



How does a
weary world
rejoice?

January 7, 2024
Baptism of the Lord

✠ *You are invited to stand in body or spirit*



Gathering As God's Beloved People

Gathering Music

The Baptism of Christ

Derek Healey

Be Thou My Vision

Fred Bock

Morning Has Broken

BUNESSAN

Prelude

The Spacious Firmament on High

Diane Bish

Chiming of the Hour

Welcome and Announcements

✠ **Call to Worship**

There are some days when I need the reminder that I belong to God.

Do you ever feel that way?

Yes. We do. The world can be a harsh place; we often need that reminder.

Well then, let us care for one another.

Let us speak the truth we each need to hear.

Church, you belong to God. You are God's beloved.

Friend, you belong to God. You are God's beloved.

Let us worship the God who knows our names.

Let us worship the God who calls us beloved. Amen.

✠ **Hymn of Praise 409**

God Is Here!

ABBOT'S LEIGH

✠ **Call to Confession**

Our scripture passage for today tells the story of Jesus being baptized. The Gospel of Luke tells us that the sky opened up and the voice of God was heard saying, "You are my Son, whom I love; with whom I am well-pleased" (Luke 3:22). Friends, I don't think that's the only time God has said words like that. If I understand the promise of scripture, then I believe God delights in you. God created you. God loves you with the same passion that we hear God express in

today's scripture. So trusting that good news, trusting that we are beloved, let us go to God in prayer. For we know that the one who listens, listens with love. What greater gift exists than that? Let us pray:

✠Community Confession

Loving God, From the very beginning, you breathed life into us and called us good. However, somewhere along the way we replaced "good" with "not enough." Somewhere along the way we turned the volume up on that phrase and began to doubt our own self-worth. Forgive us, for this is not what you have taught us. For when the world tells us we are not enough, you call us beloved. Show us how to return to that truth. Show us how to let go of our weariness and rest in that good news. Amen.

✠Assurance of God's Love and Forgiveness

Family of faith, God's grace and understanding is deeper and wider than we could possibly imagine. So say these words of grace with me:

Our story begins with belovedness. Even when we lose our way, even if we stumble and fall, God never stops breaking through the clouds to claim us. We are known. We are forgiven. We are beloved. Thanks be to God!

Church, we are forgiven!

We are free to try again.

✠Response to God's Grace 582

Glory to God, Whose Goodness Shines on Me

GLORY TO GOD (Vasile)

***Glory to God, whose goodness shines on me,
and to the Son, whose grace has pardoned me,
and to the Spirit, whose love has set me free.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Amen.***

World without end, without end. Amen.

World without end, without end. Amen.

World without end, without end. Amen.

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Amen.

✠ **Passing of the Peace**

May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

And also with you!



Proclaiming the Word

Wondering with God's Children

Larry Kennon

Anthem

Wild and Lone the Prophet's Voice

ABERYSTWYTH

Krista Firkus

Prayer for God's Wisdom and Understanding

Old Testament Reading

Isaiah 42:1-9

Pew Bible page 670

Gospel Reading

Luke 3:21-22

Pew Bible page 60

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Message

My Beloved

Rev. Erin Morgan



Responding to the Word

✠ **Response 96**

On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry

WINCHESTER NEW

✠ **Affirmation of Faith**

John McCarthy

I believe that the God I see in scripture is a God of love. I believe that God created me and delights in that creation. I believe the psalmist who says, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." I believe that, just as God called Jesus "beloved," God extends this same term of endearment to us. I believe that no matter our earthly challenges, nothing could strip me of that sacred title. I could fail every test, miss every goal, drop every ball,

and I would still be God's beloved. Therefore, I cling to this promise like a rock in the storm. I anchor myself with this good news, allowing the anxiety of the day to roll over me as best I can, because I know where I belong. I am a child of God. I am beloved. I strive to live this way. Amen.

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer

John McCarthy

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.

Offering Our Gifts: An Invitation to Generosity

John McCarthy

*You are invited to "Text to Give" your offering!
Text* FPCCOV followed by your donation amount to: 73256 and follow the link to give online! Or scan the QR Code to visit the giving page!*



Offertory

Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah
Alice Walker

Thomas Hastings

✠ Response 606

Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow

OLD HUNDRETH

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise God, all creatures here below;
praise God above ye heavenly host;
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.***

Prayer of Gratitude

All are invited to join in our community Prayer of Gratitude by lifting up a one-word prayer of thanksgiving.



Being the Church in the World

✠ Sending Hymn 542

God Be with You Till We Meet Again

GOD BE WITH YOU

✠Charge and Benediction

First Presbyterian Church Covington is a Christian community existing to glorify God by welcoming all of God's children. We celebrate through serving, teaching, praying, eating, crying, singing, and dancing with the Holy Spirit. As works in progress, we seek to respond to God's presence in our church, lives, and community.

✠Postlude

To God Be the Glory

Grimoaldo Macchia



Worship Art

This week's worship guide cover art is a digital painting and collage by Rev. Lauren Wight Pittman titled *Beloved*. The artist's statement is as follows:

Luke's account of Jesus' baptism is brief and vague. He was baptized among "all the people" (Luke 3:21) by an unnamed baptizer, and until he prays, the scene is rather unremarkable. During his prayer, however, an iconic scene unfolds with the heavens opening, the Holy Spirit descending in the form of a dove, and a voice booming from heaven.

As I considered how I might visually respond to this text, it was difficult to imagine this event with a beginner's mind. I've seen lots of imagery of Jesus in the water with clouds breaking open and a dove descending, or Jesus bursting out of water into a beam of light. These images are powerful, but I wasn't sure if creating a similar image would be helpful, or if I'd be offering insight into the text that hadn't already been visually explored.

I began to meditate on what was unspoken and implied in Luke's account, and one moment that stuck out in my imagination was the moment Jesus was underwater. How did Jesus feel when he held his breath and descended into the river?

This image offers a snapshot of Jesus right before he steps into his calling, on the threshold of spectacular affirmation. He is completely suspended, embraced, and upheld by the waters of baptism. The water's surface is choppy. The future is unknown and precarious. His path is a lonely and formidable one, eventually leading to his suffering and death.

Despite what is to come, Jesus reaches toward the surface. Two fish are drawn to the light of his halo, foreshadowing his companionship with fishers and his miraculous feeding of the five thousand. All of creation is leaning into his call.

This is what trusting your belovedness feels like—muscles and bones relieved of gravity's burden, serenity, weightlessness, oneness with creation, and the warmth of God's love permeating every cell of your body and every corner of your soul.

—Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman



Worship Practices

Sound System—We are excited to announce that the new sound system has been installed in the Sanctuary! The new system is designed to improve the sound in the space, not only in volume but in clarity and includes a Bluetooth hearing aid connectivity option. We are still testing and figuring out the settings and we appreciate your patience during this adjustment period. Once we fully understand the settings and capabilities, we will hold lessons on how to connect with the Bluetooth.

Children in Worship—We have a “Children in Worship” guiding brochure available in the Narthex! This brochure is intended to serve as an aid to parents and other members of our congregation in welcoming our children to worship. Children are always welcome to wiggle and giggle in the pews at FPC! During worship children are invited to join us at the front of the Sanctuary for a time of Wondering with God’s Children. Afterwards, children planning to go to the nursery will be escorted downstairs by Pastor Neeley or Pastor Erin. This is to help you stay in worship and us get them to the nursery safely. If you need help finding the nursery, you are invited to ask an usher to point the way.

Friendship Registers—In each pew there is a pad with a black cover that we invite everyone to fill out. If the Friendship Register is nearest to you, please fill it out and pass it down the pew so it can reach everyone. When you pass it on, we invite you to introduce yourself to your pew friends! We encourage visitors and newcomers to connect with us by filling out the Friendship Register so we can be sure to send you a message to thank you for joining us.

Use—One License #A-728728 authorizes the use of music printed in our worship guide and streamed online. *Messages and data rates may apply when using Text to Give. Message frequency varies. Text HELP to 73256 for help. Text STOP to 73256 to cancel.

How Does a Weary World Rejoice | Liturgy by Rev. Sarah Speed | Graphic Design by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman | Art “Beloved” by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org



Serving Today

Tech Team | Dan Walden, Kenny Compton,
Jonny Atkins, Brad Hawley, Kraig Howell

Acolytes | Kora Howell, Parker Firkus

Usher Chair | Pat Harper

Children’s Ushers | Audrey Fullerton, Valerie Morgan



Worship Notes & Doodles

We invite you to fill the space below with the thoughts, reminders, and doodles that you may be blessed with during and after worship.

Grid of dots for writing notes and doodles.



**FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**
COVINGTON, GA

fpccov.org | 770.786.7321

1169 Clark Street SW, Covington, GA 30014

First Presbyterian Church Staff		
Neeley Rentz Lane	Senior Pastor	Nursery Staff
Erin Morgan	Associate Pastor	
Mark Fiddie	Dir. of Music & Worship Arts	Hattie Bellinger
Peni Kehoe	Finance Administrator	Sierra BlackShear
Catherine Laseter	Dir. of Communications & Operations	Catrina Crowe
Alice Walker	CAGO, AAGO Organist	Jahniah Greene
		Laina Lalane

Officers	
Reaching Out	
Luke Usry	Witness (2026)
Curtis Watson	Witness (2024)
Engaging	
Charles Ardis	Faith Formation (2025)
Pat Harper	Worship (2024)
Nichole Howell	Worship (2025)
Mary Catherine Whisnant	Faith Formation (2024)
Belonging	
Doug Bolton	Welcome (2025)
Billy Fortson	Finance, Personnel (2024)
Connecting (Deacons)	
Janet Carmichael	Pastoral Care (2026)
Tom Crews	Pastoral Care (2025)
Dana Hall	Faith & Fellowship (2025)
Darcel Tabb	Faith & Fellowship (2024)
More	
Jodi Atkins	Strategic Planning (2026)
Kenny Compton	Facilities (2026)
John McCarthy	Clerk of Session
Danny Vining	Personnel (2026)

Welcome!

Mark Fiddie

Director of Music & Worship Arts

Mark will begin his call at FPC Covington on January 8th



Mark's email with us will be mark@fpccov.org

Mark's first Sunday with us is January 14th and we will hold a welcome reception following worship!

FPC Youth

Youth Art Hang

Wednesday, January 10th at
5:30pm-7:00pm
in the art classroom

Come take an art class with your FPC Youth friends lead by Elise Hammond of Southern Heartland Art!

Dinner included

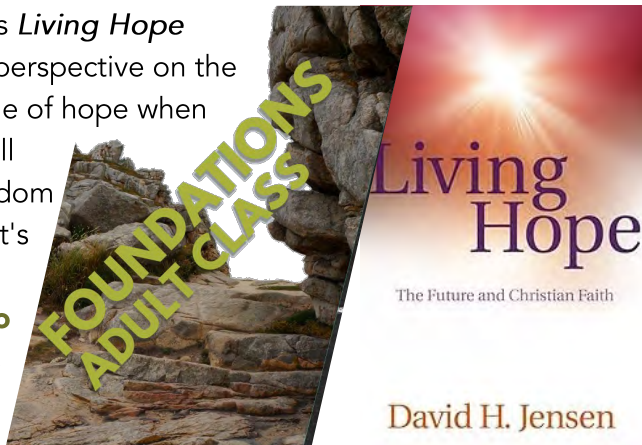
Cost: \$10

RSVP to erin@fpccov.org

February Sunday School for our Foundations Class!

David H. Jensen's *Living Hope* offers a brighter perspective on the end-time as a time of hope when we will see the full glory of the Kingdom of God and Christ's promised return.

All are invited to join us Sundays in February at 9:45am.



David H. Jensen

Ask a Sunday School teacher if you need help ordering a book, though it isn't required to enjoy the discussion!

Sunday, January 7

9:45am Sunday School

11:00am Worship

Tuesday, January 9

10:00am Elizabeth Ann Circle

10:30am Martha Circle

12:00pm Lectio Divina— Pastor's Bible Study

Wednesday, January 10

10:00am Coffee Club

11:30am Lunch Bunch

5:00pm Children's Choir

5:30pm Youth Art Hang

6:00pm Handbell Choir

7:00pm Chancel Choir

Sunday, January 14

Second Sunday after Epiphany

9:45am Sunday School

11:00am Worship—Communion

12:00pm Congregational Meeting

12:15pm Reception for Mark Fiddie

O.A.S.I.S.

Lunch Bunch

FPC

Order Adults Sharing in Service at FPC

January Lunch

11:30AM on Wednesday, January 10th

Townhouse Café

RSVP to FPC by Tuesday, January 9th

PRESBYTERIAN

January PW Circle meetings will be held THIS week on Tuesday, January 9th

Elizabeth Ann Circle

10:00am on Zoom and in the Fellowship Hall

Martha Circle

10:30am hosted by rotating members

In Our Thoughts and Prayers

Illness and Strife

- ✦ Katherine Carey, mother of Erin Stillerman - Emory Hospital
- ✦ Marissa Evans McMahan, friend of Donna Weesner - in ICU due to complications from leukemia
- ✦ Roudy Hughes - friend of church member
- ✦ Ken Fullerton, father of Scott Fullerton - settling into life at Westbury McDonough
- ✦ Patsy Freeman, sister of Judy Davis
- ✦ Grant Moss & Chris Mattice, family of Louly Fowler Hay - cancer and care
- ✦ Joyce, sister of Faye Kitchens
- ✦ Bernice Bailey - cancer treatment
- ✦ Bob and Beverly Beasley, friends of Jean Elder - health concerns and care
- ✦ Shelvie Belser, grandmother of Neeley Rentz Lane
- ✦ Brenda Buckelew, mother of Jennifer Buckelew
- ✦ Patrick Carmichael
- ✦ Larry Cox, brother-in-law of Randy Layton - cancer

- ✦ Bob Darby, friend of Jeff MacKenzie - leg amputated, kidney problems
- ✦ Karla Ensminger, sister of Perri Walden
- ✦ Randy Jones, nephew of Faye Kitchens - lung cancer
- ✦ Karen Lein Kaasa, sister-in-law of Julie MacKenzie - home health care
- ✦ Rosalia Meadors, friend of Tom Crews - three year old with bone marrow failure
- ✦ Meredith Nash, friend of Barbara Martin - four year old with stage IV kidney cancer
- ✦ Donald Vining, brother of Danny Vining - vision loss
- ✦ Carolyn Watson
- ✦ Joyce Williams, sister of Danny Vining - Alzheimer's

Condolences

- ✦ Our thoughts and prayers are with Harry Hinton and his loved ones as they mourn the passing of his brother-in-law, Forrest Oliver Bowden. A private service will be held at a later date.

- ✦ Our thoughts and prayers are with Lonnie Lamb and his loved ones as they mourn the passing of his mother, Arnetta Pritchard

Military Service

- ✦ Billy Scarborough - Marines
- ✦ Koen Ardis - Navy
- ✦ Clint Williams - Army
- ✦ Daryl Williams - Army

Independent and Assisted Living

- ✦ Penny Blakeney - Oaks Assisted Living
- ✦ Homer Borders - Presbyterian Village
- ✦ Jean Elder - Florida with her daughter
- ✦ Dot Fincher - Merryvale
- ✦ Louly Hay - Presbyterian Village Athens
- ✦ Travis Moss - Westbury, Conyers
- ✦ Louise White - Merryvale

All **prayer requests** should be sent to:
catherine@fpccov.org
 Requests may be removed after three weeks if not updated.

A Congregational Meeting will be held on January 14th immediately following worship to vote on the nominating committee's candidate for the open spot in the Session's incoming Class of 2026.

Sunday School

Sunday School classes are held at 9:45am.
 Children's Class (PreK-4th) Youth Class (5th+)
 Foundations Adult Class The Wired WORD



Lectio Divina
PASTORS' BIBLE STUDY
 Tuesdays at Noon in the Parlor
 Roundtable discussions on the week's scripture with Neeley and Erin
 Starting back Tuesday, January 9th!

Dear church family,

On behalf of our staff, I extend sincere gratitude for the Christmas love gift offering. Thank you for all the ways you care for us as we seek to faithfully care for our congregation. It is a joy and deep privilege to serve the church family of FPC! Thank you for all the love you give year round.

With an abundance of gratitude for YOU,

Rev. Neeley Rentz Lane
 Senior Pastor

Mondays from 5:15pm-6:15pm
Jan. 29 | Feb. 5 | Feb. 12
In the Gathering Room at FPC
Come in the Office Door
 Childcare provided.

Have you been "visiting" for a while?
Presbyterianism
101 Taught by Neeley and Erin

Come learn what it means to be
 Presbyterian on a *spiritual* level
and a *functional* one!

**We'd LOVE
 to have you!**

We suggest this class to
 visitors & new members at FPC!

