



First Presbyterian Church

December 24, 2023 ~ 8:45 a.m.

BELLS OF GOD'S PRESENCE

WELCOME

PRELUDE

"Silent Night"

arr. Edwin McLean

Guest pianist, Jenny Dougan

LIGHTING OF ADVENT CANDLE AND CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Though the night may seem endless; look - there appears a warm glow on the horizon;

All: **Though surrounded by the cold of night, a new warmth is kindled within.**

One: Though the darkness may seem heavy, when the light appears, all darkness is lifted.

All: **We look unto God for the rising of the sun. The light of life is God's glorious gift.**

One: God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all! God is love. Heralded by the light of His star, the Light of the world is wrapped in swaddling clothes and cradled in our midst. Jesus the babe is God's love incarnate. Three candles glow with God's heavenly gifts of hope, peace and joy.

Let us now kindle the flame of God's greatest gift of love. Let us welcome the gift of God's Son...

(What Wondrous Love Is This)

Come, dwell within our midst, God of light, God of love; come, holy child of light, child of love.

The prayers of all the earth are answered in Your birth;

bring love into our hearts, holy child, holy child; be born within our hearts, holy child.

*ADVENT CAROL

"O Come, All Ye Faithful"

No. 133

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God, as we celebrate your Son's birthday, we confess that, if we had been around at the first Christmas, we might have missed it all! Some of us might have been too busy to see anything. Others would have been so engrossed in buying and selling, that we would not have noticed that odd little star that had no business being where it was. Even now, Father, we seldom pay attention to signs and signals from you. Help us to be more attentive, God, to your presence in our lives and in the world around us.

KYRIE

CRADLE SONG

Have mercy, Lord Jesus, come down from above; O infant so gentle, incarnate in love;

Have mercy, dear Savior, forgive all our sin; our hearts be your manger, be born here within.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Leader: The Holy One forgives and grants favor on each of us, especially when we are lowly in spirit. We are blessed from generation to generation by the Mighty One, whose strength and mercy are forever.

People: **Thanks be to God!**

*SONG OF RESPONSE

ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD

Praise we now the Prince of Peace, as in humble birth He came—in His love all strivings cease; through this earth His praise proclaim: Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!

*PEACE OF CHRIST

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Old Testament Reading: Micah 5:2-5

Gospel Reading: Luke 2: 1-14

SERMON

“The Real Christmas”

*HYMN OF RESPONSE NO. 121

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND LORD’S PRAYER

OFFERING OURSELVES TO GOD

“In the Bleak Midwinter”

*God, who came from heaven, far beyond this earth; God, whose mind is mystery, knelt to us in birth.
Holy Sovereign of all life, Word in flesh made known; Holy Lamb of glory, you made us your own.*

*What can I give him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man, I would do my part; yet what I can, I give him: give my heart.*

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Holy One, we thank you for the extravagant gift of your Son, born to us this day. Receive, we pray, these offerings as our grateful response for your life among us which changed and continues to change the world. Amen.

*HYMN OF RESPONSE NO. 145

“What Child Is This”

*CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

*CONCLUDING PRAISE

“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”

arr. M. Hayes

*Those who are able please stand

THE CHANCEL FLOWERS ARE DEDICATED
TO THE GLORY OF GOD

Prayer List

PRAYER FAMILIES OF THE WEEK – Kevin, Leslie, Owen, Meghan and Evie Heindselman; Fred Martin and Diana Johnson-Martin; Cheryl Ann Hess; Lynetta Johnson; and Alan, Ashley, Mac and Emeline Hobbs.

MISSIONARIES – Eliane Menezes, Guatemala.

Birthdays This Week

Dec. 27: Carolyn Collins, Johnnie Stubblefield

Dec. 29: Mary Easley, Grace Plemmons

Dec. 30: Natalie Robertson

Dec. 31: Kim Plemmons, Anson Hagan, Charlie Lively

Christmas Eve Services

11:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Fellowship Center

Holiday Schedule

The church office will be closed on Monday, December 25 - Tuesday, December 26 and Monday, January 1. The Clothes Closet will be closed on Tuesday, December 26 and Tuesday, January 2.

New Year’s Eve Combined Service

Sunday, December 31 ~ 10:00 a.m., Fellowship Center