



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH NEW BERN, NORTH CAROLINA

A Congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Established 1817

December 24, 2023 – The Fourth Sunday in Advent
8:30 am & 11:00 am Worship

Building Community ~ Transforming Lives ~ Engaging the World

Trusting that God’s grace embraces and makes a covenant with all believers, First Presbyterian Church intends to be an inclusive place of spiritual growth for all. All persons are welcomed into this fellowship and membership, regardless of age, sexual orientation, gender, ethnic or racial identity, economic or educational status, or political affiliation.

WELCOME! Members and visitors are invited to sign the Worship Register during the service.

NAME TAGS are available in the narthex and vestibule. Everyone is invited to wear a name tag so we can greet one another by name! Want a permanent name tag or need a replacement?

Contact
church@firstpresnb.org

RESTROOMS

(including a family restroom) are available in the Ministry Center.

HEARING ASSISTANCE

DEVICES are available in the narthex. Ushers are available to help if help is needed!

CHILDREN

are welcome here! The nursery is available for infants, toddlers, and preschool children in Room 1.23 in the Ministry Center from 8:15 am to 12:15 pm.

WORSHIP BAGS and CHILDREN’S WORSHIP AND WONDER

For all children in worship, there are Worship Bags available at the front and back of the Sanctuary. There will be no Worship and Wonder after the Children’s Moment today. Worship and Wonder will return on December 31!

Welcome

The Chiming of the Trinity

We silence our devices and distractions

Prelude

Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her

Johann Pachelbel

Introit

Gentle Mary Laid Her Child

Cook/1582

Advent Candle Lighting: The Candle of Love

Leslie and Kevin Pinkston (8:30 am)

Brian, Betsy, Madelyn, and Will Gatchel (11:00 am)

We are the people who know the true depth of love, love we dream will change hearts. In a world that isn’t always comfortable with real emotion, we refuse to give in or give up. Our Advent candles are a sign of our defiance—the light of love will not be extinguished.

The first candle is the light of hope. The second candle is the light of peace. The third candle is the light of joy. The fourth candle is the light of love.

Our faith tells us that love is so central to who God is that the very word is another name for God. God is love, and all who love God, know God, and God dwells in them. By loving we reflect Christ out into the world.

Hear the promises of scripture from the prophet Isaiah:

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness — on them light has shined.*

*For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders, and he is named*

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Let us pray. Jesus Christ, help us to hold tight to your promises, loving with all we have in reflection of your great love. For you alone are love, and for you alone we dream of this day. Amen.

*Hymn 105

People, Look East

Farjeon/French melody

Matthew 1:18-24

¹⁸ Now 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. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But 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. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All 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." ²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife ²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

Giving of Gifts: The Offering

One of the greatest joys God gives us is the invitation to give, to have our generosity reflect God's generosity. Instead of collecting God's Tithes and our Offerings during the service today, there are boxes in the narthex and vestibule where you can place your pledges and gifts. Praise God from who all blessings flow!

Call to Confession

Prayer of Confession

Holy God of Promise, we so often place our trust in the things we can see, and touch, and easily believe. Forgive us, Holy One, when we doubt the ways you work. Forgive us when we find it hard to believe an ancient story. Forgive us when we question your ways, your works, your will.

(we pause for a time of silent confession)

Help us to look in faith, open our belief, and set aside our doubts that you sent your Son, born to Mary, the one who has come to set us all free. We offer these prayers in the name of your Son, Emmanuel, God with us. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Summary of the Law

Matthew 22:37-39

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and the first commandment. And a second is like it, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Children's Moment

Catherine Campbell

Anthem

Gesù Bambino

Pietro A. Yon

John Peck, tenor

Prayer for Illumination

Gospel Reading

Matthew 1:18-25

Pew Bible New Testament

The Word of the Lord.

pg 1

Thanks be to God.

Sermon

Dreaming of a Change of Heart

Anna Pinckney Straight

(after the sermon we pause for a time of silent reflection)

*Affirmation of Faith

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

*Hymn 132

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice

German melody

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The graphics for Advent were
created by sanctifiedart.org

The Advent Candle liturgy was
written by the Rev. Carol Holbrook
Prickett (deepwellworship.com) and
adapted with permission.

The Prayer of Confession was
written by the Rev. Jan Brooks

Anthem

While By My Sheep

arr. Hugo Jüngst

Joys and Concerns of the Congregation

*The flowers are given to the glory of God
and in memory of Pete Rowlett by Pat Kerr Rowlett.*

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.

***Hymn 113**

Angels We Have Heard on High

French carol

Benediction

Postlude

In dir ist Freude (BWV 615)

Johann Sebastian Bach

Liturgist: Patrick Ryan

Musicians: Daybreak and Sanctuary Choirs

Ushers: Mark Moeller, Mark Dail, Yvonne Olmstead (8:30 am)

Marc Dabagian (11:00 am)

Christmas Eve Services, December 24, 5:00 pm and 7:00 pm

In Person and on the First Presbyterian Church, New Bern YouTube page

<https://www.youtube.com/@firstpresnb>

The **5:00 pm** service is our family service, led by the children and youth of the congregation. We will receive an offering during the service that will be given to Interfaith Refugee Ministry, and the service ends with candlelight, too. While every year is different, last year this service was standing-room-only.

The **7:00 pm** service is our traditional Christmas Eve service that includes both communion and candlelight at the end. We will sing carols and hear God's word read and proclaimed as we celebrate that Jesus was born and that Jesus has promised to come again. This service will also receive an offering for Interfaith Refugee Ministry.

Epiphany Camp, January 1 – January 5

Grades K-5, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Worship and Wonder Classroom, Ministry Center

All youth, Grades K-5 are invited to Epiphany Camp, to know more about the Magi who made the journey to see Jesus after his birth.

They'll join us for a half-day camp the first week of January to walk in the steps of the Wise Men. This camp is like Vacation Bible School – we'll create, eat, play, and discover together! We will also have a nursery available for kids ages Birth-PreK Monday-Wednesday,

January 1- January 3 from 9:00 am-12:00 pm. Use the QR code on the left to get registered for the fun.



Gifts from the Heart

The Gifts from the Heart Ministry team is set up in the Narthex today- the last day! If you are looking for a last - minute, meaningful gift for someone, these gifts help support any number of amazing ministries in New Bern and around the world. When you make your donation, you will receive a card to give to the recipient of your gift. This year the highlighted organizations are *Habitat for Humanity, the Food Bank, and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance.*

Sunday School Classes from January 7 – February 11

For full class descriptions, locations, and more, visit the website ~ www.firstpresnb.org ~ or pick up a brochure.

The Present Word - *The Present Word* is an adult Bible study that focuses on a different theme from scripture each quarter to uncover its deeper meaning and how it is relevant to today. This winter, this class explores what a faith that pleases God might look like. Taught by George Evans in the Session House Parlor.

Let's Talk: Conversations on Life and Faith - This winter we continue our series, hearing from faith leaders and authors as they ponder the intersection of life and faith. In the second half of each hour, the group discusses the issues presented by our "guest speakers." Meets in the Session House.

The Story, Old Testament - *The Story* sweeps you into the unfolding progression of Bible characters and events from Genesis to Revelation. It reads like a novel, opening participants' eyes to God's master plan, unfolding in the lives of the Bible's characters as well as their own lives. Taught by Lana Brunk and Dick Betts in the Conference Room (Ministry Center, first floor).

Faith and Film - There are many intersections between the movies we love and the faith we practice, and many of these intersections are subtle and overlooked. How can movies help us better understand the messages scripture and our faith tradition? Taught by Jim Copland and meets in the Owl Room. (Ministry Center, second floor) **Starts Jan. 14.**

New Members Class – Starting **January 28**, there will be a three-week class for those who would like to learn more about First Presbyterian Church, New Bern and are interested in exploring what it means to be a part of this church family. This class will **meet January 28, February 4, and February 11.** Participants who would like to become members will be given the opportunity to be welcomed at either the 11:00 am worship service on February 11 or the 8:30 am worship service on February 18. Location TBD. For more information, please contact Anna Pinckney Straight.

“Then this stranger comes to us, blesses us with a gift,
and calls us to see ourselves as we are
—empty-handed recipients of a gracious God
who, rather than leave us to our own devices, gave us a baby.”

Will Willimon,
“The Gifted”

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Monday – Thursday
9:00 am – 3:00 pm
Friday 9:00 am – 1:00 pm