

First Sunday of Advent December 3, 2023



FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
COVINGTON, GA



How does a
weary world
rejoice?

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



Gathering As God's Beloved People

Gathering Music

An English Carol

Charles Callahan

Good Christian People

Michael Bedford

Praise Ye the Lord of Hosts from "Christmas Oratorio"

Camille Saint-Saens

Prelude

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

Johannes Brahms

Chiming of the Hour

Welcome and Announcements

Invitation to Advent

✠ **Call to Worship**

In God's house, we can be joyful.

We can be grateful. We can be hopeful.

In God's house, we can be weary.

We can be anxious. We can be grieving.

In God's house, we can be honest—

inspired or tired,

delighted or doubtful,

connected or curious,

and everything in between.

This is God's house. You are welcome exactly as you are.

Let us worship our loving God.

✠ **Hymn of Praise 276**

Sing a New Song unto the Lord

SING A NEW SONG

✠ **Call to Confession**

✠ **Community Confession**

Gracious God, we are weary.

For weary bodies that ache and cry out, we pray:

Forgive us for pushing ourselves too hard.

Remind us that we deserve Sabbath rest.

For weary minds that feel overwhelmed and saturated with news, we pray:

Forgive us for creating so many distractions.

Remind us that in the quiet, we can hear you.

For weary hearts that long to feel the joy of this season, we pray:

Forgive us for being impatient with ourselves.

Remind us that healing takes time, and that joy and grief can coexist.

For the weary edges of our faith that struggle to hold onto hope,

Forgive us. Remind us of Zechariah and Elizabeth.

Remind us that your good news knows no bounds. Amen.

✦ **Assurance of God's Love and Forgiveness**

Family of faith, no matter how many times we wear ourselves thin, no matter how many times we lose ourselves to distractions, no matter how many times we ask ourselves, "How can this be?" God's love keeps showing up for us. So say this with me:

We are loved. We are claimed. We are forgiven. Thanks be to God.

Church, we are forgiven!

We are free to try again.

✦ **Response to God's Grace 88** *O Come, O Come Emmanuel* VENI EMMANUEL

***O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.***

✦ **Passing of the Peace**

May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. **And also with you!**

Lighting of the Advent Wreath *Candle of Hope* The Fullerton Family

How does a weary world hope?

By telling stories of hope, by lighting candles in the night, and planting seeds in the winter that will bloom in the spring.

By praying for children as they grow, and picking up trash on the sidewalk.

By insisting that small acts can make a difference.

There are a million ways to practice hope. So today we light the candle of hope as a reminder and a charge.

With God's help, may we bring hope into a weary world. Amen.



Proclaiming the Word

Wondering with God's Children

Anthem

Be Still

Brandon Flowers

Ansley Stewart

Daniel Lanois

Prayer for God's Wisdom and Understanding

Loving God, the source of our joy, as we turn our hearts toward your Word, we ask that you would soften us. Soften the callouses on our hearts. Weave yourself in between the cracks in our spirits. And plant hope where there is room. And as you do this, like flowers toward the sun, we will turn ourselves toward you, eager to hear a Word so good that we cannot help but ask ourselves, "How can this be?" With openness and gratitude we pray, Amen.

Scripture Reading

Luke 1:5-23

Pew Bible page 56

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Message

We acknowledge our weariness

Rev. Erin Morgan



Responding to the Word

✦Response 97

Watchman, Tell Us of the Night

ABERYSTWYTH

✦Affirmation of Faith

We believe in a God who hears our prayers, who knows the shape and form of our weariness. We believe in a God who wants joy and delight for us, not just survival and existence. We believe in a God who looks ahead, who is not done dreaming for the world— a God who sends hope in the form of people and change, movements and Spirit. And so we return to this space. We bring our joy and our weariness

like two sides of the same coin, and we trust that God is already at work. Yes, we believe in a God who hears our prayers. Thanks be to God for a love like that. Amen.

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.

Offering Our Gifts: An Invitation to Generosity

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

Hold On
Ansley Stewart

Katy Nichole

✦ Hymn of Response 137

He Came Down

HE CAME DOWN

He came down that we may have light; he came down that we may have light; he came down that we may have light; hallelujah forevermore.

Poetry Prayers

Wade In

by Rev. Sarah Speed

You are invited to lift up a one word prayer of what brings you HOPE this day!



Being the Church in the World

✦ Sending Hymn 377

I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light

HOUSTON

✦ 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

From Heaven Above to Earth I Come

J.S. Bach

❖ Advent

How does a weary world rejoice?—Joy is often a companion to many other emotions. We can feel joy in addition to feeling many other things at once: grief, anticipation, anxiety, excitement, disappointment, exhaustion. Perhaps many of us live with the myth that joy is not something we deserve - or that is wholly out of reach. But our joy is rooted in the truth that we belong to God. Can you tether yourself to that deep truth? You deserve to feel joy - fully. The world needs your joy, even if you are weary. Our joy is better when it is shared. This Advent, we will hold space for our weariness and our joy. We will seek a "thrill of hope" in our hurting world. We will welcome joy - even and especially if, like the prophet Isaiah, we cry out for comfort. In this weary world, may we find ways to rejoice.

Worship Art—This week's worship guide cover art is a wood and ink painting on wood panel by Rev. Lauren Wight Pittman titled *Annunciation to Zechariah*. The artist's statement is as follows:

Zechariah is dressed in a breastpiece, ephod, robe, checkered tunic, turban, and sash, just as the book of Exodus specifies. In my painting, gold, blue, purple, and crimson yarns are woven together and bejeweled with engraved stones which bear the names of the sons of Israel (Exodus 28:4).

Zechariah stands in the Holy Place wearing the most meticulous of garments. Does he expect to encounter the divine? Or is he just going through the motions, lighting the incense as an all-too-familiar scent fills the air?

After all these years of fulfilling priestly duties and "living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord" (Luke 1:6), Zechariah and his wife are still childless. Regardless of their desire for children, in their culture and context, childlessness bore the implication of God's contempt.

I ruminated on this image... a weary priest wrapped in layered fabrics, colors, symbols, textures, and rare stones that proclaim God's providence and power. The contrast is not lost on me.

I often try to neglect my weariness by putting on a veneer of unwavering trust in God—while feeling like I may suddenly unravel into a pile of beautifully-curated threads, stones, and gold accessories.

In this image, I decided to depict the angel as smoke from the altar of incense. Zechariah has one hand over his mouth in fear and disbelief, while his other hand cradles the notion—not yet hope—of his son's existence.

Do you bind up your weariness in a neat and tidy bow, put your head down, and project okay-ness like me? What would it look like to acknowledge our weariness, quit powering through, and open ourselves up to what God might have in store for us? Perhaps we'll meet an angel.

—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 | Poetry Prayer by Rev. Sarah Speed | Graphic Design by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman | Art “Annunciation to Zechariah” 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

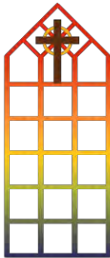
Acolytes | Greer Holder, Paisley Lane **Usher Chair** | Doug Bolton

Childrens’ Ushers | Paisley Lane, Greer Holder, William Whisnant



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.



**FIRST
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fpccov.org | 770.786.7321

1169 Clark Street SW, Covington, GA 30014

First Presbyterian Church Staff

Neeley Rentz Lane
Erin Morgan
Alice Walker
Catherine Laseter

Senior Pastor
Associate Pastor
CAGO, AAGO Organist
Dir. of Communications & Operations
Finance Administrator
Interim Choir Director

Nursery Staff
Hattie Bellinger
Sierra BlackShear
Catrina Crowe
Jahniyah Greene
Laina Lalane

Officers

Reaching Out

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)*

Louly Hay Kapp *Marketing (2023)*

Bob Tabb *Finance (2023)*

Connecting (Deacons)

Tom Crews *Pastoral Care (2025)*

Dana Hall *Faith & Fellowship (2025)*

Eleanor Scarborough *Pastoral Care (2023)*

Darcel Tabb *Faith & Fellowship (2024)*

More

Billy Fortson *Personnel (2024)*

Stan Hall *Facilities (2023)*

John McCarthy *Clerk of Session*

Ed Perkerson *Strategic Planning (2023)*

CHRISTMAS SOUL FEAST



DEC. 6



ON THE MENU:
CHRISTMAS DINNER
TURKEY, DRESSING, GREEN BEANS

Feed your body and soul in the Fellowship Hall at 5:15pm.

RSVP by Monday, December 4th
to catherine@fpccov.org or 770-786-7321



How does a
weary world
rejoice?

Services this Advent at FPC

IN PERSON AND ON FACEBOOK

Sundays at 11:00am

- Dec. 3 we acknowledge our weariness
- Dec. 10 we find joy in connection
- Dec. 17 we allow ourselves to be amazed
with the Christmas Pageant!
- Dec. 24 we sing stories of hope
- Dec. 31 STAR WORDS

Evening Services

Christmas Eve

Sun. Dec. 24 at 6:00pm
we make room

The Longest Night

Wed. Dec. 20 at 5:30pm



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A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

Visit fpccov.org/advent for more!

Sunday, December 3

First Sunday of Advent

9:45am Advent Workshop

11:00am Worship—*How does a weary world rejoice?*

Monday, December 4

RSVP deadline for Christmas Soul Feast

Tuesday, December 5

10:00am Elizabeth Ann Circle

10:30am Martha Circle

12:00pm LAST Lectio Divina

3:30pm Staff Meeting

Wednesday, December 6

10:00am Coffee Club

5:00pm Children's Choir

5:15pm Christmas Soul Feast

6:00pm Carillon Handbell Choir

7:00pm Chancel Choir

Thursday, December 7

2:00pm Singing Ambassadors at Merryvale

Saturday, December 9

9:15am Christmas Parade

Sunday, December 10

Second Sunday of Advent

9:45am Sunday School

9:45am Children's Pageant Rehearsal

11:00am Worship—Communion

5:00pm Christmas Caroling

RESCHEDULED!

We will be giving out
doughnuts for the Lions
Club Christmas Parade
on December 9th!

We cancelled our
participation due to
weather before the parade

got rescheduled. We are happy to still be able to
have a table in front of the church for this wonderful
tradition! We will meet at **9:15am** to set up before the
parade starts at 10:00am.

Please contact Curtis Watson with questions!



In Our Thoughts and Prayers

✦ Angelic Bellinger - health concerns
 ✦ 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
 ✦ Shelvie Belser, grandmother of Neeley Rentz Lane
 ✦ Carolyn Watson
 ✦ Bernice Bailey - cancer treatment
 ✦ Bob and Beverly Beasley, friends of Jean Elder - health concerns and care
 ✦ 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
 ✦ Joyce Williams, sister of Danny Vining - Alzheimer's

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.



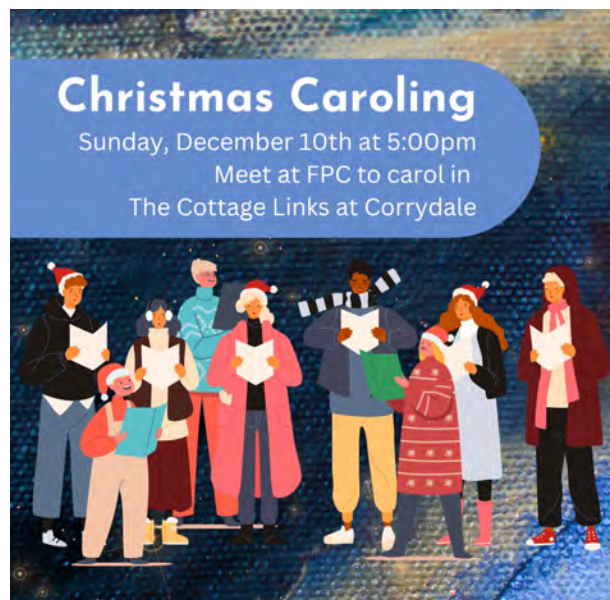
Christmas Charity and Angel Trees are in the Narthex! Pick out an angel to get gifts for this year! Be sure to write down your name with the angel's number on the clipboard next to the tree so we can keep track of the angels! Bring gifts to the Narthex no later than noon on Sunday, December 17 so it can reach your angel in time for Christmas.

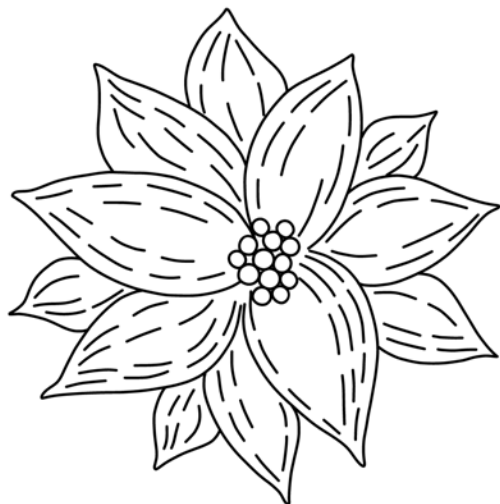
Each year during the Christmas Season, we at FPC Covington, like to show our appreciation and gratitude to our church staff members who give so much of themselves on our behalf throughout the course of each year.

We ask for your participation in this effort by making a contribution to a special **"Staff Love Gift" fund by Sunday, December 17, 2023.** Your generosity is much appreciated, in helping us to show our love to our devoted Church Staff Members.

Sincerely,
 John McCarthy, Clerk of Session

You are invited to **"Text to Give"** your offering! Find more details in the worship guide under "Offering Our Gifts: An Invitation to Generosity."





Christmas Poinsettias

If you would like to help decorate the Sanctuary during Advent and Christmas, make a donation to honor or memorialize a loved one. To do so, fill out this form and attach a check made out to FPC and place it in the offering plate or drop it off at the church office. Please put "poinsettias" in the memo space on your check or envelope.

Donations made online should be given under the dropdown fund option "Flowers-all." Please email catherine@fpccov.org with your "in memory" and "in honor" details if you use give online.

The order deadline is Tuesday, December 6th and a minimum donation of \$12 is suggested.

Whatever donations we collect over the cost of the flowers will be donated to Thornwell Homes.

Thank you!

Given by _____

Please use the first and last names for any person being remembered.

In memory of _____

In honor of _____

Amount enclosed \$ _____

please circle one cash check