

# SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT



## THE SERVICE FOR THE LORD'S DAY

December 6, 2020  
10:45 a.m.

First Presbyterian Church, Bryan, Texas  
Link to worship videos available at: [www.fpcbryan.org](http://www.fpcbryan.org)

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring

J. S. Bach

#### WELCOME AND LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLES

READER ONE: *Often these days we sense that life around us is strange. We long for a degree of familiarity – with surroundings, with people, with events. And we wish for safe ways to celebrate.*

READER TWO: *God, though, is already in the places where we will be going. God is the same forever in love, grace, and peace, but God relates in dynamic ways amid the changes in our life situations.*

READER ONE: *As we listen and watch for the presence of God-with-us, we light two candles as a sign of our hope that God's coming among us is a certainty, and as a sign in faith that God adapts dynamically for the purposes God intends to accomplish.*

READER TWO: *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.*

**O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

#### HYMN NO. 109 (st. 1 & 3)

Blest Be the God of Israel

MERLE'S TUNE

**Blest be the God of Israel, who comes to set us free;  
who visits and redeems us, who grants us liberty.  
The prophets spoke of mercy, of freedom and release;  
God shall fulfill that promise and bring the people peace.**

**On those who sit in darkness the sun begins to rise,  
the dawning of forgiveness upon the sinner's eyes.  
God guides the feet of pilgrims along the paths of peace.  
O bless our God and Savior with songs that never cease!**

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Text in **bold face type** is to be read by all.

PRAYERS OF PRAISE AND CONFESSION

Let us pray . . . **With both our voices and every part of each one’s life, O God, we honor and glorify your holy name! We also acknowledge and realize our failings and unworthiness before you. In these moments of silence, we approach your throne of grace seeking your forgiveness where we have strayed from your guidance and fallen short of your desires for our well-being . . .** *(pausing in silence for prayer)*

Make us whole in your love, Blessed One. Open our awareness to your presence multiple times each day. Anoint us with the ointment of your unending faithfulness and sacred kindness. Bring your new life among us for serving you continually in the way and spirit of Jesus Christ . . .

Friends, let us hear and share with gladness the blessed news of the Gospel:

**In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God!**

HYMN OF RESPONSE NO. 581

Glory Be to The Father

GLORIA PATRI

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, amen.**

SCRIPTURE READING

Exodus 40:34-38; Isaiah 40:8

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

HYMN NO. 129

Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming

ES IST EIN’ ROS’

**Lo, how a rose e’er blooming from tender stem hath sprung,  
of Jesse’s lineage coming, by faithful prophets sung.  
It came, a floweret bright, amid the cold of winter, when half spent was the night.**

**This flower, whose fragrance tender with sweetness fills the air,  
dispels with glorious splendor the darkness everywhere.  
enfleshed, yet very God, from sin and death he saves us and lightens every load.**

GOSPEL PROCLAMATION

God’s Dynamic With-Us-Presence:

Meeting, Leading, and Equipping through Threat and Change for Newness of Life

SACRAMENT OF THE LORD’S SUPPER

INVITATION

WORDS OF INSTITUTION: THE BREAKING, THE POURING, THE SHARING IN PARTAKING

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, INTERCESSION,  
AND THE LORD’S PRAYER



Eternal God, receive our thanksgiving for all that you have given to this world and the people and creatures of it. Through faith communities and among your people, multiply the offerings of our lives with a witness to your love, both close by and around the globe. God of mercy, as your love and power both mend brokenness and give support in the most threatening of situations and to the most vulnerable of persons . . . Where relationships are torn by hurtful words and stubborn pride, bring your healing. Where the distance of miles or the isolation of pandemic-mitigation creates loneliness, bring your healing. Where war, anarchy, political and religious strife either smolder or ignite and spread rampantly, bring your healing. Where illness, injury, and age have taken their toll, bring your healing. Spare us, O God, not ambiguities and pain in life. Grant not success, as we measure success. Yet go before us, beside us, and behind us, abiding close, that we and all others might receive your life in abundance and behold your realm and providence, even amid this world’s difficulties. Now, from this table of communion – with your people everywhere, nourish us and give us drink through these elements of field and vine.

Grow within us the spirit of Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected, our host and our mentor always, God-with-us today and always.

Hear us also praying now, as Jesus taught the community of faith to believe and give voice:

**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.**

PRAYER OF COMMISSIONING

HYMN NO. 123 (st. 1,3,4,5)

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

CAROL

**It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,  
From angels bending near the earth, to touch their harps of gold:  
"Peace on the earth, goodwill to all, from heaven's all-gracious King."  
The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.**

**Yet with the woes of sin and strife the world has suffered long;  
Beneath the heavenly hymn have rolled two thousand years of wrong;  
And we at war on earth hear not the tidings that they bring;  
O, hush the noise and cease the strife to hear the angels sing!**

**And you, beneath life's crushing load, whose forms are bending low,  
Who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow,  
Look now, for glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing.  
O, rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing!**

**For lo, the days are hastening on, by prophet bards foretold,  
When with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold,  
When peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,  
And the whole world give back the song which now the angels sing.**

DISMISSAL AND BLESSING

POSTLUDE

Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne

arr. Cindy Berry

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The prayerful support and sympathy of the congregation are extended to Caroline & Wally Simpson, and their children, Ryan & Chelsea, following the death of Caroline's father, Erwin Ahrens, in Houston on December 1.

*"I am the resurrection and the life," saith the Lord. —John 11:25*

**ASSISTED LISTENING DEVICES** are available in the narthex. Please help yourself or ask an usher for assistance.

**NEW MEMBERS** may be received any Sunday by profession of faith, reaffirmation of faith, or transfer of membership. If you feel led to inquire about becoming a church member or deepening your commitment as a disciple of Jesus Christ, please indicate your desire on the fellowship folder. You may also call the church (979.823.8073) or email Pastor Ted Foote ([tfoote@fpcbryan.org](mailto:tfoote@fpcbryan.org)) or Associate Pastor Emily Béghin ([ebeghin@fpcbryan.org](mailto:ebeghin@fpcbryan.org)). They will be glad to arrange a mutually convenient Sunday when you can be received by the Elders and introduced to the congregation.

**CHILDREN ARE WELCOME IN WORSHIP.** Worship related activity sheets and markers are available on the tables in the Narthex. Room 108 is available for your nursery needs. If you are unfamiliar with our building and need assistance, an usher will be pleased to help you. Also, two rocking chairs are located in the narthex, where the worship service can be heard via a ceiling speaker.



# A WARM WELCOME!

*We are delighted that you chose to worship with us today.*



## WORSHIP NOTES

### PREACHER

Rev. Ted Foote

### LITURGISTS

Rev. Emily K. Béghin  
Clarissa Kennedy  
Rev. George E. Klett

### USHERS | GREETERS

Adam Espinoza; Shelley Espinoza;  
Roger Reese; AJ Renold

### ADVENT CANDLELIGHTERS

The Morse Family:  
Brandon & Sarah Kate,  
and their boys, Chuck and Teddy

### MUSICIANS

Kathrine MacNeil, *organ*  
Michelle Lassiter, *piano*  
David Kipp,  
*Director of Music Ministries*

### AUDIO-VISUAL | SOUND

Bill McKinley; Nicole McKinley;  
Jerry Norris

### CHANCEL FLOWERS

To the glory of God  
with thanksgiving for  
Presbyterian Elder and Pre-K Sunday  
School Teacher, Mary Black "B" Davis,  
by the Foote family

### LITURGICAL BANNER

Pulpit side: Advent Banner  
by Becky Alter

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## THIS WEEK AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT, DECEMBER 6, 2020

9:20am Church School: The Word Class-303/via Zoom  
9:20am Church School: Seekers Class-P/via Zoom  
9:30am Church School: Loose Leaf Class-via Zoom  
10:45am Worship (with Lord's Supper) LIVE STREAMED-S \*  
5:30pm Session Stated Meeting-FH/Zoom

### MONDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2020

2:00pm Circle III-P

### TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2020

10:15am Staff Meeting-L  
11:00am Foundation Trustees-10

### WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2020

### THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2020

6:00pm Property Committee-L  
7:00pm Circle VII-via Zoom

### FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2020

### SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2020

7:30am Youth (GR 6-12) Service Project: Brazos Valley Food Bank-  
meet in church parking lot

### THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT, DECEMBER 13, 2020

#### ORDINATION | INSTALLATION OF CHURCH OFFICERS

9:20am Church School: The Word Class-303/via Zoom  
9:20am Church School: Seekers Class-P/via Zoom  
9:30am Church School: Loose Leaf Class-via Zoom  
10:45am Worship (with Lord's Supper) LIVE STREAMED-S \*

\* *During COVID-19, Room 108 is available for your nursery needs*

First Presbyterian Church | 1100 Carter Creek Parkway | Bryan, Texas 77802

PH. 979.823.8073 | FAX. 979.822.7063 | Website: [www.fpcbryan.org](http://www.fpcbryan.org) | Email: [office@fpcbryan.org](mailto:office@fpcbryan.org)

Find "First Presbyterian Church of Bryan, Texas" on FACEBOOK

## THE SALVATION ARMY ANGEL TREE



Once again, FPC has the opportunity to share in providing a wonderful Christmas for families in Bryan-College Station through **THE SALVATION ARMY**. An Angel Tree is set up on the FPC Patio. Angel ornaments on the tree provide the name, gender, age, sizes, and wish list for a child that you can help. Please consider “adopting” an ANGEL from the FPC tree and enjoy the experience of Christmas shopping at its best! Place your gifts for your “angel” near the tree in the Patio **by Friday, December 11**. *If you prefer not to select your Angel “in person,”* email Keith Halsell, [halsell@verizon.net](mailto:halsell@verizon.net), to assist you with adopting your Angel.

## A CAROLING INVITATION

Caroling, you say? Yes! Why yes, we can! It will look and feel a bit different this year! You are invited to record a video of you and/or your family singing and/or playing on your favorite instrument a carol of your choice. Text your video to Rev. Béghin, 832-413-3012, **by Friday, December 11**. All submissions will be compiled into a video and made available on our YouTube Channel, Facebook page, and church website for all to enjoy!



## A SERVICE OF WHOLENESS IN ADVENT



This season, you are invited to a VIRTUAL “The Longest Night | Blue Christmas”—a service of Wholeness in Advent in a time when we may be separated from loved ones by distance or by death or experiencing a sense of loss in other ways. For many, the holidays are a time of

remembering. Through sharing in song, scripture, prayer, and a time of remembrance, we tend to our souls and uplift one another in the hope and spirit of the holidays. This service will be available on our YouTube Channel, Facebook page, and church website homepage early to mid-December.

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**Visit us on the web!** [www.fpcbryan.org](http://www.fpcbryan.org) for the newsletter, announcements, worship bulletins, updates, etc.

**Check out “Advent Devotionals” on Facebook** [www.facebook.com/FPCBryan](https://www.facebook.com/FPCBryan)

**NEW!!! on Instagram** [www.instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com)  
Search for and follow **fpcbryantx1867** and/or **fpcbryan\_youth**

**BE THE FIRST TO KNOW** when **WORSHIP** and **ACTIVITY** videos are uploaded to our YouTube channel!  
Go to [www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com), search for First Presbyterian Church of Bryan, Texas, then click **SUBSCRIBE**

**Share prayer needs and church group news with fellow FPC participants on Church Updates!**  
is FPC-Bryan’s online tool for YOU to post church-related announcements, ways to serve, and your current prayer needs. While users receive a weekly reminder email on Thursdays to view new posts, this online tool is “REAL TIME.” Contact Karen in the church office, 979.823.8073 or [office@fpcbryan.org](mailto:office@fpcbryan.org) to set up your account. Then, login at <https://fpcbtx.churchupdates.org/login> to create your password-protected account.

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The deadline for our final newsletter of 2020 is Noon, Sunday, December 13, and will be distributed on Wednesday, December 16. This newsletter will cover news from December 23, 2020, thru January 13, 2021.



# What's the buzz?

***First Presbyterian Youth invite you to join in their mission project benefitting Heifer International.***

*Heifer International works to end hunger and poverty in partnership with the communities they serve globally. Their programs support entrepreneurs, creating lasting change from the ground up. It begins with a seed investment of livestock or agriculture, followed by mentorship to help project participants build a business, and ultimately to gain access to supply chains and markets. These families are able to earn a living income and continuously lift up their communities as they train the next generation of leaders. By supporting and training the world's farmers, ranchers, and female business owners, they're investing in a new breed of success.*

## **Here's how you can participate...**



**HEIFER<sup>®</sup>**  
**INTERNATIONAL**

Jars of honey, donated by registered beekeeper Carolyn Lowry, are available for you to purchase, with 100% of the proceeds being forwarded from FPC-

Bryan to Heifer International. Church members have invested time to “dress” the jars with decorative fabric. Ms. Lowry is a Bryan ISD faculty member at Rudder High School. She has family friendship ties to long-time FPC member Mary Alice Hall, whose favorite non-Presbyterian mission endeavor was Heifer International. And . . . Ms. Lowry's beekeeping efforts began with bees from the Hall family ranch at Kurten.

**The jars of honey and prices are  
available on a table in the narthex.**

Have you ever thought, "I need to get closer to God"? Across the years, I've heard that statement many times from persons expressing such a feeling. Our Scripture readings this morning suggest to me that my or your inclination or conviction that we "need to get closer to God" is not as important as perceiving how God's (let's call it) dynamic presence draws near to us in different ways at different times – and draws near with purpose: to lead and equip us through threat and change for newness of life. That word "dynamic" in English can mean, "full of life and perhaps even boundless energy," as in the sentence, "She has a dynamic personality." A second meaning is "the opposite of static," which means "steady or same." The opposite of "steady or same," obviously, is "subject to change" and "periodically changing." God is much less evidencing "boundless energy" like Tigger in "Winnie the Pooh," and more is dynamic and periodically changing in the form of presence we perceive or imagine.

Sometime when I was in first grade, one of my Sunday School teachers read us these verses from Exodus, chapter 40, and showed us a picture-poster illustrating the scene. The picture-poster had two sides: As you looked at it, on the left the former slaves to Pharaoh were painted in the foreground (their backs to the viewer) following Moses as they journeyed along a desert road, facing toward a large, puffy, white cumulous cloud in the blue day-time sky (upper background). "They followed the cloud by day." On the viewer's right was a dark-of-night scene with tents pitched and a few glowing red campfires in the foreground. In the upper background at a distance from the pitched tents and small campfires was a huge cumulonimbus cloud illumined by yellow-white lightning within it. "They beheld the fire in the cloud by night." God's presence was symbolized not by a spiritually reassuring warmth within, but by symbols of nature in the sky above: a puffy white cumulous cloud by day and a towering anvil-like topped cloud flashing lightning internally by night.

Five hundred years later when the faithful prophet Elijah is feeling isolated and is fleeing for his life out front of King Ahab's commissioned posse, Elijah ascends the mountain, hides in a cave and experiences there a storm of wind, earth-quaking thunder or thunderous earthquake, and strobe-light-like lightning – nature's meteorological fire right at the door to the mountain cave. The scripture here tells the story with a clear distinction, told almost in a whisper: God's presence there was not in the mighty wind, the thunder or earthquake, or in the strobe-like-lightning. Rather know of God's presence through a still, small voice within, asking, "What are you doing here?" (I Kings 19:11-13). These two stories from Scripture held side-by-side with two iconic figures of the Biblical faith indicate that God's presence can be symbolized in aspects of nature, but cannot be isolated or limited to nature. You may recall the words of the hymn with Swedish origins: "I see the stars; I hear the rolling thunder; thy power throughout the universe displayed. Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee: How great Thou art." That hymn then moves from descriptions of nature's beauty and grandeur to the narrative/ the story of God's redeeming love in Jesus, who is the faith-tradition descendant of Moses and Elijah. While in his early adult years, Jesus is arrested and executed through a treacherous collaboration of religious leaders and Empire officials. Jesus' own life and death embody and symbolize God's love emptied and poured out from eternity into real-life and real-time, including that experience of mortality with cruel death.

Consider the words of the prophet Isaiah, how "the grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever." Jesus taught: "Consider the lilies of the field: They are dressed up like nothing you've ever seen, and God is their tailor!" (Matthew 6:28; Luke 12:27). Flowers symbolize God's power to create botanical beauty in nature. Consider how flowers symbolically remind us of the sacred story Scripture in the Christian tradition: Poinsettias – whether red, pink, white, golden – can remind us of Christmas and Jesus' birth. Trumpet lilies can remind us of celebrating Jesus' resurrection beyond death, which is proclaimed as occurring by God's stunning work for newness always, including

beyond death's power. Flowers and the associations which flowers bring to mind – in certain contexts – represent God's "There is more" communication. Just as during the post-Exodus wandering for the former slaves, the white cloud by day and the lightning in the night-time storm cloud daily reminded the desert wanderers of God leading them because "there is more." Just as Christmas reminds us "there is more" than an Empire based in Rome; there is more than anxiety, worry, and pregnancy in Nazareth; there is more than urgency and labor contractions looking for lodging in Bethlehem. In Nazareth and in Bethlehem when Mary is pregnant, and thirty years later in Jerusalem during the week of Passover when Jesus arrives, we are told "there is more" than power struggles to suppress faith with tyranny, to suppress love with cruelty, to suppress gentleness with force, to suppress dignity with disregard, to suppress integrity with betrayal, to suppress courage with fear. These qualities of faith, love, gentleness, dignity, integrity, and courage are there in the post-Exodus desert journey, in Nazareth, in Bethlehem, in Jerusalem and beyond – even into the world when and where we are – because God is ever communicating, "There is more." How could God do all of that if God were not dynamic in presence?

In the late 1980s, in the East Texas county seat church where I served, a new member signed up to provide the floral arrangement on Pentecost, and then on another Pentecost, and then on another. Each year consecutively before she moved away, she special-ordered the arrangement to include Bird of Paradise blossoms. Some long-time members were critical because the bird of paradise looked so different from a rose, chrysanthemum, lily, azalea, daisy, dogwood, carnation, impatience, or marigold. That criticism by some members aside, I had never before seen a bird of paradise blossom. My imagination was stirred! The yellow, red, blue, and white of the bird of paradise blossom are all the colors of fire. The member ordering the Pentecost floral arrangement was absolutely on target. I saw bird of paradise blossoms on Pentecost for five consecutive years, until Mary B Davis moved to Lampasas, then I saw them only occasionally and rarely. 26 years later I was in Santa Barbara, California, for my mentor and friend Tom Schmid's committal and memorial service. Between the afternoon cemetery service and the evening church service, one of Tom's family members gave me a ride to a sandwich shop in the downtown area, which we entered from the rear parking lot. After our late lunch, the plan was for me to wait for my son Kendall to drive from Los Angeles and attend the evening memorial service with me. I went out the front door onto the main street, strolled the sidewalk, and gazed in several store windows, thinking about my friend and having traveled 1200 miles for this funeral. When I looked back at the street, I noticed flower boxes next to the curb, spilling over with bird of paradise plants in full bloom. Even in a day melancholy with the pain of grief, doesn't God find ways dynamically to indicate, "There is more"? When Kendall drove up, I said, "Before today, I've only seen bird of paradise blossoms in floral arrangements." He said, "Dad, out here they grow like this."

Hebrew former slaves in the desert associated a cloud by day and storm-cloud lightning by night with God's dynamic leading through threat and change for newness of life. We have: our association of poinsettias with God's dynamic drawing near for new life through Nazareth and Bethlehem; our association of trumpet lilies with God's dynamic drawing near for new life after cross and grave in Jerusalem – ever through the threats of tyranny, cruelty, force, disregard, betrayal, and fear. And through those threats, God dynamically draws near for new life with God's redeeming grace, delivering among people holy gifts of faith, love, gentleness, dignity, integrity, and courage. The same dynamic drawing near through threat and change for new life long ago is symbolized again here this morning with the yield of the wheat-field and the yield of the vineyard, related to God's life embodied in Jesus. That dynamic, sacred presence meets us here once more for strengthening, nourishing, and leading us anew today toward faith, love, gentleness, dignity, integrity, and courage. Your favorite symbol of God's gifts for new life amid threat and change (or mine), may be cloud, poinsettia, trumpet lily, bird of paradise, bread and wine, rainbow, something else; but the dynamic nature of the Eternal One who draws near will amaze us, will humble us, and will embolden us continually. From God's ageless dynamic presence, how grand it is that – all the time – "there is more"! – All honor and praise be to God.

# POINSETTIAS ORDER FORM



During Advent, poinsettias will be placed in our sanctuary on **Sunday, December 13**. Following worship, sponsors are invited to take their poinsettia home and/or deliver to a loved one. Poinsettias will again grace our worship space on **Sunday, December 20, and Christmas Eve**.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

No. of Plants \_\_\_\_\_ Amount (\$20 per plant) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Paid \_\_\_\_\_

## DESIGNATION

\_\_\_\_\_

(IN HONOR OF)

\_\_\_\_\_

((IN MEMORY OF)

\_\_\_\_\_

(OTHER)

You may place your order and/or payment in the offering box today or mail it to the church office **by Monday, December 14.**

First Presbyterian Friends,

During this 2020 Christmas complicated by COVID-19, please assist the church staff by indicating a response with one of the three choices below related to your current plans for 2020 Christmas Eve worship (or not) as related to FPC-Bryan.

1.  **I/we plan to attend the 6:00 p.m. on-site worship service in the sanctuary on Christmas Eve** with \_\_\_\_\_ in my group. I/we understand that this will include carols, the Lord's Supper, and candlelight, yet physically distanced with masks. *(If as many as 85 reply with their plan to attend on-site at this time, the staff will plan to offer a second service beginning at 7:30 p.m.)*
2.  Understanding that the **6:00 p.m. Christmas Eve service** will be **live-streamed** over the FPC-Bryan YouTube channel *(also available through our church website)*, I/we **do NOT plan to attend** worship in-person on-site at the church this year.
3.  **I do not feel comfortable worshipping in a crowd this year. But** if the staff offered **an opportunity to visit the sanctuary** for an experience of prayer, Lord's Supper, and candlelight, open from **4:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m.** for worshippers to **arrive and depart as desired**, I/we would be interested in participating. *(A pastor will be available at the communion table for this self-guided time of Christmas Eve worship.)* I/we would attend with \_\_\_\_\_ in my group.

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Name (please print)

December 6, 2020