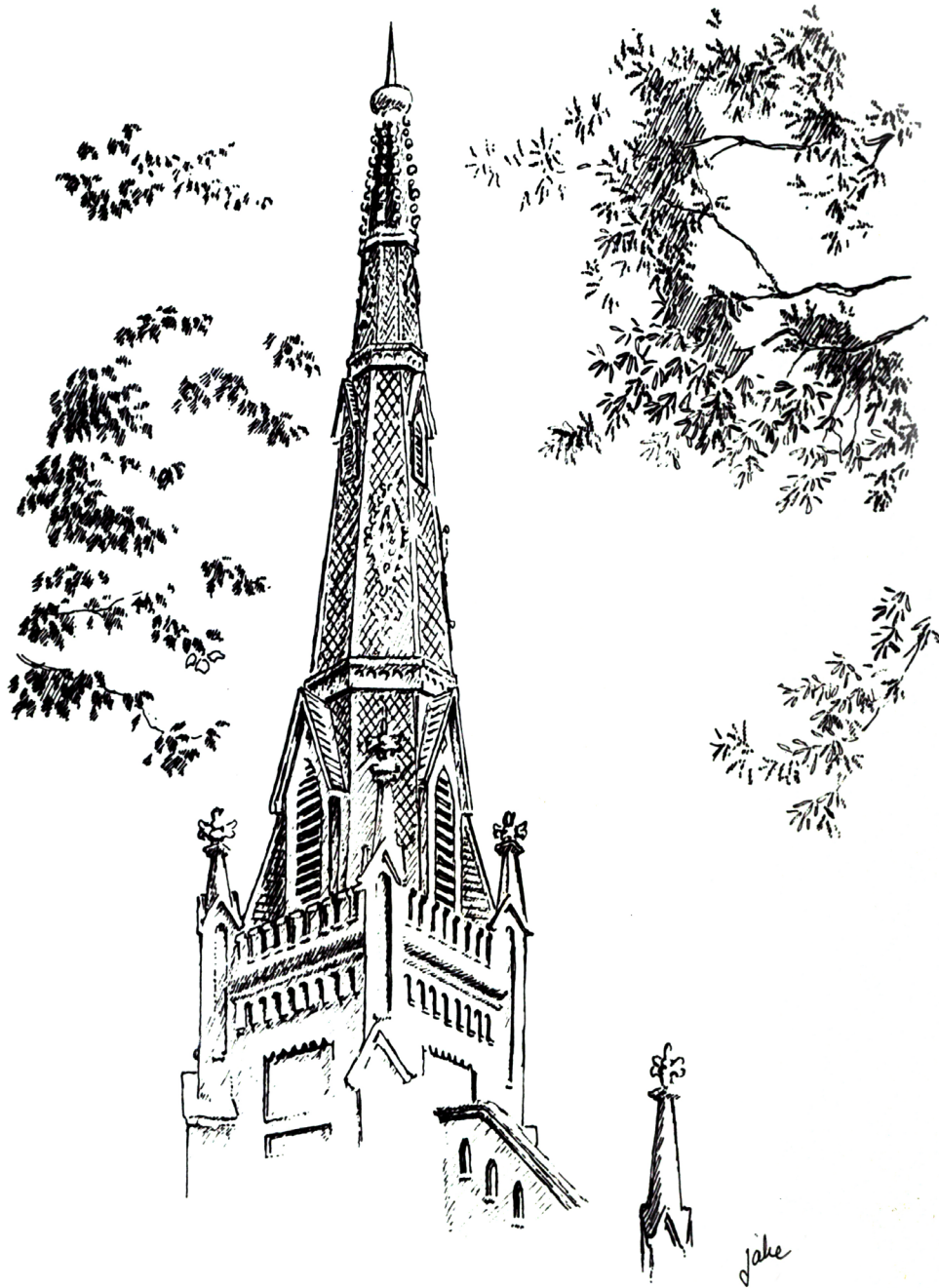


First Presbyterian Church

CONTEMPLATIVE WORSHIP | 9 AM | DECEMBER 17, 2023
THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT



We invite you, whoever you are and whoever God is helping you to become, to join First Presbyterian Church of Charlotte in our journey of faith. God is love, and that love is for you. You belong as a child of God, and we welcome you. Come experience how that belonging might change you and our world as we seek to be for Christ in the heart of Charlotte.



First Presbyterian
Church of Charlotte

Time of Quiet Meditation and Reflection | Silence begins in the Chapel at 8:50 a.m.

Words of Welcome | Reverend Mary Bowman

Invocation | *A New Zealand Prayer Book*

O God, the soles of Your feet have touched the Earth. The back street, the forgotten places have been laid up with significance. The households of earth welcome the King of heaven. For You have come among us, You are one of us. So may our praises rise to surround Your throne as our knees bend to salute Your cradle. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Meditative Music | Nativity Carol | John Rutter and The Cambridge Singers

Born in a stable so bare; Born so long ago.
 Born 'neath light of star; He who loved us so.
 Far away, silent He lay; Born today, your homage pay.
 For Christ is born for aye; Born on Christmas Day.
 Cradled by mother so fair; Tender her lullaby.
 Over her son so dear; Angel hosts fill the sky.
 Far away, silent He lay; Born today, your homage pay.
 For Christ is born for aye; Born on Christmas Day.
 Wise men from distant far land; Shepherds from starry hills.
 Worship this babe so rare; Hearts with His warmth He fills.
 Far away, silent He lay; Born today, your homage pay.
 For Christ is born for aye; Born on Christmas Day.
 Love in that stable was born; Into our hearts to flow.
 Innocent dreaming babe; Make me Thy love to know.
 Far away, silent He lay; Born today, your homage pay.
 For Christ is born for aye; Born on Christmas Day.

Prayer for Illumination | Adapted from Reverend Andy James | Joan Wright

First Scripture Reading | Mark 13:31-38

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. "But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert, for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake, for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening or at midnight or at cockcrow or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Moment of Reflection

Second Scripture Reading | Luke 2:8-20 | Scott Wallace

Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom He favors!" When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them, and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Moment of Reflection

Meditation | “The Meaning of Christmas: Through the Eyes of the Shepherds”

Moment of Reflection

Call to Confession

Prayer of Confession | Adapted from *The Book of Common Worship (PCUSA)*

God our Maker, we confess that we are not always ready to meet You. You call us to repent, but we often turn away from You. You wait patiently for us, but we often fail to wait and watch for You. Forgive us, God of grace. Embrace us with tender mercy so that as we confess, we may become more at one with You.

Moment of Reflection

O Lord, we ask that You forgive what we have been and done, help us amend what we are, and direct what we shall be, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways, to the glory of Your holy name. We receive Your forgiveness with grateful hearts, and we commit to the work of extending it to others. Amen.

Offering

The Christian life is marked by the offering of one's self to God to be shaped, empowered, directed, and changed by God. In worship, God presents us with the costly self-offering of Jesus Christ. We are claimed by Christ and set free. In response to God's love in Jesus Christ we offer God our lives, our gifts, our abilities, and our material goods, for God's service. The offering plates are located at the back of the chapel if you are interested in giving regularly as a spiritual practice.

Invitation to the Table

Meditative Music | Angel's Carol | John Rutter and The Cambridge Singers

Have you heard the sound of the angel voices;
Ringing out so sweetly, ringing out so clear?
Have you seen the star shining out so brightly;
As a sign from God that Christ the Lord is here?
Have you heard the news that they bring from Heaven;
To the humble shepherds who have waited long?
Gloria in excelsis, Deo. Gloria in excelsis, Deo.
Hear the angels sing their joyful song.
He is come in peace in the winter's stillness;
Like a gentle snowfall in the gentle night.
He is come in joy like the sun at morning;
Filling all the world with radiance and with light.
He is come in love as the child of Mary;
In a simple stable, we have seen His birth.
Gloria in excelsis, Deo. Gloria in excelsis, Deo.
Hear the angels singing Peace on Earth.
He will bring new light (He will bring new light) to a world in darkness;
Like a bright star shining in the skies above.
He will bring new hope (He will bring new hope) to the waiting nations;
When He comes to reign in purity and love.
Let the Earth rejoice (let the Earth rejoice) at the Savior's coming
Let the Heavens answer (let the Heavens answer) with the joyful mourn
Gloria in excelsis, Deo. Gloria in excelsis, Deo.
Hear the angels singing, Christ is born.
Hear the angels singing, Christ is born.

Prayers of the People and 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

Sacrament of Communion

To receive the gluten-free bread and the cup, come forward, take a piece of bread, and then dip the bread into the cup. It is still communion if you prefer to take only the bread. Please do not drink out of the cup directly. If for any reason you prefer not to come forward, please raise your hand and the officers will be glad to serve you in your pew.

Prayer of Thanksgiving | Adapted from *A New Zealand Prayer Book*

Shepherd of our souls, we praise and thank You for You have come and not left us. We celebrate Your coming to us as Emmanuel, God with us in the manger. We celebrate each time You come to us in the broken bread and in the cup we share. In time or out of time, You will be revealed. Help us to stay awake and watch for how You are moving among us still. And send us — like the shepherds — to serve as witnesses to Your marvelous, incarnational love. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Charge and Blessing

We have been fed by the presence of God in the silence, by the Word, and through communion. Please feel free to greet one another in a warm and quiet way that allows an easing out of the silence. The minister is available for prayer or conversation after the service. Sunday School begins at 9:45 a.m. If you would like to visit longer with other members, you are invited to gather in the Welcome Center.



**VIRTUAL
CONNECT
CARD**



**PRAYER
REQUESTS**



**ANNOUNCEMENT
LINKS**



**TEXT
TO GIVE**



**GIVE
ONLINE**