

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
RALEIGH, NC

ORGANIZED MARCH 8, 1812



December 21, 2025

THE CHURCH IN WORSHIP
THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 21, 2025

Eleven o'clock

About our Worship: On this Fourth Sunday of Advent, we continue with the lighting of the Advent candle and prayers of confession as we prepare for the coming of the Christ into a Bethlehem stable and our lives today. While the reading from Luke for Christmas Eve focuses on Mary's role in the Christmas story, the reading today from Matthew focuses on Joseph's role. He is not the lead character, but there are important things we can learn from him. As we do, we sing praises to the God who comes to us in startling ways, we pray for a world that needs God-With-Us, and we respond with the dedication of gifts and our lives in service.

GATHERING FOR WORSHIP

The Greeting of Worshipers

Warren Howell

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

"Meditation on *Es ist ein Ros*"
Howard Helvey

Maureen Howell

The Lighting of the Advent Candle

Casey Barrett and Emily Taylor

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):

¹⁰Again 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.

(The fourth candle is lit.)

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.

*The Hymn of Praise, 174 "Angels from the Realms of Glory"

REGENT SQUARE

CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE

The Call to Confession

LEADER: Assured that God hears our repentance, let us turn our minds to the truth, confessing our sins to God and one another.

The Prayer of Confession (unison)

**Shepherd of our souls,
we anticipate your coming
but do not feel ready.
We have done too much, and not done enough.
We have focused too much on ourselves,
and not enough on others.
Restore us, O God;
let your face shine, that we might be saved. Amen.**

The Silent Prayer

The Assurance of Forgiveness

LEADER: Emmanuel did not come into this world
to condemn, but to save.

PEOPLE: **God does not come to imprison us,
but to set us free.**

LEADER: Through this abundant love, we are forgiven.

The Expression of Praise

Glo - ry, glo - ry, glo - ry, glo - ry be to God on high,

The first line of musical notation consists of a treble and bass staff in 6/8 time. The treble staff contains a melody of eighth and quarter notes, while the bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines. The lyrics are written below the treble staff.

and on earth peace to all peo-ple in whom God is well pleased.

The second line of musical notation continues the melody and accompaniment from the first line. It features similar rhythmic patterns and harmonic support. The lyrics are written below the treble staff.

Words: Based on Luke 2:14; Pablo Sosa, 1989
Music: Pablo Sosa, 1989

LISTENING FOR GOD'S WORD

The Hebrew Bible

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

Jay Carothers

- ¹ Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a flock!
You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth
²before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh.
Stir up your might,
and come to save us!
³Restore us, O God;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.
⁴O LORD God of hosts,
how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?
⁵You have fed them with the bread of tears
and given them tears to drink in full measure.
⁶You make us the scorn of our neighbors;
our enemies laugh among themselves.
⁷Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.
¹⁷But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand,
the one whom you made strong for yourself.
¹⁸Then we will never turn back from you;
give us life, and we will call on your name.
¹⁹Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

LEADER: This is the Word of the Lord.

PEOPLE: **Thanks be to God.**

The Christian Testament

Romans 1:1-7

¹Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ²which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the gentiles for the sake of his name, ⁶including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, ⁷To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

LEADER: This is the Word of the Lord.

PEOPLE: **Thanks be to God.**

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.**

The Gospel

Matthew 1:18–25

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²²All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³“Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,”

which means, “God is with us.” ²⁴When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife ²⁵but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

LEADER: This is the Gospel of Christ.

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

*The Hymn of Devotion, 155

ST. LOUIS

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”

The Sermon

“Learning from Joseph”

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, 144

KINGSFOLD

“The Hands That First Held Mary’s Child”

*The Offertory Prayer

The Offertory Anthem

“I Wonder as I Wander”

Sanctuary Choir

Maureen Howell, arr.

Tonya Carter, solo

I wonder as I wander, out under the sky,
how Jesus the Savior did come for to die
for poor ordn’ry people like you and like I;
I wonder as I wander, out under the sky.

When Mary birthed Jesus, 'twas in a cow's stall
with wise men and farmers and shepherd and all
but high from God's heaven a star's light did fall,
and the promise of ages it did then recall.

If Jesus had wanted for any wee thing,
a star in the sky, or a bird on the wing,
or all of God's angels in heaven for to sing,
he surely could have it, 'cause he was the King.

I wonder as I wander, out under the sky,
how Jesus the Savior did come for to die
for poor ordn’ry people like you and like I;
I wonder as I wander, out under the sky.

Words and Music: Traditional Appalachian carol,
John Jacob Niles, coll., 1934

*The Doxology

LASST UNS ERFREUEN

**Praise God for gifts of hope and peace;
Praise God for gifts of joy and love: Alleluia! Alleluia!
Praise God for sending Christ to dwell;
On earth for us — Emmanuel.
Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

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

“Angels from the Realms of Glory”

Maureen Howell

Hal H. Hopson

*The congregation may stand.

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The Advent candle-lighting ritual is adapted from *Touch Holiness,* Ruth Duck and Maren Tirabassi.

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The Deacon on Call is Jay Carothers. A 31-year member, Jay serves on the Nominating Committee and is a greeter and a member of the Grains of Sand Sunday School class. He and his wife Janie have two children, Claire and Parker.

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

Sympathy to David Guzman and his family on the December 13 death of his mother, Sylvia Guzman; to Steve Brown and his family on the December 15 death of his mother, Virginia Brown; and to the family of Joe Webb, who died December 17.

Beginning after the Christmas Eve service, Dr. Chapman will be on vacation for two weeks. Please contact the office or one of the other ministers if you need anything.

We Promise To Do Our Best, our 2026 stewardship emphasis, is underway. Please prayerfully consider how you can give generously and with gratitude to God. If you don't receive a stewardship packet in the mail, please contact the church office. As of December 18, we have received 97 pledges totaling \$801,920 towards our goal of \$1,389,580.

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 2026. Year-end contributions must be received or postmarked by December 31. Please note that the church office will be closed December 24–31, so no one will be able to receive your offering at the church office during that time.

The clothing ministry will be closed for all donations through January 7 while our volunteers are away for the holidays. We will resume accepting donations again on January 8. We are grateful for the church's continued support of this ministry.

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 (Facebook, and Instagram).

In the event of an emergency, first aid kits can be found at the greeting desk in the Lewis Lobby and in the workroom in the church office. The church has two defibrillators (AED): one between the elevator and the church offices on the second floor and one on the main floor behind the sanctuary on the Edenton Street side.

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.

Calendar Highlights • December 21–28

Sunday, December 21

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

Monday, December 22

Clothing ministry closed

Tuesday, December 23

- 10:00 Staff meeting (conference room)
- 10:45 WMU Group 2 (Springmoor)
- 1:00 WMU Group 2 (Independence Village)

Wednesday, December 24–Friday, December 26

Church office closed for Christmas holiday

Wednesday, December 24

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

Sunday, December 28

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



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.



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF RALEIGH
Affiliated with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
99 N. Salisbury Street, Raleigh, NC 27603
(919) 832-4485 x201 Fax: (919) 832-6726 www.fbcraleigh.org

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.