

{Love}



GOD WITH US



Luke 2:22-40

First Sunday of Christmas

**First Presbyterian Church
Durham, North Carolina**

December 31, 2023

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA**

First Sunday of Christmas

December 31, 2023

A SERVICE FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD

(As we prepare to worship, please silence all mobile devices.)

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

John Weicher

PRELUDE

Ben Maxwell

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

John Weicher

Leader: We come today as an expectant people:

All: As a people returning from a long journey.

Leader: We come today as a hopeful people:

All: As a people entering the landscape of a new promise.

Leader: We come today as a Christmas people:

**All: As a people ready to worship this God who promises us light in the night
and peace in a sorrowful world.**

Come, let us worship God!

***HYMN NO. 143**

Angels, from the Realms of Glory

Regent Square

***CONFESSION OF SIN**

John Weicher

Call to Prayer

Prayer of Confession (in unison)

**O Mysterious God, you have entered our lives in the form of a vulnerable baby,
of love-made-flesh, of God-with-us.**

**Yet in the reality of your radical, incarnational love, we have failed to love mysteriously.
We have chosen the easy paths of convenient love, of no-cost love, of self-beneficial love.**

Forgive us, O God, for choosing this limited way of being.

Embolden us, as we go forth,

to embody your incarnational peace in our lives as Christmas people.

May we love freely, love fully, love costly.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Silent Confession

Assurance of Pardon

***THE PEACE**

John Weicher

***RESPONSE (Hymn No. 365, verse 4)**

Marion

The radiance of God's light beams joy into our days;

now filled with God's own peace and love, our hearts resound with praise.

Rejoice! Rejoice! God reigns! Let earth rejoice!

*Those who are able, please stand.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Candace Knotts Gunn

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Leader: Let us pray.

All: **Living God, in your Word-made-flesh you show how you are always creating. As we ponder your words this morning, may our spirits be open to what you are creating within us today and may we be emboldened to go forth as your lived love in the world. Amen.**

HEBREW SCRIPTURE LESSON

Isaiah 61:10 – 62:3

(Pew Bible, OT page 692)

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

Candace Knotts Gunn

People: **Thanks be to God!**

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 2:22-40

(Pew Bible, NT page 59)

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

Esther Hethcox

People: **Thanks be to God!**

SERMON

"Love-with-us"

Esther Hethcox

*HYMN NO. 545

Lord, Bid Your Servant Go in Peace

Land of Rest

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

(From *Confession of 1967*)

Susan Dunlap

God's sovereign love is a mystery beyond the reach of our minds.

Human thought ascribes to God superlatives of power, wisdom, and goodness.

But God reveals God's love in Jesus Christ by showing power in the form of a servant, wisdom in the folly of the cross, and goodness in receiving sinful people.

The power of God's love in Christ to transform the world discloses that the Redeemer is the Lord and Creator who made all things to serve the purpose of God's love.

God has created the world of space and time to be the sphere of God's dealings with humanity.

In its beauty and vastness, sublimity and awfulness, order and disorder, the world reflects to the eye of faith the majesty and mystery of its Creator.

A TIME WITH THE CHILDREN

Lenore Champion

DEDICATION OF OFFERINGS

Invitation to Give

John Weicher

Instrumental Music

Ben Maxwell

*Doxology (Hymn No. 108, verse 6)

Divinum Mysterium

Christ, to thee with God the Father, and, O Holy Ghost, to thee

Hymn and chant and high thanksgiving, and unwearied praises be

Honor, glory, and dominion, and eternal victory, evermore and evermore!

JOYS AND CONCERNS

Susan Dunlap

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Susan Dunlap

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 NO. 110

Love Has Come

Bring a Torch

*CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

Esther Hethcox

*POSTLUDE

All Glory Be to God on High

Johann Walther

Following today's worship, you are invited to take a poinsettia with you to enjoy at home,
or deliver it to a homebound member or friend of the church.



Welcome! Let us know you have joined us for worship by scanning this QR code. First Presbyterian Church welcomes all who worship with us. We honor and celebrate the human diversity and unity that God gives us in Christ. We welcome individuals of every age, race, nationality, gender identity, ability, sexual orientation, and economic circumstance to participate fully in the life of the church. So that you may know who is sitting nearby, please sign the *Friendship Pad*, pass it along the pew, and then return it to the starting point, noting the names of those sitting near you.

The *poinsettias* are a loving gift from the *Arthur and Mary Clark Family Fund* in deep appreciation to the family in Christ at First Presbyterian Church.

Thanks to *Ben Maxwell* for providing musical leadership this morning. Ben is the son of *Jody and Julie Maxwell*. He grew up in FPC. Ben is a graduate of the New England Conservatory of Music and the School of Music at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.

We also thank *Alice Raney, Griffin Momsen-Hudson, and Vernon Cooper* for decorating the sanctuary so beautifully for the season.

Hearing Assistance Receivers are available from the ushers. Before you leave the sanctuary, please turn off the receiver and place it in the specially marked receptacle by the door or return it to the audio/video console at the rear of the sanctuary. Receivers are sanitized after each use.

Childcare: A staffed nursery and children's playroom are available on the second floor of the education building during worship. *Activity bags* are available in the foyer for children. Please return bags to the foyer at the end of worship.

Restroom locations: to the left and right as you exit the rear of the sanctuary; on the second floor of the education building; and on the first and second floors of the church house. There is an infant changing table in the restroom area located to the left as you exit the rear of the sanctuary.

Today's worship texts were written by *Esther Hethcox*.

These Days devotional books for January-March 2024 have arrived. Free copies are available from the tables in the foyer and narthex.

Ushers Needed: If you are interested in serving as an usher, head usher, or being on-call for ushering duties, especially on the first and second Sundays of the month, please contact **Esther Hethcox** (e.hethcox@firstpres-durham.org or 540-316-1548). Training is available.

~ Joys and Concerns ~

Condolences: The love and concern of the congregation are extended to **Tyler Adams** on the death of his father, **Scott Adams**, on December 22 in Melbourne, FL.

Concerns:

<i>Susan Cyr</i>	<i>Paul Cornsweet</i>	<i>Kerry Holbrook</i>	<i>Lee House</i>	<i>Ann Huff</i>
<i>Jenni James</i>	<i>Mitzi Lesher-Thomas</i>	<i>Franzi Rokoske</i>	<i>Alfred Tisdale</i>	

Care Communities

Croasdaile Pavilion: **Dub Gulley**

Durham Ridge Assisted Living: **Phillip Herndon**

Hillcrest Convalescent: **Julian Boswell, Maxie Honeycutt, Carol Wills, Jim Wolfe**

Family and Friends of the Congregation

Bob Betley, friend of Susan Cyr

Kim Cummings, father of Drew Cummings

John Keller, son of Tom & Margaret Keller

Brian Knowles, son of Sheila & Sam Miglarese

Gabe Lamazares, assoc. rector, St. Philip's EC

Keith Nivens, uncle of Mindy Douglas

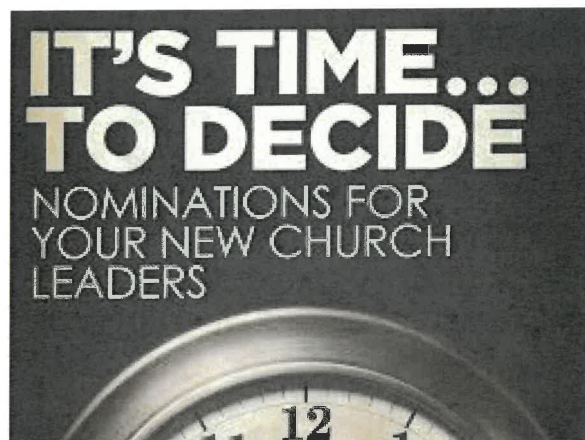
Alan Petersburg, brother-in-law of Jenni James

Doug Rimmer, brother of Steve Rimmer

Calvin Rogers, friend of Steve Rimmer

Jim Vacca, father of Jamie Chambliss

John C. Weicher, father of John Weicher



A Call for Nominations

It's time to nominate people to serve in the Class of 2027 Ruling Elders and Deacons and on the 2024-2025 Nominating Committee. Nomination forms are in today's worship bulletins. Please complete the form and return it to the church **today** via the offering plate or give it to an usher. Thank you.

New Study Series on Gender
Faith & Community Class
9:45-10:45 a.m. in Watts-Hill Hall

January 7 – *Understanding the latest definitions of gender*, led by Noah Penny, educator with Transgender Training Institute who directs an LGBTQ+ program for age 55 and up at Durham Center for Senior Life.

January 14 – *Meet people with lived experiences on the gender spectrum.*

January 21 – *An exploration of how Reformed Theology understands gender, inclusion, and possible action.*



January Slide Show: Birds of Taiwan

Taiwan is a prosperous, friendly island nation located about 100 miles from its larger neighbor on the mainland. Political issues aside, it's an easy country to visit, and the thirty-one bird species that are found nowhere else were a big attraction for *David and Judy Smith*, who spent almost two weeks there in May of 2023. Join them for a virtual tour of Taiwan's birds and sights next

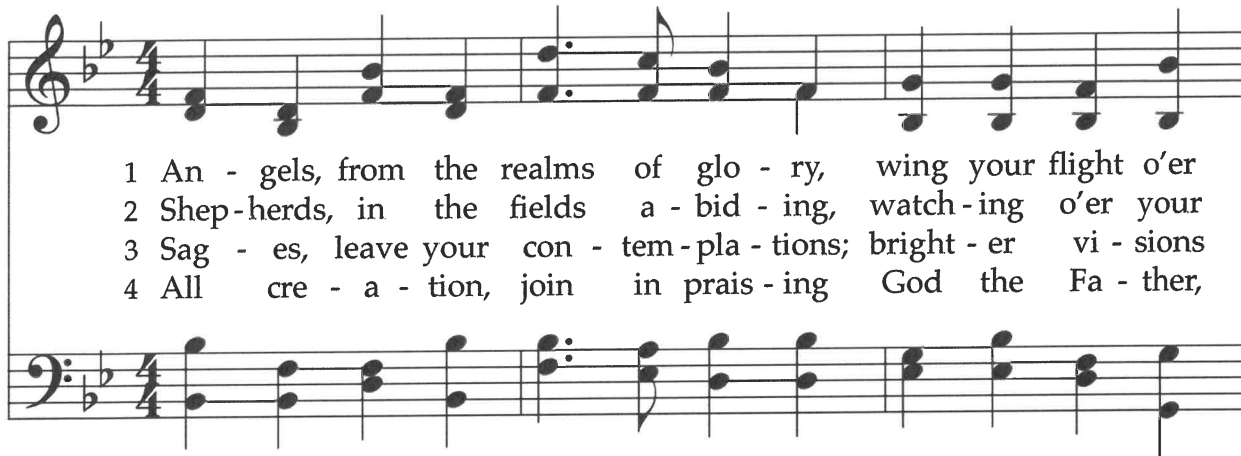
Sunday, January 7, at 7:00 p.m. in Watts-Hill Hall.



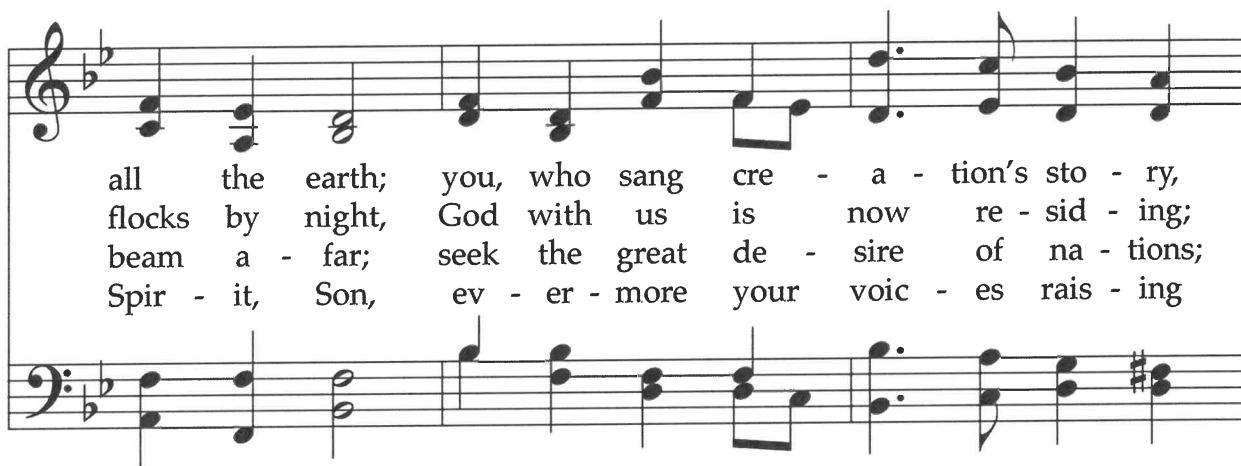
Join **Singers of New and Ancient Music (SONAM)** for their winter concert on **Saturday, January 6, 2024, at 4:00 p.m. in the sanctuary of FPC.** They will present music of light and receive gifts in support of Durham Tech's Mobile Health Lab which provides health services for under-served neighborhoods in Durham and

Orange counties. SONAM is a chorus committed to creating high-quality sacred and secular music and giving back to the community. Their mission is to make excellent choral music that supports local non-profits through benefit concerts. SONAM was established in 2012 and became officially a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in 2022. The group consists of about 30 talented singers from central North Carolina, led by music director Allan Friedman and accompanist Jane Lynch.

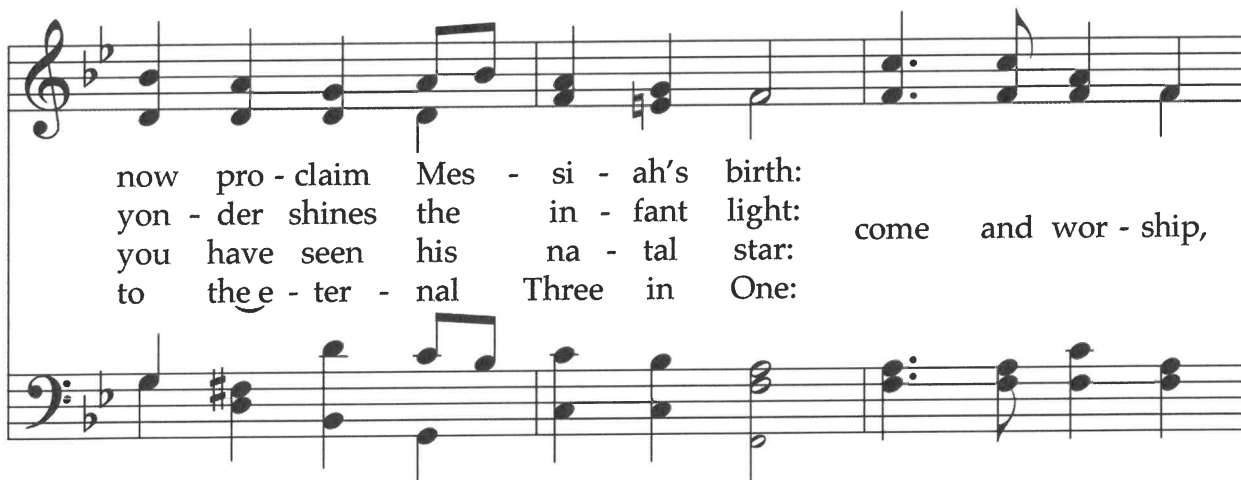
143 Angels, from the Realms of Glory



1 An - gels, from the realms of glo - ry, wing your flight o'er
2 Shep-herds, in the fields a - bid - ing, watch - ing o'er your
3 Sag - es, leave your con - tem - pla - tions; bright - er vi - sions
4 All cre - a - tion, join in prais - ing God the Fa - ther,



all the earth; you, who sang cre - a - tion's sto - ry,
flocks by night, God with us is now re - sid - ing;
beam a - far; seek the great de - sire of na - tions;
Spir - it, Son, ev - er - more your voic - es rais - ing



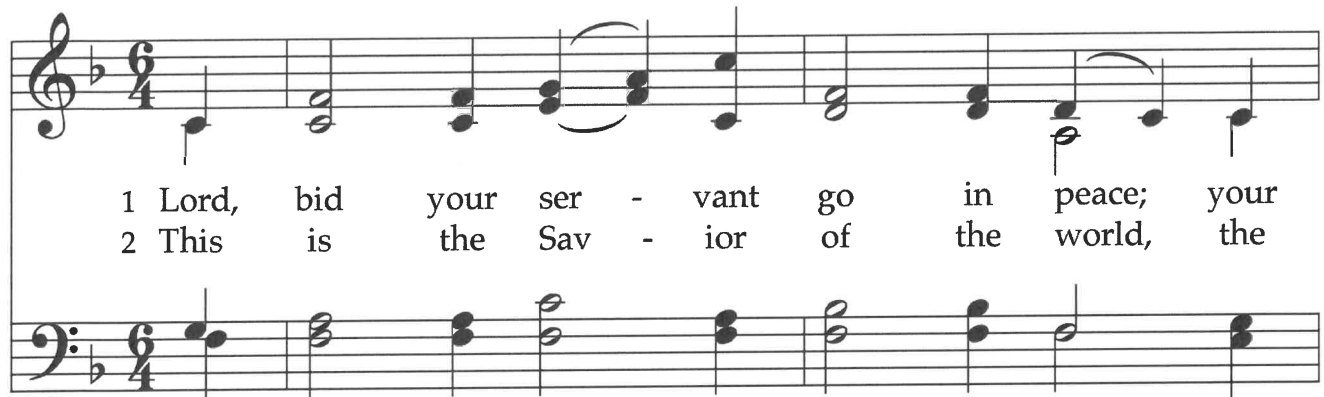
now pro - claim Mes - si - ah's birth:
yon - der shines the in - fant light: come and wor - ship,
you have seen his na - tal star:
to the e - ter - nal Three in One:



come and wor - ship, wor - ship Christ, the new - born king!

Lord, Bid Your Servant Go in Peace 545

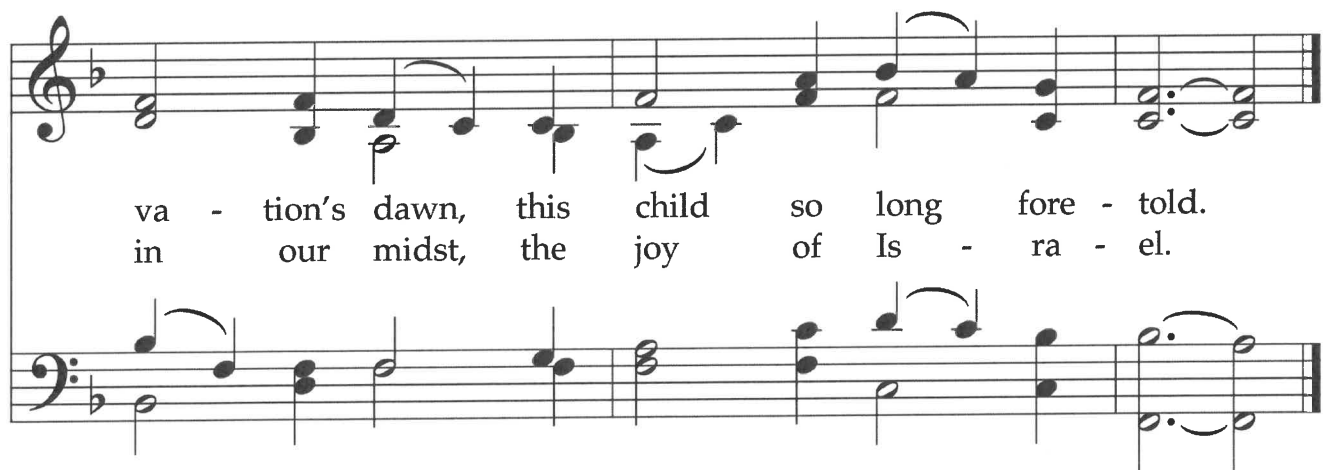
Song of Simeon



1 Lord, bid your ser - vant go in peace; your
2 This is the Sav - ior of the world, the



word is now ful - filled. These eyes have seen sal -
Gen - tiles' prom - ised light, God's glo - ry dwell - ing



va - tion's dawn, this child so long fore - told.
in our midst, the joy of Is - ra - el.

Love Has Come

110

Capo 3: (D) F (Bm7) Dm7 (Em7) Gm7 (A) C

1 Love has come: a light in the dark - ness!
 2 Love is born! Come, share in the won - der.
 3 Love has come and nev - er will leave us!

(D) (Bm7) (Em) (A7) (D)
 F Dm7 Gm C7 F

Love shines forth in the Beth - le - hem skies. See, all
 Love is God now a - sleep in the hay. See the
 Love is life ev - er - last - ing and free. Love is

(A) (D) (Bm) (D) (A) (G) (D)
 C F Dm F C Bb F

heav - en has come to pro - claim it; hear how their song of
 glow in the eyes of his moth - er; what is the name her
 Je - sus with - in and a - mong us. Love is the peace our




(Em7) (F#7) (G) (A) (Bm) (A7)
 Gm7 A7 Bb C Dm C7

joy a - ris - es: Love! Love! Born un - to you, a
 heart is say - ing? Love! Love! Love is the name she
 hearts are seek - ing. Love! Love! Love is the gift of

(D) (A) (G) (A) (D) (A) (A7) (Dsus) (D)
 F C Bb C F C C7 Fsus F

Sav - ior! Love! Love! Glo - ry to God on high.
 whis - pers. Love! Love! Je - sus, Em - man - u - el.
 Christ-mas. Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!

The Week at a Glance!

<p>Later Today</p>	<p>Monday, January 1</p>  <p><i>New Year's Day</i></p> <p>The Church office is closed. Pastors are on call.</p> <p>Presbyterian Women will meet on Monday, January 8.</p>	<p>Tuesday, January 2</p> <p>1:30 PM Worship Planning</p> <p>Wednesday, January 3</p> <p>Newsletter Today</p> <p>1:00 PM All Staff</p> <p>No Chancel Choir</p>
<p>Thursday, January 4</p> <p>Friday, January 5</p> <p>8:00 AM Men of Faith Breakfast (Mad Hatters Restaurant)</p>	<p>Saturday, January 6</p>  <p><i>Epiphany</i></p> <p>4:00 PM SONAM Winter Concert (FPC sanctuary)</p>	<p>Sunday, January 7</p>  <p><i>Baptism of the LORD</i></p> <p>9:45-10:45 AM Faith Formation classes for all ages</p> <p>11:00 AM Worship & Communion</p> <p>12:15 PM Racial Equity Task Force (Daye Meeting Room)</p> <p>5:00-7:00 PM Youth Group</p> <p>7:00 PM Taiwan Bird Show (Watts-Hill Hall)</p>

For more information about First Presbyterian Church, email the church office:
info@firstpres-durham.org or visit our website: <https://firstpres-durham.org>.

CHURCH STAFF

Tom Bloom, Business Administrator
Lenore Champion, Children's Ministry Director
Vernon Cooper, Sexton
Mindy Douglas, Pastor, Head of Staff
Susan Dunlap, Parish Associate
Omar Guess, Sunday Morning Sexton
Joseph Harvard, Pastor Emeritus



Amy Bowers Heit, Pastoral Associate
Sybil King, Administrative Assistant
Mitzi Leshner-Thomas, Associate Pastor (Medical Leave)
Valerie McMillian, Parish Administrator
Kathy Parkins, Minister of Music
John Weicher, Associate Pastor