



December 18, 2022

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

10:30 a.m.

Welcome to Worship at First Presbyterian Church

We are grateful for your presence and invite you to participate in the worship, service, and program life of First Pres!

Please visit the church website: www.firstpresevansville.com to stay up-to-date on our ministry and service opportunities.

Please visit our Facebook page - [First Presbyterian Church - Evansville, Indiana](https://www.facebook.com/FirstPresbyterianChurchEvansville). We hope you'll "like" us!

Please note that this service is being livestreamed on our website and Facebook page, and the recording will be posted to our [YouTube](#) channel.

THE SERVICE FOR THE LORD'S DAY

WE GATHER TO CELEBRATE NEW LIFE

**You may rise in Body or Spirit.*

THE MUSIC FOR GATHERING

"Infant Holy, Infant Lowly"

"Comfort, Comfort Now My People"

W Żłobie leży; arr. Robert Nicholls

Genevan 42; arr. Robert Nicholls

THE INTROIT

"The Advent Candle"

Bob Chilcott

Today we are lighting a candle to burn until you come to bring light to darkness and warm us with goodwill.

Today in the sky there's a star we've never seen before, a star to lighten our darkness and bring us to your door.

Today there's a window inside us, a window you'll open wide.

We are lighting a candle to guide us. Soon we'll be by your side.

- Charles Bennett

THE LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

The Liturgy of Candlelighting

The Hymn . . . no. 85

"Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah"

Tif in Veldele; Yiddish folk song

Wayne L. Wold

**Light one candle to watch for Messiah: let the light banish darkness.
He shall bring salvation to Israel, God fulfills the promise.**

**Light two candles to watch for Messiah: let the light banish darkness.
He shall feed the flock like a shepherd, gently lead them homeward.**

**Light three candles to watch for Messiah: let the light banish darkness.
Lift your heads and lift high the gateway for the King of glory.**

**Light four candles to watch for Messiah: let the light banish darkness.
He is coming; tell the glad tidings. Let your lights be shining.**

***THE CALL TO WORSHIP**

One We are seeking:

All **Deeper faith, a place to belong, the feeling that God is here in this room.**

One We are seeking:

All **Joy that overflows, the movement of the Spirit, a hand to hold, when alone in the dark.**

One We are seeking:

All **The freedom to be, the courage to love, the conviction to act in the face of injustice.**

One We are seeking, but here in this space,

All **We are found.**

One Take a deep breath. This is your sanctuary.

All **God is here. We are found. Amen.**

***THE OPENING HYMN . . . no. 347**

"Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence"

*Picardy; French Melody
Liturgy of St. James, 4th C*

**Let all mortal flesh keep silence, and with fear and trembling stand;
ponder nothing earthly minded, for with blessing in his hand
Christ our God to earth descendeth, our full homage to demand.**

**King of kings, yet born of Mary, as of old on earth he stood,
Lord of lords, in human vesture, in the body and the blood,
he will give to all the faithful his own self for heavenly food.**

**Rank on rank the host of heaven spreads its vanguard on the way,
as the Light of light descendeth from the realms of endless day,
that the powers of hell may vanish as the shadows clear away.**

**At his feet the six-winged seraph, cherubim, with sleepless eye,
veil their faces to the presence, as with ceaseless voice they cry,
"Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, Lord most high!"**

***THE CALL TO CONFESSION**

***THE PRAYER OF CONFESSION** *(in unison)*

God of today and tomorrow, when Mary was pregnant and afraid, she ran to her cousin Elizabeth's house. Elizabeth threw open the door with joy and showered blessings upon her. How often do we have that same opportunity? How often do we leave the door locked, the curtains drawn, and the lights off? How often do we shower critique or judgment instead of blessings and joy? Gracious God, forgive us for our wrongs. We want to see you when we see our neighbor. Amen.

***THE SILENT PRAYERS OF CONFESSION**

***THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

One Friends, this is what I know:

God delights in us. God throws open the door, just like Elizabeth, and says, "Come on home.

There is room for you here!" And in that moment, we are blessed. In that moment, we are forgiven. In that moment, we are seen, healed, and welcomed home. Rest in this good news: you are saved by grace. Let us respond together, using the words from Mary's song:

All **"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant; surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed."**

***THE RESPONSE . . . no. 93, verse 3**

"Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates"

*Truro; Musica Sacra
Georg Weissel*

**Redeemer, come! I open wide my heart to thee; here, Lord, abide.
Let me thy inner presence feel; thy grace and love in me reveal.**

THE WORDS OF WELCOME

The Greetings Among the People of God
The Announcements

WE HEAR THE WORD OF LIFE

THE PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

THE LESSON FROM THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES

Isaiah 7:10-16

Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, "Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test." Then Isaiah said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

One The Word of the Lord.

All Thanks be to God.

THE ANTHEM

"Virgin Mother of God, Rejoice" from *All Night Vigil*, Op. 37

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Virgin mother of God, rejoice, Mary full of grace, the lord is with you, for you have borne the Savior of our souls.

THE CHILDREN'S MOMENT

Following the Children's Moment, those in PreK through 5th grades may go to Sunday School. Parents may pick up their children after worship from Room 104 in the education wing.

THE GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 1:39- 45

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

One The Gospel of the Lord.

All Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

"Crossing the Threshold"

Rev. Wendy VanderZee

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

A TIME OF INTENTIONAL SILENCE

***THE HYMN . . . no. 84**

Conditor Alme Siderum; Sarum plainsong, 9th C
Latin hymn, 9th C

“Creator of the Stars of Night”

**Creator of the stars of night, your people’s everlasting light,
O Christ, Redeemer of us all, we pray you, hear us when we call.**

**When this old world drew on toward night, you came; but not in splendor bright,
not as a monarch, but the child of Mary, blameless mother mild.**

**At your great name, O Jesus, now all knees must bend, all hearts must bow;
all things on earth with one accord like those in heaven, shall call you Lord.**

**To God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit, Three in One,
praise, honor, might, and glory be from age to age eternally. Amen.**

***THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH** (*in unison*)

We believe that creation is inextricably linked. We belong to one another in an undeniable way. We are bone of bone and flesh of flesh, life breathed into dust. We believe that God invites us to live into that truth: to love without abandon, to see the good in one another, to trust that all belong to God. We know that this life of connection is easier said than done, which is why we gather in this space, week after week, generation after generation. We see God in each other. This we believe. Amen.

THE MORNING OFFERING

The Invitation to the Offering

We will receive the Christmas Joy offering today, supporting current and retired church workers in need as well as Presbyterian schools and colleges.

The Offertory

You may send a check to the church office, or give online at <http://firstpresevoansville.com/giving/>

“O Holy Night”

arr. Sandra Eithun
Old Hundredth
Neil Weatherhogg

*The Presentation of Our Tithes and Offerings . . . no. 607

“Praise God, From Whom All Blessings Flow”

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Christ, all people here below;
Praise Holy Spirit evermore;
Praise Triune God, whom we adore. Amen.**

*The Prayer of Dedication

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

The Sharing of Joys and Concerns

**One All these we lift to the Lord;
All Lord, hear our prayer.**

The Spoken Prayers

The Silent Prayers

The Lord’s Prayer (*in unison*)

**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.**

WE DISPERSE TO SERVE GOD AND NEIGHBOR

*THE CLOSING HYMN . . . no. 106

“Prepare the Way, O Zion”

Bereden Väg för Herran; Then Svenska Psalmboken
Frans Mikael Franzen

Prepare the way, O Zion, your Christ is drawing near!
Let every hill and valley a level way appear.
Greet One who comes in glory, foretold in sacred story.
O blest is Christ who came in God’s most holy name.

He brings God’s rule, O Zion; he comes from heaven above.
His rule is peace and freedom, and justice, truth, and love.
Lift high your praise resounding, for grace and joy abounding.
O blest is Christ who came in God’s most holy name.

Fling wide your gates, O Zion; your Savior’s rule embrace,
and tidings of salvation proclaim in every place.
All lands will bow rejoicing, their adoration voicing.
O blest is Christ who came in God’s most holy name.

*THE SENDING AND BENEDICTION

THE POSTLUDE

“Jacob’s Lullaby”

Kevin Heil; arr. Amanda Walker

Leading worship this morning:

Bridge Co-Pastors John and Wendy VanderZee
Liturgist Jessica Montgomery
Advent Liturgy Wendy McCormick and Lydia Fleming
Director of Music Robert Nicholls
The Choir of First Presbyterian Church
The Handchime Choir of First Presbyterian Church, Abby Greenwell, director
The Handbell Choir of First Presbyterian Church

Portions of today’s liturgy were adapted from Rev. Sarah Speed of *Sanctifiedart.org*.

Some materials in this service bulletin are reprinted with permission under OneLicense.net #A-702939; others are under CCLI Licenses #1419649 and #20550012. All rights reserved.

Happening at First Presbyterian Church

The First Pres Session continues to monitor local pandemic conditions and modify our **COVID safety protocols** as conditions warrant. **The current CDC Level is Yellow/Medium**; please continue to practice good public health.

“Merry and Bright” doesn’t describe everyone’s mood during the holidays. The Session invites all, especially those who are grieving or in some way struggling, to attend the service of the **Longest Night on Wednesday, December 21 at 7:00 p.m.** Through music, scripture, readings, and prayer, this service aims to bring comfort and Christ’s peace.

As we prepare to receive Rev. Anna vonWinckler as our Interim Minister in January, we are continually working to make sure all of our information is up-to-date in First Web, our online community. An important piece of that information is **your picture!** If your photo is not already in First Web, please plan to take a minute or two **after worship today** when Jerusha Van Camp and Carrie Aiken will be happy to take your photo for the church’s secure database. Thank you!

Are you wearing a **nametag**? If you worship regularly with us, a **reusable** nametag is available for you on the table in the hallway between Fellowship Hall and the Sanctuary. Please make a point of wearing your nametag while you are in the building. Didn’t see yours or want to make a correction? Supplies are available on that same table in the hallway. When it’s time to leave, simply put the nametag the basket by the door when you exit. Thanks for helping First Pres continue to be a place of welcome!

The sound of flutes, songs from the choir, joyful congregational singing, and inspirational words will carry us as we usher in the Christ Child this **Saturday, December 24 at 5:00 p.m.** Join us for **Christmas Eve worship** as we sing carols, light our candles, and are welcomed to the Lord’s Table. Reservations are **not** required.

On **Christmas Day** and **New Year’s Day**, which both fall on Sundays this year, we will gather for **one service of worship at 10:30 a.m.** Bring your family downtown to continue the celebration of Christmas.

The **church office will be closed** the week **between Christmas Day and New Year’s day**. The staff will monitor email and telephone messages remotely during that time.

Weekly Calendar

Elder of the Week: Gary Morris

Sunday, December 18

7:30 a.m. Band Rehearsal
8:30 a.m. Wide Awake Worship
9:15 a.m. Fellowship Time
9:15 a.m. Directory Pictures
9:30 a.m. Choir Rehearsal
9:30 a.m. Adult Sunday School
10:30 a.m. Sanctuary Worship
11:15 a.m. Fellowship Time
11:15 a.m. Directory Pictures
5:30 p.m. First Light

Monday, December 19

Tuesday, December 20

3:45 p.m. Choir Teens
4:45 p.m. Handbells/Handchimes
6:00 p.m. Chorister Rehearsal

Wednesday, December 21

11:00 a.m. Staff Meeting
7:00 p.m. Longest Night Service

Thursday, December 22

4:00 p.m. Choir Beginners
4:45 p.m. Chorister Rehearsal
6:00 p.m. Choir Rehearsal

Friday, December 23

Church Office Closed

Saturday, December 24 *Christmas Eve*

3:00 p.m. Choir Rehearsal
4:00 p.m. Handbell Rehearsal
5:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Worship