. As you go, remember, “you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people.”

The Postlude

“Swiss Noel”
Sue Crocker, organ

Louis-Claude Daquin

†Adapted from *Touch Holiness*, Ruth Duck and Maren Tirabassi, pp. 16–18.

The tune and text of “Joy to the World! the Lord Is Come,” “On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry,” and “Gentle Mary Laid Her Child” are in the public domain.

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Sympathy to **Ruth Dowell** on the December 12 death of her sister, Beth Fleetwood.

Our annual stewardship emphasis continues with the theme *In the wilderness prepare a way for the Lord... And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed*. Please help us to meet our budget goal by returning your pledge card to the church office (you may also pledge online at: <https://fbcraleigh.org/pledgecard/>). As of December 15, we have received 151 pledges totaling \$1,061,161 for the 2021 budget.

End-of-year giving: Please continue to be faithful to your financial stewardship commitment. Your generous support toward this year’s budget will allow us to end the year with a solid base on which to begin 2021. Year-end contributions must be received or postmarked by December 31.

There is no better gift than to share the love of Jesus Christ to the world. One hundred percent of our offering sends CBF field personnel to share this love both here at home and in foreign lands. When we give to the offering for Global Missions, we help plant new churches and share the hope of Christ with people who have never heard the Gospel, we offer food and teach children how to succeed in school, and help refugees adapt and thrive in their new homes. Please give prayerfully to the CBF Global Mission Offering. As of December 15, we have received \$4,315.

Hurricane Relief Offering: As happened last year, instead of the usual breakdown for the fall NC Mission Offering, all money collected will go CBF Global Disaster Response to help our neighbors who are victims of hurricanes. As of December 15, we have received \$3,640.

Calendar Highlights • December 20–26, 2020

Sunday, December 20

- 10:00 6th Grade Sunday School (Virtual)
- 7th and 8th Grade Sunday School (Zoom)
- High School Sunday School (Zoom/In-person TBD)
- 11:00 Virtual Worship Service (YouTube)
- 4:00 1st and 2nd Grade Sunday School (Lingafelt yard)

Tuesday, December 22

- 10:00 Ministerial Staff Meeting (Library or Zoom)
- 6:00 Theology on Tap (Zoom/In-person TBD)
- 7:30 Pathfinders Sunday School (Virtual)

Thursday, December 24, and Friday, December 25

Church Office Closed (Christmas)

Thursday, December 24

- 7:00 Band of Brothers (Zoom)
- 5:00 Virtual Christmas Eve Service — Communion (YouTube)