



FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
COVINGTON, GA



How does a
weary world
rejoice?

December 10, 2023
Second Sunday of Advent

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



Gathering As God's Beloved People

Gathering Music

How Brightly Shines the Morning Star

Johann Pachelbel

Sinfonia to Cantata No. 106

J.S. Bach

Meditation on "Pleading Savior"

David Hegarty

Prelude

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Diane Bish

Chiming of the Hour

Welcome and Announcements

Introit Handbells

Carol of the 3-8 Bell Ringers

Arr. by Kathleen Wissinger

Carillon Handbell Choir

✠ **Call to Worship**

Family of faith, one of the greatest joys of worship is that it is not a solo act.

We gather together. We find joy, and God, in the act of connection.

Welcome to worship.

Welcome to worship.

I am glad you're here.

I am glad you're here.

Surely God is in this space.

Surely God is in this space.

I see God in your face.

I see God in your face.

Let us worship together.

Let us worship together.

✠ **Hymn of Praise 107**

Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn

REJOICE, REJOICE

✠ Call to Confession

✠ Community Confession

God of laughter,
God of open front doors
and family reunions,
we confess that we often doubt good news.

**We move through this world
waiting for the other shoe to drop,
waiting for life to fall apart,
waiting for our humanity to get the best of us.**

Instead of leaning into joy, we lean into scarcity.
We lean into fear.

We lean into isolation.

Forgive us for forgetting that joy is amplified when shared.

**Heal the wounds we have from past hurts,
and teach us how to throw open our doors like Elizabeth.
Show us how to find joy in connection.**

Amen.

✠ Assurance of God's Love and Forgiveness

Faith family,
I imagine that when we come before God with the truth of our lives,
God meets us like Elizabeth meets Mary in our scripture today. The door is
thrown open. There is laughter. There is joy. There is embracing—and it is holy.
So trust this; believe this:
You are claimed. You are loved. And you are sent to serve. Find joy in that.

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 Peace

Bernice & Betty Bailey

Ruth & Bart Frankena

How does a weary world practice peace?

By listening before we speak and saying sorry when we need to.

By advocating for justice and caring for our neighbor.

By practicing Sabbath and forgiving seventy times seven.

By choosing grace over hate and opening the door for each other.

There are a million ways to practice peace.

So today we light the candle of peace as a reminder and a charge.

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



Proclaiming the Word

Wondering with God's Children

Anthem

There's Still My Joy

M. Manchester, M. Rollings, B. Chapman

Chancel Choir

Arr. by R. Emerson

Prayer for God's Wisdom and Understanding

Holy God,

We know that you are near.

We know that you are standing at the door,

you are running down the driveway,

**you are inviting us in—
into your Word,
into relationship,
and deeper into joy.**

**So as we approach your Word, O God,
we pray: do not let us pass you by.**

**Do not allow distraction or doubt to get the best of us. Do not let us walk
down this road without you. Instead, give us the wisdom to turn and run your
way. Give us the wisdom to hear your wisdom, to let it sink into our bones
and change us.**

With hope and gratitude we pray, amen.

Old Testament Reading

Isaiah 40:1-11
Yvonne Hill-Davenport

Pew Bible page 667

Gospel Reading

Luke 1:24-45

Pew Bible page 56

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Message

We find joy in connection

Rev. Neeley Rentz Lane



Responding to the Word

✠Response 86

The People Who Walk in Darkness

ISAIAH 9

***The people who walked in darkness awaken to see a great light.
The people who dwelt in the land of shadow rise to a star shining bright.
His name is Wonderful, Counselor, Almighty God,
Father forever, Prince of Peace.***

***For us now a child is given, for all the despised and forlorn.
The rule of compassion shall rest on his shoulder. God's own Messiah is born!
His name is Wonderful, Counselor, Almighty God,
Father forever, Prince of Peace.***

✠Affirmation of Faith

**We believe that joy is a sacred gift,
existing on a plane deeper than happiness,
stemming from the truth that we belong to God.
We believe that joy is not meant for isolation.
Joy is meant to be shared,
weaving us together in laughter and in hope.
And when joy feels impossibly out of reach,
we believe that part of being sacred community is leaning on one another.
So together we say:
I will share my joy when yours runs out. You will share your joy when mine
runs out. And in doing so, we will both see God. 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

The First Nowell
Carillon Handbell Choir

Arr. by Ellen Jane Lorenz

✠Hymn of Response 137

He Came Down

HE CAME DOWN

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



The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

Invitation to the Table

Verses 1, 2, 5

The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving and The Lord's Prayer

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

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.

Words of Institution

Church, you are invited to partake with bread and cup upon hearing the words "The gifts of God for the people of God." We recognize Christ is present with us as the Body of Christ in our sanctuary and in our homes this day. May the Holy Spirit dwell with you as we participate in the sacrament of communion together.

One bread, one body!

See our Worship Practices section for more details.

Prayer After Communion



Being the Church in the World

✦ 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

In Thee Is Gladness

J.S. Bach



Advent

Special Guest—We welcome guest artist Scott Fuss as he paints an interpretation of our scripture today.

Ever grateful for the opportunity to share the Good News, Scott Fuss uses artwork created from materials that have a story, to tell a story.

Using salvaged cardboard, packing crates, discarded paint and pallets, Scott reveals artwork with a message that we, like these overlooked materials, can be repurposed and used to make something of beauty. Artwork that is like us “Imperfectly Perfect”.

Along with fellow musicians, Scott has performed “Cardboard Art & Music” for churches, coffee houses, prisoners, and judges... anywhere someone needs to hear the transforming message of Christ.

How does a weary world rejoice?—When our world is hard, when days are long and cumbersome, when our bodies and spirits are weary, it proves challenging to see JOY, be JOY, experience JOY. Thus, we need one another to remember the joy! So this Advent season we will join in the rituals of our faith – telling the story of God with us – and in doing so explore the question – How does a weary world rejoice?

Worship Art—This week's worship guide cover art is a painting on reclaimed wood by Gracie Morbitzer titled *The Visitation*. This piece was featured in the 2023-24 Presbyterian Women bible study *Sacred Encounters: The Power and Presence of Jesus in Luke-Acts* as the art for “Lesson One: Elizabeth's Sacred Encounter”. The artist's statement is as follows:

Though most images of this greeting between Mary and her cousin Elizabeth upon discovery of their miraculous pregnancies show the first, joyful part of their interaction, I wanted to make sure that the scared, confused, and worried aspects of their conditions were portrayed as well. Anyone with children, especially in the United States today, can, I'm sure, understand. Both of these saints lost their children, and will then, hopefully, guide us on a path to reform that will save ours.

The Visitation is a piece in Gracie Morbitzer's series The Modern Saints. The artist's statement on the series is as follows:

Ancient icons of saints portray everyone as old, white, expressionless, and hard to tell apart. I believe these pieces of Church imagery can turn modern-thinking people away from the influences of the saints, and even the Church itself.

My goal was to re-imagine these extraordinary people as modern, everyday humans... because that is exactly what they were, and they remind us of ourselves. They show us that we can all be saints just like them.

themodernsaints.com



Worship Practices

Communion—All are invited to come forward to take communion. The ushers will guide you to two stations on either side of the Lord's table to receive the bread and the cup. You may choose to receive prepackaged communion elements or a gluten-free option which are available at the Lord's table. If you are not physically able to come forward and would still like to receive communion, please let an usher know and it will be brought to you. Communion elements are taken to the nursery for children to participate in the sacrament. If you would not like to receive communion, you are welcome to stay in your seat for a time of prayerful reflection.

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.

Art | *The Visitation* by Gracie Morbitzer | themodernsaints.com

How Does a Weary World Rejoice | Liturgy by Rev. Sarah Speed | Graphic Design 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 | Alexander Whisnant, Mary Lindsey Whisnant

Usher Chair | Doug Bolton

Advent Poinsettias

In memory of:

- ✦ Clayton W. Bailey, Sr.
- ✦ Our father: Clayton W. Bailey, Sr.
- ✦ Blair Brown
- ✦ John Fish
- ✦ Our parents: Lois & S.A. Ginn,
Dot & Bill Fortson
- ✦ Anne Bouchillon
- ✦ Our grandparents
- ✦ Beverly Star Edmonds &
Samuel Burney Hay, Jr.
- ✦ Papa & Grammie
- ✦ Guy McGiboney, Jr.
- ✦ Logan & Willena Powell,
Lucy Perkerson
- ✦ Calvin & Georgia Floyd,
Mamie Lou & Wallace Scarborough
- ✦ Jim Stillerman
- ✦ Arnold & Bonnie Tingler

In honor of:

- ✦ Our mother: Bernice Bailey
- ✦ Alice & Ken Walker
- ✦ Our sisters
- ✦ Louly Fowler Hay &
William Karl Kapp, Jr.
- ✦ Memama, Bamma, &
Our Church Family
- ✦ Lisa, Yvonne, Emily, Donna & Chris

Given by:

Bernice Bailey
*Betty Bailey, Clay Bailey,
& family*
Doug & Sherri Bolton
Jo Anna Fish
Stephanie & Billy Fortson
Bart & Ruth Frankena
Kraig & Nichole Howell
Louly & Steve Kapp
Robert & Neeley Lane
Carol McGiboney
Ed & Susanne Perkerson

The Scarborough Family
Pam Stillerman
Roger & Tootles Tingler

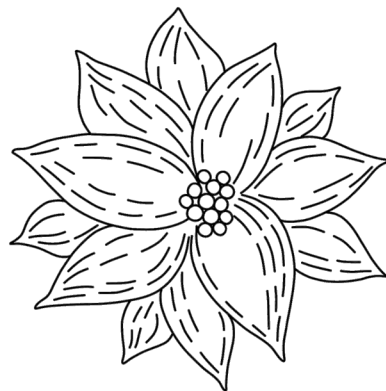
Given by:

*Betty Bailey, Clay Bailey,
& family*
Doug & Sherri Bolton
Stan & Dana Hall

Louly & Steve Kapp
Robert & Neeley Lane
Carol McGiboney

The poinsettias that are decorating the Sanctuary this Advent season were provided through donations in memory and in honor of the following people.

Donations above the cost of flowers goes to support Thornwell Home for Children.

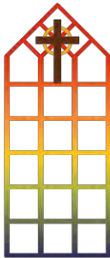


Fill out the form available in the Narthex and at fpccov.org/advent and submit it to the office by the end of the day on Wednesday to have your dedication included in the following Sunday's Worship Guide.



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
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**
COVINGTON, GA

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)*



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

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
COVINGTON, GA

A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

Visit fpccov.org/advent for more!

Sunday, December 10
Second Sunday of Advent

- 9:45am Sunday School
- 11:00am Worship—Communion
- 5:00pm Christmas Caroling

Monday, December 11

- 5:30pm Belief & Beer

Tuesday, December 12

- 3:30pm Staff Christmas Party - Office Closed
- 5:00pm Faith Formation Team Meeting

Wednesday, December 13

RSVP deadline for Parents' Night Out

- 11:30am OASIS Lunch Bunch

- 10:00am Coffee Club

- 5:00pm Children's Choir

Friday, December 15

- 5:00pm Parents' Night Out

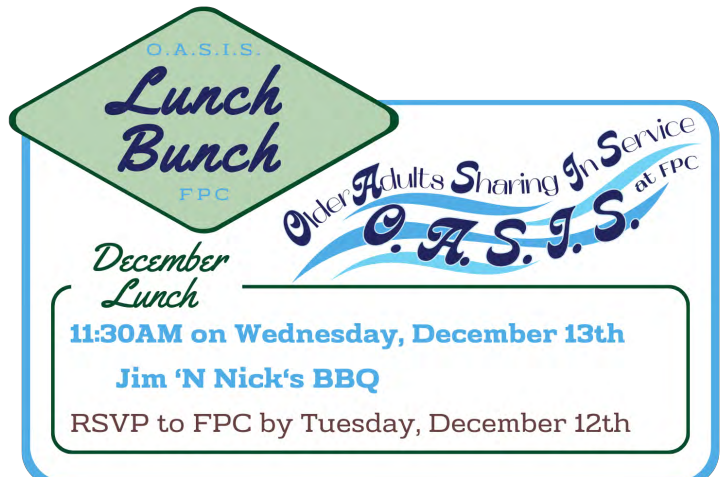
Sunday, December 17

Third Sunday of Advent

Deadline to bring Angel Tree gifts
Deadline for Staff Love Gift Offering

- 9:45am Sunday School

- 11:00am Worship—Children's Pageant



O.A.S.I.S.
Lunch Bunch
FPC

December Lunch

11:30AM on Wednesday, December 13th

Jim 'N Nick's BBQ

RSVP to FPC by Tuesday, December 12th

Order Adults Sharing In Service at FPC
O.A.S.I.S.



FPC Kids & Youth

"PARENTS' NIGHT OUT"
KIDS MOVIE NIGHT

Friday, December 15th
5:00pm-7:30pm

Drop the kids off for a movie night with their FPC friends so you can head out for a night that can be spent however you want!

We'll feed the kids dinner at no cost.
Everyone MUST RSVP to Erin by Dec. 13th to attend!



FPC YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY PRESENTS

BELIEF & BEER
CHRISTMAS PARTY

DRINKS + DISCUSSION
DECEMBER 11 | 5:30PM
NEELEY'S HOUSE
CONTACT THE CHURCH OFFICE OR NEELEY FOR THE ADDRESS
CHILDCARE AT FPC

In Our Thoughts and Prayers

✦ Bob Wheeler, brother of Jack Wheeler
 ✦ Roudy Hughes
 ✦ 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 Enslinger, 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@fpc cov.org
 Requests may be removed after three



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."