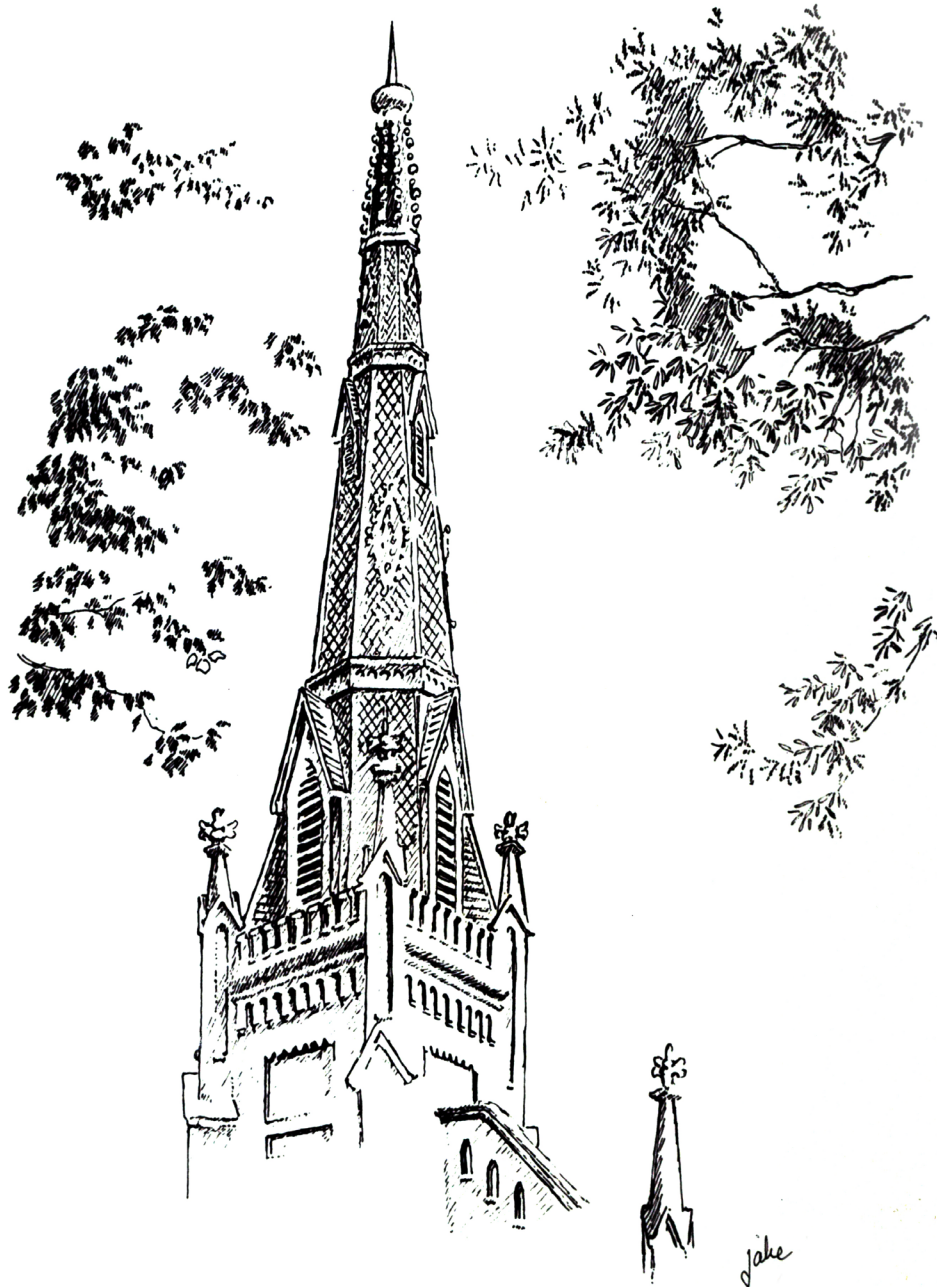


First Presbyterian Church

CONTEMPLATIVE WORSHIP | 9 AM | DECEMBER 22, 2024
FOURTH SUNDAY OF 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

Opening Prayer

Gracious Lord, as we come this morning to celebrate this Advent season, we come seeking the Child once again and also the Savior who has promised to come again.

As we wait and watch, we ask that You would come close and bring Your light into the dark places of our individual lives and into our world.

We confess that we need You . . . to comfort us and forgive us, to give us purpose and give us hope, and to remind us that we all have been made in Your image and have value.

We enter these doors with a variety of needs, concerns, griefs, joys, disappointments, hurts, and sins, and we ask that You would be at work in them as we name and confess them in the silence.

Moment of Reflective Prayer

We receive Your care and forgiveness with grateful hearts and we commit to the work of extending both to others. Amen.

Meditative Music | “The Wexford Carol” | Celtic Woman

Good people all, this Christmas time;
 Consider well and bear in mind.
 What our good God for us has done;
 In sending His beloved Son.
 With Mary holy we should pray;
 To God with love this Christmas Day.
 In Bethlehem upon that morn;
 There was a blessed Messiah born.
 Near Bethlehem did shepherds keep;
 Their flocks of lambs and feeding sheep.
 To whom God's angels did appear;
 Which put the shepherds in great fear.
 'Arise and go,' the angels said 'To Bethlehem, be not afraid.
 For there you'll find, this happy morn;
 A princely babe, sweet Jesus born.'
 With thankful heart and joyful mind;
 The shepherds went, the babe to find.
 And as God's angel had foretold;
 They did our savior Christ behold.
 Within a manger He was laid;
 And by His side the virgin maid.
 As long foretold upon that morn: There was a blessed Messiah born.

Prayer for Illumination | Selina Malherbe

First Reading | Hebrews 1:1-4

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by a Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom He also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and He sustains all things by His powerful word. When He had made purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name He has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Second Reading | Luke 2:1-20 | Joan Wright

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped Him in bands of cloth and laid Him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room.

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 | "Christmas at Luke's House" | Reverend Mary Bowman

Moment of Reflection**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 | "Some Children See Him" | James Taylor

Some children see Him lily white,
The baby Jesus born this night,
Some children see Him lily white,
With tresses soft and fair.

Some children see Him bronzed and brown,
The Lord of heaven to earth come down,
Some children see Him bronzed and brown,
With dark and heavy hair.

Some children see Him almond-eyed,
The Savior whom we kneel beside,
Some children see Him almond-eyed,
With skin of golden hue.

Some children see Him dark as they,
Sweet Mary's Son to Whom we pray.
Some children see Him dark as they,
And oh, they love Him too.

The children in each different place,
Will see the baby Jesus' face,
Like theirs, but bright with heavenly grace,
And filled with holy light.

Oh lay aside each earthly thing,
And with thy heart as offering,
Come worship now the infant King,
'Tis love that's born tonight!
'Tis love that's born tonight!

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 | *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.

IN LOVING MEMORY

Betsy Lee Griffin, October 10, 1925 - December 13, 2024

Transcripts for the Contemplative Service can be found here: <https://firstpres-charlotte.org/sermons/>



VIRTUAL
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PRAYER
REQUESTS



TEXT
TO GIVE



GIVE
ONLINE