

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

1621 E. GARRISON BOULEVARD • GASTONIA, NORTH CAROLINA
704.864.2651 • www.fpcgastonia.org • streaming live

December 24, 2020
Christmas Eve

Words for Silent Prayer and Reflection before Worship

Ready your heart to welcome the unexpected ways Christ arrives
to transform our lives with the wonders of God's love.

WE GATHER IN GOD'S PRESENCE

STRING QUARTET PRE-SERVICE SELECTIONS

CARILLON PEAL

WELCOME

Pastor John H. Stanley

ORGAN PRELUDE

"Interlude on the Coventry Carol"

W.S. Lloyd Webber

CELEBRATING THE ADVENT WREATH

Christ Candle

Musical Response

This Advent we have had the audacity to be on the lookout for the arrival of a baby in a manger who one day will reign in glory.

The four Advent candles signal a renewal of our trust in the amazing grace of God's promise of the coming of a savior.

One candle alerts us to hope for the future return of Christ.

Another candle urges us to prepare the way of the Lord.

A third calls us to be anointed by the Holy Spirit.

The fourth invites us to experience the joy of the glad tidings of a Savior.

Today we light the Christ candle to celebrate the birth of the One who redeems the world.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

Those who lived in a land of deep darkness, on them light has shined.

Let us walk in the light of the Christ!

Musical Response

On this Christmas Eve, we light the candle of Christ, who became flesh and lived among us so that we might become people of light.

Musical Response

CALL TO WORSHIP (from Luke 1:46b-49)

Christ is born! Give him glory!

Christ has come down from heaven! Receive him!

Christ is now on earth! Exalt him!

O earth, sing to the Lord!

O you nations, praise him in joy,
for he has been glorified!

†**GATHERING HYMN**

“Good Christian Friends, Rejoice”

IN DULCI JUBILO

CALL TO CONFESSION

Like a great light in a land of deep darkness,

the mercy of Christ shines on us.

Trusting in God’s grace,

let us confess our sins.

SHARED PRAYER OF CONFESSION (from *Book of Common Worship*)

God of grace and truth, in Jesus Christ you came among us as light shining in darkness. We confess that we have not welcomed the light, or trusted good news to be good. We have closed our eyes to glory in our midst, expecting little, and hoping for less. Forgive our doubt, and renew our hope, so that we may receive the fullness of your grace, and live in the truth of Christ the Lord.

Silent Confession (“*Of the Father’s Love Begotten*”)

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Christ our Savior gives himself for us, redeeming us from our sin and claiming us as his own people.

Hear the promise of God: See, your salvation has come! You are a holy people, redeemed by God; sought out and not forsaken.

Friends, believe the good news—in Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven!

Thanks be to God!

MUSICAL RESPONSE - CAROLINA BRASS

Hark the Harold Angels Sing

WE LISTEN TO GOD’S WORD

FIRST READING

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

MUSICAL RESPONSE - CAROLINA BRASS

“Savior of the Nations Come”

SECOND READING

Jeremiah 23: 5-6

MUSICAL RESPONSE - STRING QUARTET

“The First Noel”

arr. By C Rabinowitz

THIRD READING

Micah 5:2 - 5a

MUSICAL RESPONSE - ORGAN

“King Jesus Hath a Garden”

Charles Wood

FOURTH READING

Luke 1:26-38

MUSICAL RESPONSE - STRING QUARTET

“Mary Did You Know?”

Arr. by P Hopper

FIFTH READING

Matthew 1:18-25

MUSICAL RESPONSE - VOCAL OCTET

“O Come, Emmanuel”

by Elaine Hagenberg with Cello

SIXTH READING

John 1:1-9, 14

MUSICAL RESPONSE - CAROLINA BRASS

“In the Bleak MidWinter”

SEVENTH READING

Luke 2: 1-7

MUSICAL RESPONSE - VOCAL OCTET

“Lo, How A Rose E’re Blooming”

by Preatorius

EIGHTH READING

Luke 2: 8-20

MUSICAL RESPONSE - VOCAL OCTET

“Go Tell It on the Mountain”

arranged by Howard Helvey

HOMILY

“The Audacity of Christmas: Going Off Script”

Rev. Fred Lyon

†CONGREGATIONAL HYMN

“Angels, We Have Heard on High”

GLORIA

WE RESPOND TO GOD’S WORD

CHRISTMAS PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING 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.

OFFERING OUR LIVES TO GOD

(Tithes and offerings may be presented at www.fpcgastonia.org/giving.)

100% of this offering goes to CAM and S.O.C.K.S.

OFFERTORY

“Ding, Dong Merrily On High”

David Willcocks

SHARING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

†CLOSING HYMN

“Silent Night, Holy Night”

ST. LOUIS

†BLESSING

†POSTLUDE - ORGAN AND CAROLINA BRASS

“Gloria In Excelsis Deo”

Daniel Pinkham

Worship Leaders:

Rev. Fred Lyon, Rev. Lauren Sease Vanacore, Pastor John H. Stanley,
Bethany Jennings, David Jennings,

Special Guest Musicians: Carolina Brass

Vocal Octet: Claire Lemke, Holly Shropshire, Bethany Jennings, Heather Copley, Isaiah Cornelius,
Sam Wanamaker, Michael Imerman, Logan Risch

TODAY’S OFFERING

The Christmas Eve offering received will be divided equally between Crisis Assistance Ministry (CAM) in Gastonia and Serving Our Community with Kindness in Springwood (S.O.C.K.S.).

CAM is a cooperative ministry of the greater Gastonia faith community that provides direct emergency assistance. By collaborating with other community resources, CAM assists those facing financial crisis or struggling with the burden of poverty. Established in 1976, CAM provides emergency assistance with food, necessary utilities, and rent/mortgage to low-income households in the greater Gastonia community. CAM serves about one-half of Gaston County, including those residing inside Gastonia city limits and rural areas surrounding the city limits.

S.O.C.K.S. was formed in June 1987, under the direction of community leaders and concerned citizens to serve the very rural Springwood area of Gaston County. S.O.C.K.S.’s sole purpose is to provide emergency relief to individuals and families from infant to older adults for food, clothing, utilities, medicine and hospital supplies. S.O.C.K.S. collaborates with community volunteers, houses of worship, businesses, the United Way and other community-minded relief agencies.

GOOD CHRISTIAN FRIENDS REJOICE

Verse 1

Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
give ye heed to what we say:
Jesus Christ is born today;
ox and ass before him bow,
and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today!
Christ is born today!

Verse 2

Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
now ye hear of endless bliss:
Jesus Christ was born for this!
He has opened heaven's door,
and we are blest forevermore.
Christ was born for this!
Christ was born for this!

HYMN - ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH

Verse 1

Angels we have heard on high,
sweetly singing o'er the plains,
and the mountains in reply
echoing their joyous strains.
Gloria in excelsis Deo!
Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Verse 2

Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
which inspire your heavenly song?
Gloria in excelsis Deo!
Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Verse 3

Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
now ye need not fear the grave:
Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all
to gain the everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save!
Christ was born to save!

Verse 3

Come to Bethlehem and see
him whose birth the angels sing;
come, adore on bended knee
Christ, the Lord, the newborn King.
Gloria in excelsis Deo!
Gloria in excelsis Deo!