



MERRY
CHRISTMAS
FROM
FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH



THE LORD'S DAY

The Twenty-Fourth Day of December, Two Thousand Twenty-Three
MORNING WORSHIP
Ten O'Clock

The Reverend Dr. David T. A. Strain
Senior Minister

The Reverend Mr. David L. Felker
Executive Minister

APPROACHING GOD'S THRONE

The Greetings and Announcements (8:25 and 10:55 a.m.)

The Prelude — "Go Tell It on the Mountain"..... A.D. Miller
Rae Shannon, Organ

The Introit — "Nowell, Nowell, Nowell"..... English Carol

The Call to Worship — Adapted from Psalm 136 and Isaiah 9

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever.

For unto us a Child is Born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulders.

Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever.

His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever.

Of the increase of His kingdom and His government there shall be no end.

Let us Worship God.

The Hymn No. 207 — "Good Christian Men, Rejoice"

SEEKING GOD'S FACE

The Invocation

The Doxology

**All creation join in praising God the Father, Spirit, Son;
Evermore your voices raising to the eternal Three in One;
Come and worship, come and worship;
Worship Christ the new-born King.**

The Solo — "Our Heavenly Shepherd" Ryan T. Miller
Ryan Miller, Soloist

Watching their flocks, tending their sheep
As each night before these shepherds did keep
The stillness of night, the silence of night
The silence so deep
The glory of God shone down where they sleep.

A heavenly call of joy meant for all
An angel sings praise of a child in a stall
For not since the garden was closed by the fall
Had hope become flesh, in a baby so small.

Glory to God. Sing of His praise
We marvel in Him, thanksgiving we raise
For there in the manger our shepherd was laid
In His life, great refuge, and death He has stayed

“Fear not,” said the angel, Oh shepherds make way
Come see how the lord has brought blessing this day
A sight to behold this holy display
To Bethlehem travel and do not delay.

Glory to God

And it came to pass just as was foretold
This night beheld riches more precious than gold
The promised salvation from prophets of old
Our heavenly Shepherd and we in the fold

Glory to God

The Prayer of Confession

The Assurance of Pardon

The Offering

The Offertory — “We Three Kings”..... Philip Stopford

We three kings of orient are bearing gifts we traverse afar,
field and fountain, moor and mountain following yonder star.
Born a King on Bethlehem plain, gold I bring to crown Him again.
King forever, ceasing never over us all to reign.
O star of wonder, star of night, star with royal beauty bright.
Westward leading, still proceeding guide us to thy perfect light.

Frankincense to offer have I. Incense owns a deity nigh.
All men raising, prayer and praising, Worship Him God most high.
O star of wonder

Myrrh is mine its bitter perfume breathes a life of gathering gloom.
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying, sealed in a stone-cold tomb
O star of wonder

Glorious now behold Him arise, King and God and sacrifice.
Heaven sing Alleluia, Alleluia, the earth replies
O star of wonder

The Hymn No. 200 — “It Came upon the Midnight Clear”

The Pastoral Prayer

HEARING GOD’S VOICE

The Old Testament Reading — Micah 5:2..... (pew Bible page 779)

The Prayer of Illumination

The New Testament Reading — Luke 2:1-7 (pew Bible page 857)

The Sermon — The BirthDr. Strain

The Hymn No. 211 — “God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen”

The Benediction

The Congregational Response

Yea, Lord, we greet, Thee, born this happy morning:
Jesus, to Thee be all glory giv’n;
Word of the Father, late in flesh appearing:
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

The Postlude — “Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence”.....Denis Bedard

EVENING WORSHIP

Four O'Clock

The Reverend Dr. David T. A. Strain
Senior Minister

The Greetings and Announcements (3:55 p.m.)

The Prelude — “A Christmas Medley”
Lydian Peipon, Piano

The Call to Worship

The Carol of Praise No. 203 — “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing”

The Invocation

The Carols

- No. 208 — “O Come, All Ye Faithful”
- No. 204 — “Away in a Manger” (Stanzas 1 and 3)
- No. 196 — “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus” (Stanzas 1 and 4)

The Reading of the Christmas Story — Luke 2:1-20..... (pew Bible page 857)

The Christmas Song — “O Holy Night”
Brister Ware, Harmonica; Marian Ware, Piano

The Carols

- No. 210 — “Silent Night! Holy Night!”
- No. 218 — “Angels, from the Realms of Glory” (Stanzas 1 and 5)
- No. 201 — “O Little Town of Bethlehem” (Stanzas 1 and 3)

The Message — The Celebration Dr. Strain

The Carol No. 200 — “It Came upon the Midnight Clear”

The Benediction

The Postlude — “Good Christian Men, Rejoice!”arr. David Willcocks
William Wymond, Organ

CAROL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

“HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING”

One of Wesley's great hymns, the tune is from Mendelssohn (his cantata *Festgesang*). This carol is full of biblical and theological allusions.

“O COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL”

One hymnologist says this of Wade's carol, “Its popularity in all English-speaking countries is universal: hardly a congregation fails to sing it at every Christmas time. Such popularity is testimony to its genuine worth.”

“AWAY IN A MANGER”

Leonard Payton says this song “conveys the plainness of Jesus' humanity probably more directly than any other hymn”— though some have complained of implicit docetism in the second stanza's claim that “no crying he makes.”

“COME, THOU LONG-EXPECTED JESUS”

This hymn is one of Charles Wesley's masterpieces of hymnody. It ponders the richness of revelation found in the prophecies of the Old Testament and plumbs the depths of the reality of the second member of the Triune God becoming man: “Born Thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a king, born to reign in us forever, now Thy gracious kingdom bring.”

“SILENT NIGHT! HOLY NIGHT!”

This carol has been a favorite of Christians worldwide for almost 200 years. Joseph Mohr's lyrics capture a sense of hushed reverence at the birth of the Saviour.

“ANGELS, FROM THE REALMS OF GLORY”

James Montgomery, a great evangelical hymn-writer whose works are still widely sung in Britain, wrote these lyrics and published them in a newspaper in Sheffield, England, on Christmas Eve, 1816.

“O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM”

The author of this favorite carol of Christmastide is Phillips Brooks, the famous Episcopal clergyman, still associated with Holy Trinity Church in Boston's Back Bay area. In the first three stanzas, Brooks piles up objective truths about the incarnation. Brooks uses the physical darkness of night to represent the spiritual darkness of the world and draws a parallel between the silent entry of Jesus into the world in Bethlehem and His silent entry into meek souls who receive Him by faith. This is a great evangelical carol.

“IT CAME UPON THE MIDNIGHT CLEAR”

The words to this familiar carol were written in 1849, and first publicly appeared in the *Christian Register*, 1850. It begins with the appearance of the angels who came to herald the arrival of Jesus and recounts their message of “peace on earth.” The next two stanzas note the contrast between this hopeful word of peace and the realities of this life that can mar and hide that peace. The final stanza is a reminder that this earth is passing away, and there will be one day when the troubles and trials of this life shall be forever removed, and “the whole world give back the song which now the angels sing.”

FPC THIS WEEK

Sunday, December 24, 2023

10:00 a.m.	Morning Worship	Sanctuary
4:00 p.m.	Christmas Eve Service	Sanctuary

Monday, December 25, 2023

Church Office Closed

Tuesday, December 26, 2023

Church Office Closed

Wednesday, December 27, 2023

No Midweek Dinner or Activities

Saturday, December 30, 2023

7:30 a.m.	Men's Prayer Meeting	WH 202
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Sunday, December 31, 2023

8:30 & 11:00 a.m.	Morning Worship	Sanctuary
9:45 a.m.	Church-wide Hymn Sing	Miller Hall
11:00 a.m.	Children's Churchtime (for age 3 and 4 by Sept. 1)	M135
6:00 p.m.	Evening Worship	Sanctuary

LH—Lowe Hall MB—Main Building MH—Miller Hall MS—Music Suite
PH—Patterson Hall SC—Study Center WH—Westminster Hall YH—Youth House

YEAR-END GIVING

Support the Work of First Presbyterian Church

Contributions must be received by FPC on or before December 31 or postmarked by December 31 in order to be deductible for the 2023 tax year. The Business Office will be open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on December 29. On Saturday and Sunday, December 30 and 31, security will be on site to receive any contributions. Additionally, you may give online through midnight on December 31 at fpcj.ms/give or via the church app.

Any gifts received in person or postmarked after December 31 must be applied to the 2024 tax year. For information about how to donate stock to First Presbyterian Church, please contact the Business Office at 601-973-9100 or businessoffice@fpcjackson.org.

WELCOME

Welcome to First Presbyterian Church! We are so glad you are here. If you are a visitor, we would love to know more about you. Please leave your contact information in the "Welcome Pad" at the end of your pew. We will follow up with you to introduce ourselves and tell you about ways to get plugged in to the church.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DEACON ELECTION

On December 10, 2023, our congregation approved a resolution to proceed with the election of new deacons. The nomination period will close on January 10 at 5 p.m. and will be followed by a period of nominee instruction and examination. Nominees will then be approved by the Session and presented to the congregation for prayerful consideration in anticipation of the May 5 election. For more information or to make a nomination, please visit fpcj.ms/deacon-election. We also have paper nomination forms available at the receptionist desk in the welcome center.

THE BOOK OF ROMANS: JANUARY INTENSIVE

For the month of January, First Presbyterian Church will be immersed in an intensive study of the Book of Romans. Sunday mornings, Sunday nights, and Wednesday nights, we will be led through the book. Come experience the book as you never have before!

SENIOR HIGH WINTER RETREAT 2024

Join FPCYM for our annual Winter Retreat at Alpine Camp, January 12-15, 2024. Our speaker Brian Cosby will be teaching on embracing the entirety of the Bible, even the hard to understand or difficult to accept passages and ideas. Register online at fpcjackson.org/events or on the church app. Contact youthhouse@fpcjackson.org with questions. Registration ends January 5.

MOMS BIBLE STUDY

Ladies, we hope you'll join us for MOMS this spring! We will continue to offer two options, one that meets every Wednesday morning and one for working mothers that meets every other Tuesday night. This semester, our MOMS at Night will continue their study of the book of James, led by Jane Wiggins. On Wednesday mornings, David Strain will lead us through an overview of a personal Bible study. What does it mean to regularly, individually read the Bible? Why should this be a priority for us? And how can we be successful in making this a regular part of our lives? A nursery is available, but space is limited. Registration is available on the church website or app beginning Jan 1. For more information, email moms@fpcjackson.org.

COMMUNICANT CLASSES

Communicant Classes will meet in Miller Hall on January 7, 14, 21, and 28 from 4:45 - 5:30 p.m. with a complimentary Fellowship Meal from 5:30 - 5:50 p.m. Sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students who are interested in learning about the process of becoming a communing member of the church are encouraged to attend. Childcare is provided for siblings below sixth grade upon request. To register or for questions, contact Kimberly Wilkins at kimberlyw@fpcjackson.org.

FOUNDATIONS CLASS

We will offer the Foundations Class during the Sunday School hour at 9:45 a.m., beginning January 7. Foundations is the place to begin if you are considering membership at FPC or would like to know more about our church and the basics of our faith and practice. The class will be taught by David Felker and Charlie Wingard. To sign up, please email ccare@fpcjackson.org.

FATHER SON RETREAT — JANUARY 19-20

Save the date, as we begin planning for our next Father Son Weekend, January 19-20, at Twin Lakes! Join us for what we hope is a deeply formative camping weekend for Dads and sons, with a lodging option. The cost will be \$65 per father and son; additional sons are \$30. Watch for more details and registration information, coming soon.

MID-SOUTH MEN'S RALLY — FEBRUARY 2

Each year, First Presbyterian Church hosts the Mid-South Men's Rally, an evening of praise, worship, and fellowship anchored in the preaching of God's word. Men from across Mississippi and neighboring states attend this event every year, and it has become a multi-generational gathering as fathers, sons, and grandsons participate together. Please make plans to attend the 37th Mid-South Men's Rally on February 2, with speaker Sandy Willson, Interim President of *The Gospel Coalition* and Pastor Emeritus at Second Presbyterian Church, Memphis, Tennessee.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

II THESSALONIANS 3:1 — “Finally, brethren, pray for us...”

For detailed prayer requests and contact information for our supported missionaries and ministry partners, please contact Jo Lynn at jolynnm@fpcjackson.org.

Jacob & Ivete – Jacob serves with Action International in the Middle East.

Matt Oomkes – Matt serves as an intern with CMDA at UMMC.
email: mattoomkes@gmail.com

FLOWERS

The poinsettias in the sanctuary are available after the 4 p.m. service to anyone who would like to take them.

CHURCH-WIDE HYMN SING — DECEMBER 31

Join us for a Hymn Sing in Miller Hall for the whole family on December 31 during the Sunday School hour. Families are encouraged to attend together as we sing familiar hymns of praise. There will be no regular Sunday School classes, but a nursery will be available for infants through age 2.

CHURCH-WIDE SURVEY RESULTS

More than 700 of you responded to our recent church-wide survey. Thank you! We are so thankful to have had so many responses. The results are being reviewed and we will share some take-aways with you in the coming weeks. Thank you in particular for your comments and feedback to our open-ended questions. Though the survey was completely anonymous, we would like to be able to respond to some of the personal feedback we received. If you would like to meet individually with a minister or staff member, please let us know by emailing ministersoffice@fpcjackson.org or cwingard@fpcjackson.org.

FPDS ACORN FUND

We invite you to invest in the mission of FPDS: to plant seeds of Christlikeness into the hearts of children. Gifts to the FPDS Acorn Fund will benefit each FPDS student, as the school will use the unrestricted funds to provide academic excellence and sew the gospel into every aspect of our children's education. Your gift will also support keeping tuition competitive by supplementing the school's annual budget. Planned areas of use for the Acorn Fund are professional development of the school's staff as they teach and minister to our children, improvements to our school facilities and infrastructure, and enhancements to technology resources in the classroom. Most importantly, a gift to the FPDS Acorn Fund is your opportunity to partner with FPDS as we help grow our children from acorns of faith into “oaks of righteousness” (Isaiah 61:3). Please consider supporting the ministry of the school through the FPDS Acorn Fund as you plan your year-end giving. For more info visit fpcjackson.org/giving.

TWIN LAKES CAMP

Twin Lakes 2024 is open for camper registrations! Camp sessions are available for children ages 5-12 with a Leader-In-Training program for ages 13-15. Register today at twinlakescamp.org or call our office at 601-845-6858 with any questions.

SUPPORT GROUP

If you are struggling with alcohol or other chemical dependence and would like to get together with people who share the same struggles, we have a small and very safe group that meets regularly for just that purpose. This discreet, weekly meeting is one of friendship, encouragement, biblical reflection, and prayer. For more information, please call or text 601-260-1636. Also, twice each month a group of those who have loved ones who struggle with addiction/alcoholism meet for a time of mutual encouragement and Christ-centered counsel. Anonymity is required. For more information concerning the place and time of these meetings, call or text 601-260-0388.