



Mason Armstrong © 2022

# **FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA**

**DECEMBER 24, 2023**

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 24, 2023

A SERVICE FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD

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

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

John Weicher

PRELUDE (Handbell Choir)

*O Come, All Ye Faithful*

arr. Hal Hopson

\*CALL TO WORSHIP AND LIGHTING OF THE FOURTH ADVENT CANDLE

Ann & Dan Huff

Leader: Today we light the fourth Advent candle, the candle of love.

All sing: *Veni Emmanuel*

*O come, Desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind;  
bid envy, strife, and discord cease; fill the whole world with heaven's peace.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

Leader: Because God is a God of love: This is what the Lord Almighty says:

People: "I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come."

Leader: With Mary of Nazareth we say,

People: "The Mighty One has done great things for us – holy is God's name."

Let us worship God!

*The candle is lit.*

\*HYMN NO. 123

*It Came Upon the Midnight Clear*

Carol

\*CONFESSION OF SIN

Esther Hethcox

Call to Prayer

Prayer of Confession

We watch for packages to arrive and Christmas cards to be delivered,  
but we do not keep our eyes open for your coming, Approaching God.

We expect our Christmas "wish list" to be filled,  
and for the pile under the tree to grow and grow,

but we hope you do not expect to transform our lives.

We notice where to find the best bargains,

and what decorations our neighbors have put on their houses,

but we do not notice the little, the least, the lost, the last walking down our streets.

Forgive us, Saving God, for our misplaced priorities.

May we watch for your coming,

may we reach out to those in need,

may we wait with hope

even as Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, arrives to live in our hearts.

*\*Those who are able, please stand.*

Silent Confession  
Assurance of Pardon

**\*THE PEACE**

Esther Hethcox

**\*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!*

**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

Kerry Holbrook

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Let us pray.

All: Holy God, our hope and strength,  
by the power of your Spirit prepare the way in our hearts  
for the coming of your Word,  
so that we may see the glorious signs of your promise fulfilled;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**EPISTLE LESSON**

Romans 16:25-27

(Pew Bible, NT page 165)

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

Kerry Holbrook

All: Thanks be to God.

**GOSPEL LESSON**

Luke 1:26-38

(Pew Bible, NT page 56)

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

John Weicher

All: Thanks be to God.

**SERMON**

*"Mary, the Fierce"*

John Weicher

**\*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

(from *The Scots Confession*, chapter 6)

Mindy Douglas

**When the fullness of time came, God sent God's Son, Divine eternal wisdom, the substance of God's own glory, into this world, who took the nature of humanity from the substance of a woman, a virgin, by means of the Holy Ghost. And so was born the "just seed of David," the "Angel of the great counsel of God," the very Messiah promised, whom we confess and acknowledge to be Emmanuel, true God, and true man, two perfect natures united and joined in one person.**

**\*HYMN NO. 98**

*To a Maid Whose Name Was Mary*

*Annunciation*

**A TIME WITH THE CHILDREN**

Mindy Douglas

**DEDICATION OF OFFERINGS**

Invitation to Give

Esther Hethcox

The PCUSA **Christmas Joy Offering** is received today. Fifty percent of this offering aids current and retired church workers and their families in their time of need, and the other 50 percent is used to develop future leaders at Presbyterian-related school and college communities of color. Please use the specially marked offering envelope found in your bulletin for this offering.

Offertory (Handbell Choir)      *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly*      Polish Carol, arr. Noel Piercy  
(The *Hunger for Change Offering* is received following the offertory.)

\*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

Amy Heit

## 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.**

\*HYMN NO. 141      *On This Day Earth Shall Ring*      *Personent Hodie*

\*BENEDICTION      John Weicher

\*POSTLUDE      *Ding Dong! Merrily on High*      David Lasky

**A Reminder to Worshippers:** Thank you for leaving the sanctuary presentable for our members and friends who will attend the Christmas Eve worship at 5:00 p.m. this evening. As you exit your pew today, please kindly recycle your bulletin, and pick up any inserts, children's drawings, personal trash, etc. and take these with you. Returning hymnals and Bibles to the pew racks is also very helpful.



**Welcome! Let us know you have joined us for worship by scanning this QR code.**

First Presbyterian Church welcomes all who worship here. We honor and celebrate the human diversity and unity that God gives us in Christ. We welcome individuals of every age, race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, economic circumstance, and ability 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.

This season's beautiful *Advent wreath* is given to the glory of God by *Alice Raney*.

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.

Thank you to the Handbell Choir for providing the music this Christmas Eve morning: *Brent Curtis, Tess Tessier, Kate Busa, Julie Maxwell, Andrew Hedgpeth, Phyllis Supple, and FloAlice Reaves*. The Chancel Choir will sing at the 5:00 p.m. Christmas Eve service.

*Special thanks* to *Alice Raney, Griffin Momsen-Hudson, and Vernon Cooper* for decorating the sanctuary for the season.

The *sanctuary table* upon which the Advent Wreath sits was made by **George Danser** and is given to the church by him and his wife, **Jean Cary**. George has drawn design features from our communion table and used oak removed from the sanctuary during our renovation and from a tree in their backyard that Jean saw get hit by lightning some years ago.

**Advent paraments:** In 2012, First Presbyterian Church commissioned internationally known fiber-artist Laurie Wohl to design and create two paraments to be hung from the pulpit and lectern during Lent and Advent. The Advent text on the pulpit parament, in Hebrew and English, is from Isaiah 12:3: “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” The Advent text on the lectern parament is from Luke 1:78-79: “The dawn from on high will break upon us to give light to guide our feet into the way of peace.” We are grateful that the bequest of Anne ‘St. Clair’ Williams made it possible to enhance our sanctuary with these beautiful works of art.

**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.

The **bulletin cover** was created by FPC youth Mason Armstrong and used for Christmas 2022.

**A Call for Ushers:** If you are interested in serving as 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](mailto:e.hethcox@firstpres-durham.org) or 540-316-1548). Instructions are available.

**Portions of today’s worship texts** were taken from *Lectionary Liturgies* and *Book of Common Worship* (2018).

**These Days** devotional books for January-March 2024 have arrived. Pick up a free copy from the table in the foyer while supplies last.

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## CHURCH OFFICE YEAR-END SCHEDULE

**The church office will be closed to the public December 25-29, 2023, for Christmas, and Monday, January 1, 2024, for the New Year’s Day holiday.**

If you have a pastoral need during the holidays, you may call or text the pastors’ cell phones, or call the church office (919-682-5511) and leave a message on the appropriate extension number:

**Mindy x 211 - John x 213 - Esther x 220 - Kathy x 219**

**Tom x 216 - Valerie x 215 - Sybil x 217.**

## YEAR-END GIVING

Timely payment of pledges by December 31 will allow First Presbyterian to pay its end-of-year bills promptly and to meet its benevolence obligations for 2023.

**Please remember that the church must receive your charitable contributions by 12:00 p.m. on Friday, December 30, 2023; or the gift must be postmarked by December 31, 2023, if mailed, to be deductible on your 2023 taxes.**

If you wish to make a contribution by credit card, this may be done through the parish's website ([www.firstpres-durham.org](http://www.firstpres-durham.org)) at any time. **To be deductible on your 2023 taxes, please initiate the gift by Wednesday, December 27. Online contributions scheduled for December 31 will not reach us in time.** If you wish to make a donation through a gift of stock, please notify Tom Bloom, Business Administrator ([t.bloom@firstpres-durham.org](mailto:t.bloom@firstpres-durham.org)) **as soon as possible.**

Members aged 70 ½ + who own an IRA may be able to make a tax-excludable gift directly to First Presbyterian and have that gift satisfy any required minimum distribution for this year. Please contact your IRA administrator ASAP if you wish to consider this giving option for tax year 2023.

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## SAVE THESE 2024 DATES

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



Join **SONAM** for its 2023-24 season continuing **Saturday, January 6, 2024 at 4:00 p.m. at FPC**, for music of light and gifts, in support of Durham Tech's Mobile Health Lab, which provides health services for under-served neighborhoods in Durham and Orange Counties. Singers of New and Ancient Music (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.

## ~ Our Joys and Concerns ~

**Condolences:** The love and concern of the congregation are extended to *Haley and Walker Winslow Stephenson* on the death of Haley's great-grandmother *Helen* on December 20<sup>th</sup>.

### **Concerns:**

*Scott Adams*, father of Mindy Douglas' son Tyler Adams, is in hospice care in Florida.

<i>Doug Butler</i>	<i>Paul Cornsweet</i>	<i>Kerry Holbrook</i>	<i>Lee House</i>	<i>Ann Huff</i>
<i>Jennie 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

*John Keller*, son of Tom & Margaret Keller

*Robert Lewis, Jr.*, son of Bob Lewis

*Keith Nivens*, uncle of Mindy Douglas

*Spencer Reaves*, worships regularly with FPC

*Calvin Rogers*, friend of Steve Rimmer

*John C. Weicher*, father of John Weicher

*Kim Cummings*, father of Drew Cummings

*Brian Knowles*, son of Sheila & Sam Miglarese

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

*Alan Petersburg*, brother-in-law of Jenni James

*Doug Rimmer*, brother of Steve Rimmer

*Jim Vacca*, father of Jamie Chambliss

*Emily Wilson*, daughter-in-law of Chuck & Jean Wilson

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## **THE HUNGER FOR CHANGE OFFERING**

First Presbyterian Church of Durham has a long history of involvement in hunger-related mission, most notably Pennies for Hunger (now Hunger for Change) and the Durham CROP Walk. In addition, we coordinate volunteers for the Community Kitchen at Urban Ministries of Durham, collect food for and volunteer at the Emanuel Food Pantry. We also encourage giving to the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering on Easter Sunday which funds mission activities related to disaster assistance and hunger programs locally and around the world.

The funds received from our Hunger for Change Offering go to the New Hope Presbytery for the Presbyterian Hunger Relief Program and are divided as follows:

50% - International Hunger Relief Programs

40% - Local Hunger Programs

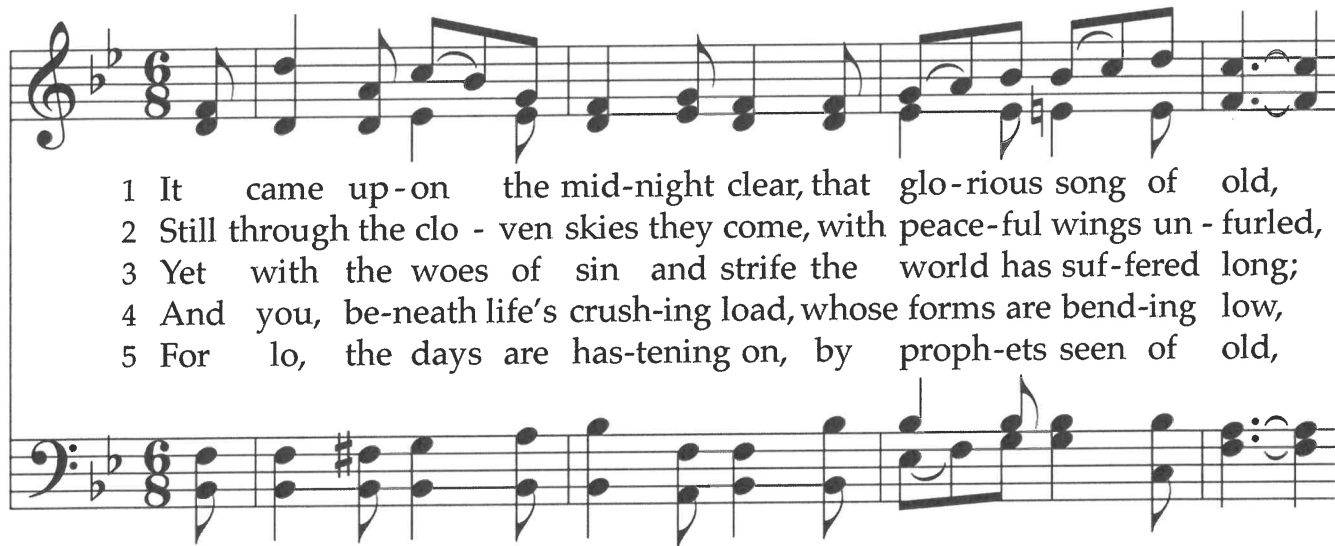
10% - Administration.

The funds dispersed locally go to hunger relief programs based on a grant application process.

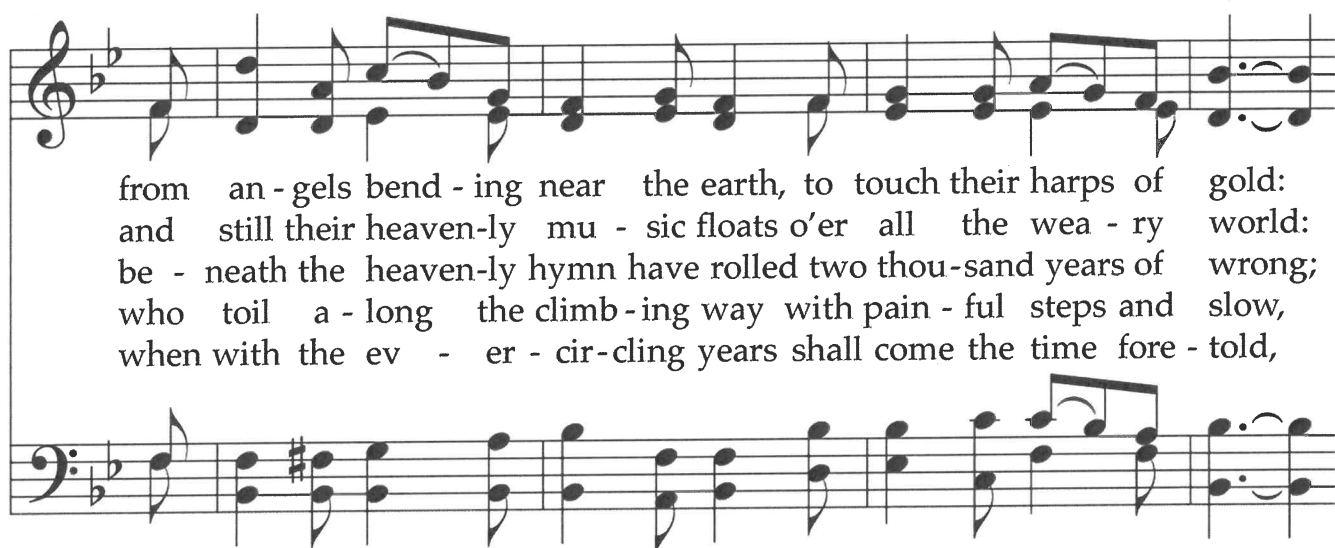
The fourth Sunday of each month is designated to receive the Hunger for Change Offering. Please consider supporting this hunger relief effort with a generous offering today.



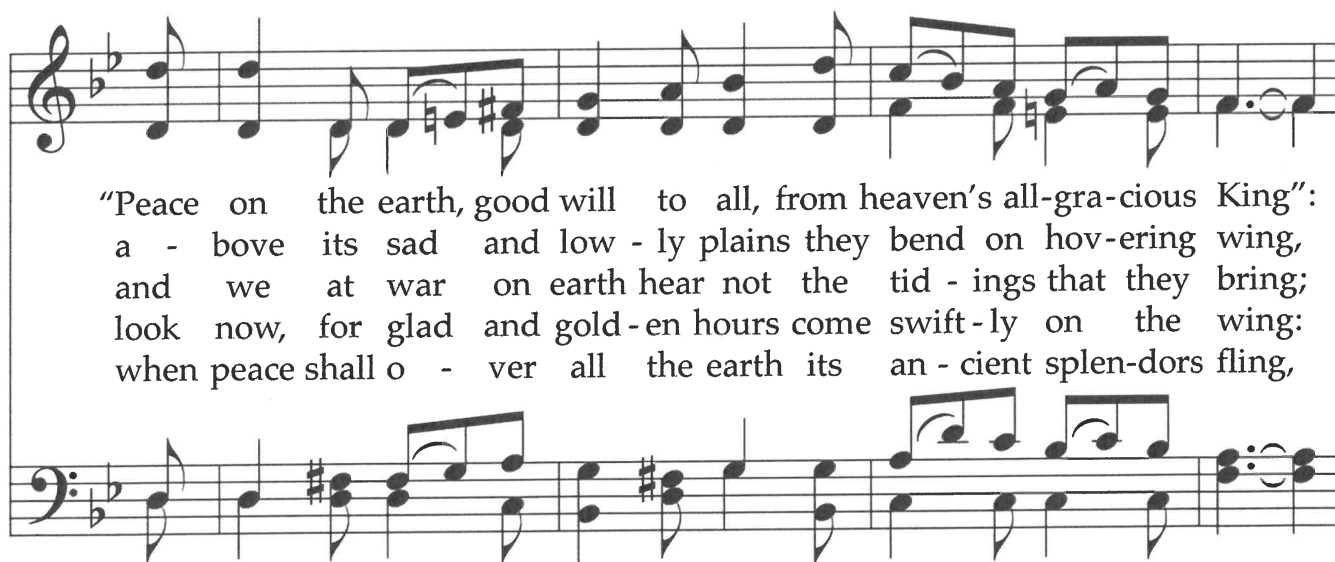
# 123 It Came Upon the Midnight Clear



1 It came up-on the mid-night clear, that glo-rious song of old,  
2 Still through the clo - ven skies they come, with peace-ful wings un - furled,  
3 Yet with the woes of sin and strife the world has suf-fered long;  
4 And you, be-neath life's crush-ing load, whose forms are bend-ing low,  
5 For lo, the days are has-tening on, by proph-ets seen of old,



from an - gels bend - ing near the earth, to touch their harps of gold:  
and still their heaven-ly mu - sic floats o'er all the wea - ry world:  
be - neath the heaven-ly hymn have rolled two thou-sand years of wrong;  
who toil a - long the climb-ing way with pain - ful steps and slow,  
when with the ev - er - cir-cling years shall come the time fore - told,



"Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heaven's all-gra-cious King":  
a - bove its sad and low - ly plains they bend on hov-ering wing,  
and we at war on earth hear not the tid - ings that they bring;  
look now, for glad and gold - en hours come swift-ly on the wing:  
when peace shall o - ver all the earth its an - cient splen-dors fling,

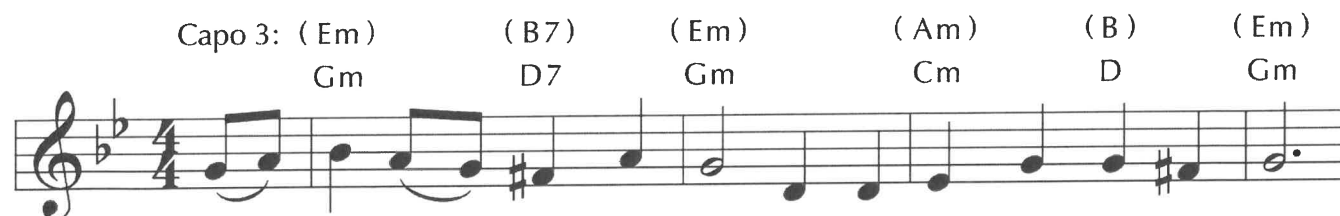




the world in sol - emn still - ness lay, to hear the an - gels sing.  
and ev - er o'er its Ba - bel sounds the bless - ed an - gels sing.  
O, hush the noise and cease the strife to hear the an - gels sing!  
O, rest be - side the wea - ry road, and hear the an - gels sing.  
and the whole world give back the song which now the an - gels sing.



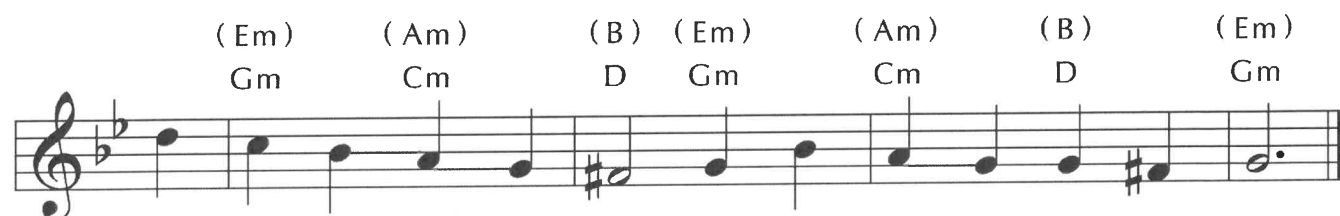
# 98 To a Maid Whose Name Was Mary



1 To a maid whose name was Mar - y, the an - gel Ga-briel came.  
2 "For you are high - ly fa - vored by God the Lord of all,  
3 But Mar-y was most trou-bled to hear the an-gel's word.  
4 "Fear not, for God is with you, and you shall bear a child.  
5 "How shall this be?" said Mar - y, "I am not yet a wife."  
6 As Mar-y heard the an - gel, she won-dered at his words.

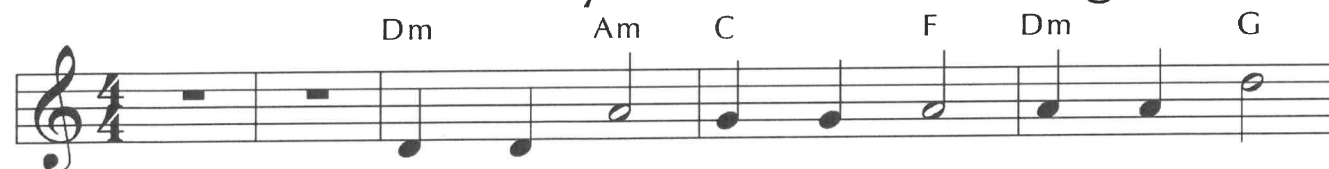


"Fear not," the an - gel told her, "I come to bring good news;  
who e - ven now is with you. You are on earth most blest;  
What was the an - gel say - ing? It trou-bled her to hear,  
His name shall be called Je - sus, God's off-spring from on high.  
The an - gel an-swered quick - ly, "The power of the Most High  
"Be - hold, I am your hand-maid," she said un - to her God.



good news I come to tell you, good news, I say, good news."  
you are most blest, most bless - ed; God chose you, you are blest!"  
to hear the an - gel's mes - sage, it trou-bled her to hear.  
And he shall reign for - ev - er, for - ev - er reign on high."  
will come up - on you short - ly, your child shall be God's child."  
"So be it; I am read - y ac - cord - ing to your word."

# 141 On This Day Earth Shall Ring



1 On this day earth shall ring with the song  
 2 His the doom, ours the mirth; when he came  
 3 God's bright star, o'er his head, wise men three  
 4 On this day an - gels sing; with their song



chil - dren sing to the Lord, Christ our King, born on earth to  
 down to earth Beth - le - hem saw his birth; ox and ass be -  
 to him led; kneel they low by his bed, lay their gifts be -  
 earth shall ring, prais - ing Christ, heav - en's King, born on earth to

## Refrain



save us; him the Fa - ther gave us.  
 side him from the cold would hide him. \*Id - e - o - o - o,  
 fore him, praise him and a - dore him.  
 save us; peace and love he gave us.



id - e - o - o - o, id - e - o glo - ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - o!

\*Therefore, glory to God in the highest.

NOEL HALLELUJAH MERRY CHRISTMAS HAPPY NEW YEAR  
*Noel Hallelujah Merry Christmas Happy New Year*

## The Week at a Glance

### Later Today

**5:00 PM** Christmas Eve Worship  
 with communion and candle lighting

### Monday, December 25



The Church Office is closed.  
 Staff on call.

### Tuesday, December 26

The Church Office is closed.  
 Staff on call.

### Wednesday, December 27

The Church Office is closed.  
 Staff on call.

No Chancel Choir

### Thursday, December 28

The Church Office is closed.  
 Staff on call.

### Friday, December 29

The Church Office is closed.  
 Staff on call.

### Saturday, December 30

### Sunday, December 31 First Sunday After Christmas



**FPC is 152 years old today!**

**No Faith Formation**  
 (The Lectionary Class will meet at 9:45 AM.)

**11:00 AM Worship**

**No Youth Group**

**No MnMs Fellowship**

For more information about First Presbyterian Church, email the church office:  
[info@firstpres-durham.org](mailto: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



*Esther Hethcox*, Pastoral Associate  
*Amy Bowers Heit*, Parish 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

**305 EAST MAIN STREET    DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA 27701    919-682-5511    ORGANIZED 1871**