

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
RALEIGH, NC

ORGANIZED MARCH 8, 1812



December 17, 2023

THE CHURCH IN WORSHIP
THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 17, 2023

Eleven o'clock

About our Worship: On this Third Sunday of Advent, as we continue to prepare for the coming of the Christ into our hearts and the world around us, we consider the experience of the women who are a central part of this story. They experience many different emotions, and ponder the meaning of it all, but the totality of their experience moves them to singing. It cannot be contained by words alone. Such is our experience with incarnation. It involves more than we can grasp through rational processes. It permeates our entire being. And we are not only moved to singing, but sometimes it is the singing itself that enables us to embrace the incomprehensible good news that God enters this world as one of us. The sermon explores this very dynamic, the question of what enables us to embrace the good news. And as we explore, we sing!

GATHERING FOR WORSHIP

The Greeting of Worshipers

Leah Reed

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 Prelude

"Voluntary on IRBY"

Maureen Howell

The Lighting of the Advent Candle

Chad and Lindsay Weatherly

READER: Without joy, we have no fulfillment to our lives.
As we continue the season of Advent,
we wait in joyful anticipation
of the happiness the Christ-child will bring to a world that needs
it so desperately.
We seek to live as a people of joy
that share it with everyone we encounter,
to bless others with the happiness we have in Jesus Christ.

PEOPLE: **We light this candle to symbolize the joy we have in Christ's
presence. We gather to share this joy with one another.**

(The candle is lit.)

*The Hymn of Praise, 146

“Joy to the World”

ANTIOCH

CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE

The Call to Confession

Christopher Chapman

In the desert places of our lives, in the wilderness of our hearts, we hear
again the cry of the living God: Make ready! Prepare! Let us confess our
sins, for God comes, rich in blessing.

The Prayer of Confession (unison)

**Merciful God, you love justice; why, then, do we persist in wrongdoing
and every form of evil? You have given us the gift of your Spirit;
why, then, do we quench the Spirit among us?
You have given us the words of the prophets and the Word himself;
why, then, do we despise and ignore what we have heard from you?
You have sent the light into the world;
why, then, have we loved darkness rather than light?
Forgive us. Restore us.
Till and tend us as your garden until righteousness and praise spring up,
for the sake of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.**

The Silence

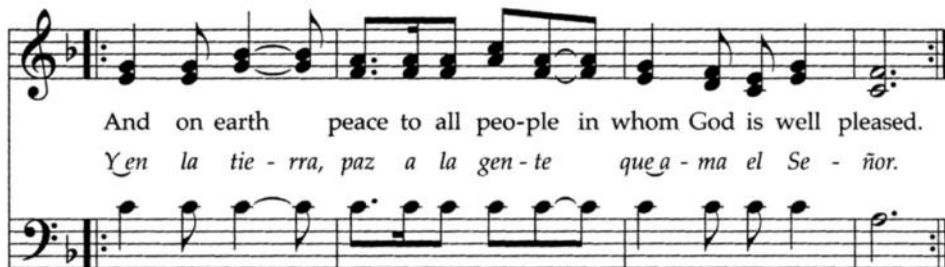
The Assurance of Forgiveness

The Act of Praise

(Sung responsively the first time, and together on the second)



Glo - ry, glo - ry, glo - ry, glo - ry be to God on high!
¡Glo - ria, glo - ria, glo - ria, en las al - tu - ras a Dios!



And on earth peace to all peo-ple in whom God is well pleased.
Y en la tie - rra, paz a la gen - te que a - ma el Se - ñor.

Words: based on Luke 2:14, Pablo Sosa, 1989
Music: Pablo Sosa, 1989

LISTENING FOR GOD'S WORD

The Hebrew Bible

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

LaCount Anderson

¹The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; ²to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; ³to provide for those who mourn in Zion— to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.

⁴They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. ⁸For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. ⁹Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.

¹⁰I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. ¹¹For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

LEADER: This is the Word of the Lord.

PEOPLE: **Thanks be to God.**

The Christian Testament

1 Thessalonians 5:16–24

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰Do not despise the words of prophets, ²¹but test everything; hold fast to what is good; ²²abstain from every form of evil.

²³May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

LEADER: This is the Word of the Lord.

PEOPLE: **Thanks be to God.**

*The Hymn of Devotion “In You, O God, Our Hearts Rejoice”

FOREST GREEN

(Extended Introduction)

(Verse)

**In you, O God, our hearts rejoice,
with ev’ry breath we pray.
Throughout our lives we give you thanks
and seek your holy way.
Pour out your Spirit here and now,
and keep us whole and pure.
In Jesus Christ, we hope and wait —
your faithfulness is sure.**

Words: David Gambrell, 2008
Music: English Folk Melody

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 1:39–55

³⁹In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, ⁴⁰where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴²and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? ⁴⁴For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord." ⁴⁶And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. ⁵⁰His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. ⁵²He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; ⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. ⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

LEADER: This is the Gospel of Christ.

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

The Sermon

"What Moves the Needle for Us?" Christopher Chapman

RESPONDING IN FAITH

The Invitation to Christian Discipleship

If you desire membership in this congregation, you are invited to present yourself during the singing of the Hymn of Discipleship. As an open membership church, we honor your previous baptism in any other Christian community. If you have not made a confession of faith, we invite you to do so and receive Christian baptism. Church members are invited to use this time to reflect upon their covenantal relationship with God and their commitment to Christian service.

*The Hymn of Discipleship “Mary Gladly Told Her Cousin” IRBY

**Mary gladly told her cousin, "Praise the Lord! My spirit sings!"
Young and humble, she'd been chosen! God was surely changing things!
God of love, her words ring true as we sing her prayer to you:**

**"Now our souls are gladly singing at the greatness of the Lord.
We rejoice, for God is bringing bright salvation to the world.
All who live will know they're blest even in their lowliness.**

**"God is mighty, just and holy. God has done great things for me.
Those who trust God's love and mercy, know God gives it endlessly.
Mighty ones are brought down low; Lowly ones find blessings flow.**

**"God has filled the poor and hungry, and the proud are sent away.
God is active here in history, in a real and wondrous way.
God, you're faithful all our days; hear this song of joyful praise."**

Words: Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, 2009, alt.
Music: Henry John Gauntlett, 1849

*The Offertory Prayer

The Offertory

“Canticle of the Turning”

Sanctuary Choir

Irish Folk/Rory Cooney, arr.

Caroline Childrey, solo

My soul cries out with a joyful shout that the God of my heart is great,
And my spirit sings of the wondrous things that you bring to the ones who wait.
You fixed your sight on your servant's plight, and my weakness you did not spurn,
So from east to west shall my name be blest. Could the world be about to turn?

*My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near, and the world is about to turn!*

Though I am small, my God, my all, you work great things in me,
And your mercy will last from the depths of the past to the end of the age to be.
Your very name puts the proud to shame, and to those who would for you yearn,
You will show your might, put the strong to flight, for the world is about to turn.

From the halls of power to the fortress tower, not a stone will be left on stone.
Let the king beware for your justice tears ev'ry tyrant from his throne.
The hungry poor shall weep no more, for the food they can never earn;
There are tables spread, ev'ry mouth be fed, for the world is about to turn.

Though the nations rage from age to age, we remember who holds us fast:
God's mercy must deliver us from the conqueror's crushing grasp.
This saving word that our forebears heard is the promise which holds us bound,
'Til the spear and rod can be crushed by God, who is turning the world around.

Words: adapted from Luke 1:46-58

Music: STAR OF THE COUNTY DOWN, Rory Cooney, arr. 1990

*The Presentation of Our Tithes and Offerings (sung)

GREENSLEEVES

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.
Praise God, all creatures here below.
Praise God above, ye heavenly host.
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherd guard and angels sing:
Joy, joy, for Christ will come,
the babe, the son of Mary.

Words: Thomas Ken, 1674

and William C. Dix, c. 1865

Music: Traditional English Melody

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

Chad Reed and the Mercer Family Band

*The congregation may stand.

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During the Sundays of this year's Advent season, the bulletin cover images are by artist LaCount Anderson, depicting scenes from the birth narratives of Jesus. Each picture features something from our sanctuary decor in the design. Here is LaCount's clue to this week's hidden design:

*The Rose is a theme we love;
Look around to see;
In a window called the Rose;
Jesus is the rose.*

Our offering helper is Asher Helms, reminding us that no matter our age, we all can offer our gifts of thanksgiving to God.

Thanks to the Mercers (Becky, Cady, and Will) and to Chad Reed for sharing their instrumental accompaniment to this morning's music.

The Deacon on Call is LaCount Anderson. A first-term deacon, LaCount has been a member of First Baptist since January 2022 and serves on the Denominational Relations Committee. He is a member of the Sanctuary Choir and has designed artwork for several of our service bulletins. He and his wife Anna live in Rocky Mount and have a grown daughter, Leah Reed, and a grandson, Jennings.

Sympathy to the family of Laura Ann Vick, who died on December 12.

Please note our December 24 schedule:

- 9:45am Intergenerational potluck breakfast. Sign up at www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C44AAAB23A0FFC07-46679636-christmas#/
- 11am Advent IV service, with Extended Session for children and worship bags in the Gathering Room for children attending the service.
- 5pm Candlelight Christmas Eve service with communion. Children of all ages are invited to join us in the sanctuary.

2023 financial year gifts must be post-marked or given electronically by December 31 in order to be recorded on your 2023 contribution statement. Gifts brought to the church office must be in the office by December 29 since the 31st is a Sunday. The last Sunday to bring an offering is December 24. If you have a question about your giving in 2023, please contact Kathy Rattie (financeadmin@fbcraleigh.org or 919-832-4485).

The clothing ministry will be closed from December 15–January 7. Please hold all donations during this time, and do not leave items at the back door or in other places in the clothing ministry area. We will begin accepting winter items again (especially winter coats!) on Monday, January 8. Please hold spring/summer items until the end of February, as our limited off-season storage spaces are filling up quickly!

Our annual winter retreat and ski trip will be January 5–7 in Pipestem, WV. Everyone is welcome to join, whether you ski or not! Email Michael Hood (mhood@fbcraleigh.org) for more information.

Are you interested in providing care for our preschoolers during worship (10:45–12 noon)? Volunteers must be church members or actively involved in the life of the church for at least six months and would serve once a quarter (four days a year). Contact Lynn (llingafelt@fbcraleigh.org) as soon as possible if you're interested.

Giving Generously with Gratitude, our 2024 stewardship emphasis: so far, we have received 128 pledges in the amount of \$1,119,490. Please prayerfully consider how you can give generously and with gratitude to God through First Baptist Church. If you didn't receive a stewardship packet, please contact the church office.

If you have used offering envelopes this year or have requested them for 2024, you will find contribution envelopes for 2024 on the first floor corridor leading to the Clothing Ministry on Sunday, December 24. If you would like some but have not requested them, please contact Wayne Hager (whager@fbcraleigh.org).

Global Missions Offering supports CBF personnel around the world as they spread the Gospel. Please prayerfully consider your support of these missionaries. So far, we have received \$3,080.

In case of inclement weather, cancellation information about scheduled activities will be noted on a recorded greeting obtained by calling the office at 919-832-4485. Information will also be supplied to WRAL-TV (1st Baptist, Salisbury St), WTVD-TV (First Baptist Church-Salisbury St) and posted on our home page and on social media (X, Facebook, and Instagram).

Diaper changing stations are located in the men's and women's bathrooms on each floor of the Lewis building, and a nursing room is located in our preschool suite on the first floor.

Children of all ages are welcome in worship! Worship bags are located in the narthex and in the Gathering Room; preschoolers (birth – kindergarten) are also welcome to join the supervised play in the preschool suite on first floor.

Visiting? We'd love to get to know you. Scan the QR code to the right to share your contact information.



Calendar Highlights • December 17–24

Sunday, December 17

- 9:45 Sunday School
- 11:00 FBC worship (sanctuary/YouTube)
JBC Christmas service/luncheon (301/302)
- 12:00 Grade school kids Lunch Bunch (2nd floor children's suite)

Monday, December 18

- 10:00 Clothing ministry closed

Tuesday, December 19

- 10:00 Staff meeting (conference room)
- 10:45 WMU Group 2 (Springmoor)
- 12:30 Staff Christmas luncheon
- 1:00 WMU Group 2 (Independence Village)
- 1:30 Yoga class (302)

Thursday, December 21

- 7:00 Band of Brothers (Zoom)

Friday, December 22; Monday, December 25; and Tuesday, December 26

Church office closed for Christmas holiday

Sunday, December 24

- 9:45 Intergenerational potluck breakfast (fellowship hall)
- 10:00 JBC Sunday School (227)
- 11:00 FBC worship (sanctuary/YouTube)
JBC worship (226)
- 5:00 Candlelight Christmas Eve service/communion (sanctuary)

First Baptist Church

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