

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH RALEIGH, NC

ORGANIZED MARCH 8, 1812



*Elizabeth exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you
among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb."
Luke 1:42*

December 22, 2024

THE CHURCH IN WORSHIP
THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 22, 2024

Eleven o'clock

About our Worship: Today is the Fourth Sunday of Advent, the Sunday when love is the focus but not just any old kind of love. We celebrate God's radical self-giving love which we are called to reflect in our love for one another. We seek to do this through glorious songs of praise and sincere prayers of gratitude, confession, and intercession, but ultimately our finest celebration comes in acts of love, and justice, which is simply love on a social and systemic scale. Love has come, we sing, a light in the darkness, glory to God on high. Glory, indeed!

GATHERING FOR WORSHIP

The Greeting of Worshipers

Lynn Lingafelt

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

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"
Brenda Portman

Maureen Howell

The Lighting of the Advent Candle

Nancy and Charles Kimball

READER: We have lit three candles—for hope, for peace, and for joy. Today we light the fourth candle—the candle of love. With this flame we signify the love of God that surrounds and fills us at all times, but that we recognize in a special way in the Christmas story. There is no greater power than love. It is stronger than rulers and empires, stronger than grief or despair, stronger even than death. We love, because God loves us.

(The fourth candle is lit.)

PEOPLE: **Loving God, we open ourselves to you this Christmas season. As these candles are lit, light our lives with your imagination. Show us the creative power of hope. Teach us the peace that comes from justice. Fill us with the kind of joy that cannot be contained, but must be shared. Magnify your love within us. Prepare our hearts to be transformed by you, that we may walk in the light of Christ. Amen.**



1. Love has come: a light in the dark - ness!
2. Love is born! Come, share in the won - der.
3. Love has come and nev - er will leave us!



Love shines forth in the Beth - le - hem skies. See, all
Love is God now a - sleep in the hay. See the
Love is life ev - er - last - ing and free. Love is



heav - en has come to pro - claim it; hear how their song of
glow in the eyes of his moth - er; what is the name her
Je - sus with - in and a - mong us. Love is the peace our



joy a - ris - es: Love! Love! Born un - to you, a
heart is say - ing? Love! Love! Love is the name she
hearts are seek - ing. Love! Love! Love is the gift of



Sav - ior! Love! Love! Glo - ry to God on high.
whis - pers. Love! Love! Je - sus, Em - man - u - el.
Christ-mas. Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!

Words: Ken Bible, 1992
Music: French Melody

CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE

The Call to Confession

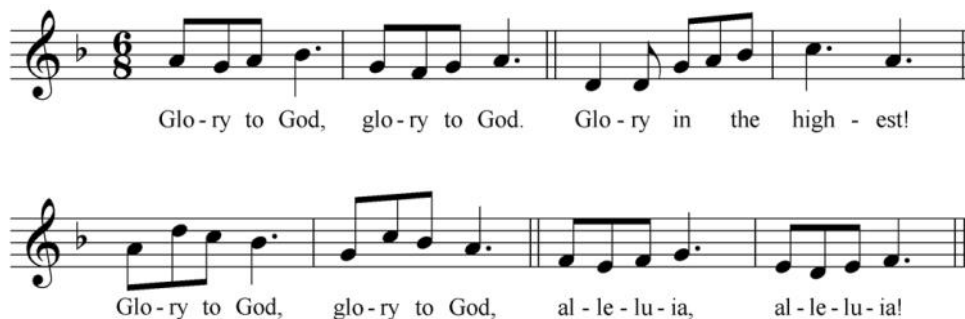
The Prayer of Confession (unison)

**God our Savior, though we have heard Mary's song,
we still seek security in pride and power and possessions.
Though we know your story,
we resist the costs of following you.
We pass by those considered lowly in this world.
We turn away from hungry people who still wait to be filled.
Forgive us, we pray.
Help us to work for the justice you intend.
Make us messengers of the peace you bring.
As we wait for you, turn our apathy into acts of love and service.
We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Emmanuel. Amen.**

The Silent Confession

The Assurance of Forgiveness

The Act of Praise



Glo-ry to God, glo-ry to God. Glo-ry in the high - est!

Glo-ry to God, glo-ry to God, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

Words: Traditional
Music: Jacques Berthier, 1979

LISTENING FOR GOD'S WORD

The Hebrew Bible

Micah 5:2-5a

Caleb Petty

²But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. ³Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. ⁴And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; ⁵and he shall be the one of peace.

LEADER: This is the Word of the Lord.

PEOPLE: **Thanks be to God.**

The Christian Testament

Hebrews 10:5-10

⁵Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; ⁶in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.

⁷Then I said, 'See, God, I have come to do your will, O God' (in the scroll of the book it is written of me)." ⁸When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), ⁹then he added, "See, I have come to do your will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

LEADER: This is the Word of the Lord.

PEOPLE: **Thanks be to God.**

The Anthem

“How Far Is It to Bethlehem?”
Alice Parker and Robert Shaw, arr.

Sanctuary Choir

How far is it to Bethlehem, not very far?
Shall we find the stable room lit by a star?
Can we see the little child, is he within?
If we lift the wooden latch, may we go in?
May we stroke the creatures there, ox, ass, and sheep?
May we peep like them and see Jesus asleep?
If we touch his tiny hand, will he awake?
Will he know we've come so far just for his sake?
God in his mother's arms, babes in the byre
Sleep as they sleep who find their heart's desire.

Words: Frances Chesterton
Music: Traditional English Carol

The Morning Prayer

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.**

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 Hymn of Devotion, 161 "Once in Royal David's City"

IRBY

The Sermon

Christopher Chapman

"How To Celebrate the Topsy-Turvy Message of Christmas"

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, 154

FOREST GREEN

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"

The Celebration of Baptism

Dillon Michael Tyndall

Michael Hood

The Prayer of Blessing and Commitment

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

“Good Christian Friends, Rejoice”

Maureen Howell

Douglas E. Wagner

*The congregation may stand.

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The Deacon on Call is Caleb Petty. An eight-year member who has been at FBC since birth, Caleb is a member of the Wilderness Sunday School class. He and his fiancée Claire Willmschen live in Raleigh.

The Advent parament was dreamed up by LaCount Anderson after he attended the annual Music & Worship Week at Montreat and learned about the intricacies of designs used for sacred artwork in places of worship. We hope this image inspires congregants to reflect on the birth of Christ during this season of hope, joy, and anticipation.

Our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will be held at 5pm on Tuesday, December 24. This beautiful service will include scripture, carols, and celebration of the Lord's Supper. Children are welcome.

Hospitality + Community, our 2025 stewardship emphasis, is underway. Please prayerfully consider how you can give generously and with gratitude to God through First Baptist Church. Use the QR code to the right to make your pledge today! As of December 19, we have received 93 pledges totaling \$831,140.



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 2025. Year-end contributions must be received or postmarked by December 31.

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.

To access the church WiFi, please use our guest network: *FBC-MG*; password: "biography." You will need to sign in upon each use.



To facilitate your giving to FBC, use this QR code to link to the website for our main electronic giving and the page that lists all our e-giving options and instructions.

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



Calendar Highlights • December 22–29

Sunday, December 22

- 9:45 Sunday School
- 11:00 FBC worship/Baptism (sanctuary/YouTube)
- 1:30 JBC Christmas service (sanctuary)
- 3:00 JBC Christmas reception (301/302)

Monday, December 23

Clothing ministry closed

Tuesday, December 24–Thursday, December 26

Church office closed

Tuesday, December 24

- 5:00 Christmas Eve service/communion (sanctuary)

Sunday, December 29

- 9:45 Sunday School
- 11:00 FBC worship (sanctuary/YouTube)
JBC worship (227)

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF RALEIGH
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Christopher C. F. Chapman, Pastor

J. Daniel Day, Pastor Emeritus

Warren Howell, Music

Wayne Hager, Church Administrator

Lynn Lingafelt, Children

Michael Hood, Youth/College

Jun Matsuzaki, Japanese Ministry Pastor

Maureen Howell, Organist/Music Assistant

Leah Anderson Reed, Community

A place of grace, a place of challenge, a place for you.