

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



THE SERVICE FOR THE LORD'S DAY

August 9, 2020
10:45 a.m.

First Presbyterian Church, Bryan, Texas
Link to worship videos available at: www.fpcbryan.org

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

Angels, from The Realms of Glory

arr. Kevin Costley

WELCOME

We welcome you to worship today.

Isaac Watts began one of his well-known hymns, "Joy to the World, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King!" That's a paraphrase of Psalm 98: "Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!"

HYMN NO. 133 (st. 1,3,4)

O Come, All Ye Faithful

ADESTE FIDELES

**O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant; O come ye; O come ye to Bethlehem!
Come, and behold him, born the King of angels!**

REFRAIN **O come, let us adore him; O come let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!**

**Sing, choirs of angels; sing in exultation; sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest! REFRAIN**

**Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning; Jesus, to thee be all glory given;
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing! REFRAIN**

PRAYERS OF PRAISE AND CONFESSION

Let us pray ... Sovereign of the universe, vulnerable Prince of Peace, Spirit of new life always: the psalmists described you as shepherd. The prophets described you as The Holy One of all. As we approach you confessing our wanderings and sin, hear our prayers in these moments of silence.

By the gift of insight from your discerning wisdom, Gracious One, we acknowledge that we often prefer receiving more than giving, and that we often prefer being served more than serving others. By your grace, forgive, help, heal, and transform us for reconciled and partnering relationships with all others, so that—day by day—we faithfully share your love, respect, and resources 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

Luke 2:8-20

I John 4:8-12

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

GOSPEL PROCLAMATION

The Background Angel and the Difference God's Love Makes in This World

HYMN NO. 143 (*st. 1*)

Angels, from the Realms of Glory

REGENT SQUARE

**Angels, from the realms of glory, wing your flight o'er all the earth;
you, who sang creation's story, now proclaim Messiah's birth:**

REFRAIN **come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn king!**

HYMN (*st. 1*)

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

BEECHER

**Love, divine, all loves excelling, Joy of heaven, to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling; all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, thou art all compassion; pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation; enter every trembling heart.**

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

As shepherds heard announcements and choral "Glorias," where they worked in fields at night, O God, and were moved to hiking into town with curiosity and wonder, receive our thanks for all that is holy which attracts our attention.

When we are slow to praise and serve, prompt us to pick up the pace. When we are reluctant to go a direction toward which you are encouraging, prompt us further. When anyone's grief is raw, bring your soothing into that person's life. When our attitudes are uncooperative, condition our brittleness for flexibility. When our outlooks are despondent and our pain is oppressive, lift us with trust in you for confidence in grace, healing, and loving care. When justice seems far away, close the distance which separates any person or community from respect, equity, and well-being for each and all. And share your wisdom generously, because we are always standing in the need of your wisdom.

Also, this morning hear us again praying from the words Jesus taught:

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

O Holy Night

Adophe C. Adam; arr. Al Smith

Words by J. S. Dwight

**O holy night, the stars are brightly shining,
It is the night of the dear Saviour's birth;
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
'Till he appeared and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn;**

CHORUS **Fall on your knees, Oh hear the angel voices!
O night divine! O night when Christ was born.
O night, O holy night, O night divine.**

**Truly He taught us to love one another;
His law is Love and His gospel is Peace;
Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother,
And in his name all oppression shall cease,
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful Chorus raise we;
Let all within us praise his Holy name!**

CHORUS **Christ is the Lord, then ever! ever praise we!
His pow'r and glory, evermore proclaim!
His pow'r and glory, evermore proclaim!**

DISMISSAL AND BLESSING

POSTLUDE

O Come, All Ye Faithful

arr. Edwin McLean

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Especially in this time, visit the church website, www.fpcbryan.org, for the newsletter, announcements, worship bulletins, devotionals for children and adults, updates, etc.

Like us on **Facebook** at: www.facebook.com/FPCBryan

NEW!!! on **Instagram**: www.instagram.com. Search for and follow **fpcbryantx1867** and/or **fpcbryan_youth**

Help FPC-Bryan's YouTube channel achieve 350 more subscribers to be eligible for a custom url!

On www.youtube.com, search for First Presbyterian Church of Bryan, Texas, then click **SUBSCRIBE**

Our newsletter, **The Chimes**, continues to be available online, emailed to FPC-Bryan friends, and mailed to local FPC-Bryan members with the printed bulletin and sermon to those without technology. Until further notice, it will not be mailed to its full distribution list. The deadline for the next issue of the newsletter is **NOON, AUGUST 16**, and will be distributed on Wednesday, August 19. This newsletter will cover news from August 13-26.

STAY CONNECTED! with others in this community of faith at Church Updates—FPC-Bryan's online tool for church-related announcements, ways to serve, and current prayer needs. This online tool is **"REAL TIME,"** and users receive a weekly reminder email on Thursdays to view new posts.

Login and create your password-protected account at <https://fpcbtx.churchupdates.org/login>.
For more information, contact Karen in the church office, 979.823.8073 or office@fpcbryan.org.



A WARM WELCOME!

We are delighted to have you worship with us today.

WORSHIP NOTES

PREACHER

Rev. Ted Foote

LITURGISTS

Rev. Emily K. Béghin
Rev. Dr. George E. Klett

MUSICIANS

Michelle Lassiter, *Pianist*
David Kipp,
Director of Music Ministries

COVER ART

“The New Covenant
Is Initiated”
One of 11 faceted windows
in sanctuary of
First Presbyterian Church, Bryan, Texas

AUDIO/VIDEO

Emily K. Béghin

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Glory to God:
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THIS WEEK AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, AUGUST 9, 2020

ONLINE WORSHIP-

To view, visit www.fpcbryan.org

7:00pm Youth (GR 6-12) Sunday Fun Day-on the FPC Basketball Court
(Watch your inbox for details via email!)

MONDAY, AUGUST 3, 2020

TUESDAY, AUGUST 4, 2020

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5, 2020

THURSDAY, AUGUST 6, 2020

FRIDAY, AUGUST 7, 2020

SATURDAY, AUGUST 8, 2020

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, AUGUST 16, 2020

ONLINE WORSHIP-

To view, visit www.fpcbryan.org

7:00pm Youth (GR 6-12) Sunday Fun Day-on the FPC Basketball Court
(Watch your inbox for details via email!)

For regularly scheduled meetings/gatherings,
please be in touch with your group's
moderator, leader, coordinator, or facilitator
to determine alternate meeting options/platforms.



The Covenant Windows

Designed from Biblical stories by the Smith Glass Co. of Ft. Worth in 1966, eleven windows gird the nave, proclaiming the theme of God's covenant with God's people. The five windows at the congregation's left, moving toward the entrance, portray the covenants of the Old Testament. In counterbalance, the five to the right of the chancel depict the covenants of the New Testament. The window above the main entrance behind the balcony is an expansive Nativity scene.

A covenant is a solemn and binding agreement made by two or more individuals or groups, to do or to keep from doing, a specified action with understood accountability. God's compact with human beings is a commitment, a promise—absolute and certain.

The history of the people of Israel commences with the covenant of God with Israel. Abraham, at the direction of God, left Ur of the Chaldees and journeyed to a land where God promised to make his descendants a great people. The origin of Israel's religion is the covenant given to Moses at Mount Sinai and is referred to as the "old covenant."

The "new covenant" is God's gift of His Son in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So it was that, in the beginning of the Third century, Tertullian began to refer to the two collections of scripture as the Old and New Testaments—by literal definition, the old and new covenants.

The New Covenant is Initiated

Complementing the majesty of the great cross of the chancel and commanding the entrance to the sanctuary is the depiction of the Nativity in its beauty and poignance. In brilliant splendor the Holy Family is shown round the manger in which the Christ Child lies.

A sunburst radiating out to the supplemental windows draws attention down the shaft of light to the Family at the center. In the smaller windows are two shepherds who, as on the night of His birth, are guided by the star to worship Him.

Here we find the fulfillment of the promise proclaimed by Jeremiah — the coming of the Messiah — the message of the new covenant.

The Background Angel and the Difference God's Love Makes in This World

Luke 2:8-20; Hebrews 13:1-3; First John 4:8-12

August 09, 2020

Ted V. Foote, Jr.

First Presbyterian Church, Bryan, Texas

“What has he (or she) left us?” It’s a question that might be asked when a group of heirs or potential beneficiaries are awaiting the reading of a will. “What has he (or she) left us?” Occasionally, though, it’s what is said upon discovering something exists which may be more valuable than you or I previously estimated or regarded. That’s how I now feel about the Christmas Window above the balcony over the east entrance to the sanctuary on 31st Street. Since I first saw that window in 2007, and before we began this series considering the eleven covenant-theme faceted-glass windows, my eyes have almost continually focused on the oversized angel. I say “oversized,” but, honestly, I’ve never actually seen an angel. Possibly most angels grow to eight feet tall and have a wingspan of fourteen feet. Then again, for all I know, perhaps they grow taller and have a still wider wingspan. (Maybe this eight foot tall angel is only a sixth grader!) I’m wondering now, however, if this one is not this size in proportion for a reason.

What if angels, though, are not actually as real as human beings, or as real as fish, birds, or four-footed mammals, reptiles, and amphibians? What if angels are a literary creation to make a point? If so, this would mean angels are not scientifically or materially “real,” but, as a literary creation, are important. And this one portrayed as being eight feet tall with wingtips fourteen feet apart, behind Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus, is undeniably prominent in this faceted-glass window’s illustration of Christmas.

Angels are the literary creation of Bible story-tellers. They carry messages from God in the heavens to God’s people on earth below. What size are they? Since the Bible never describes the size of an angel which a story-teller is employing, the angel is the size the artist portrays. In this particular story and this particular window, let’s remember the only angels described in Luke, chapter 2, appear in the pastures outside of town to the shepherds where the shepherds were on duty. One appeared with an announcement about the birth of the child in Bethlehem, and that one is joined by a chorus of angels out there among the grass and rocks. The chorus reinforces and emphasizes the glory-due-to-God for all which the baby represents! “So get going, shepherds,” the message from God through the angels is, “This is life-changing and world changing! Get going!”

Yet, in Luke chapter 2, there is no angel at the stable-crib-room – no angel that can be seen. And this is worth remembering as we consider the artistic creation of the Smith Glass Studio of Fort Worth, brought here and installed in 1966. The Bible story from Luke chapter 2 tells of no angel visible or speaking at the Bethlehem stable labor-delivery-and-nursery-space. Isn’t this, then, exactly the point of this particular artistic portrayal? Isn’t it likely the theological conviction arresting our attention?

I never knew Mr. Gordon William Smith, who was the artistic supervisor and co-owner with his brother of Smith Glass Studio where this and the other ten of these windows were produced. I never knew any of the adults who served as the Building Committee of First Presbyterian Church during 1963, 1964, 1965, and 1966. I know less than five of the junior high youth at that time who were asked to participate in the planning and theme development of these windows; and I knew none of the employees of Smith Studio who might have participated in the actual artistic design details of these windows. Here’s what undoubtedly can be affirmed: No matter what child, youth, or in-studio design artist came up with the idea of portraying an angel eight feet-tall with a fourteen foot wingspan present behind Mary, Joseph, and that baby in a manger with a shepherd at each side, since the Bible story mentions no such creature being there, that background creature is there for a reason, because Gordon W. Smith convinced the Building Committee or the Building Committee convinced Gordon W. Smith that this portrayal was and is legitimate to faith in the world, and was and is important as a conviction of God’s people!

I don’t know about Mr. Gordon W. Smith’s faith journey in its specifics. I know his memorial service was conducted in 2010 from First United Methodist Church in Fort Worth. I also know that his avocation/ his passion beyond his professional craft and business was with Native American art and the story of the people who originated that art. Between the time when he was five years old and his parents

took him to Glacier National Park and the adjoining Blackfoot tribal reservation in 1925, until his dying days 84 years later, he was fascinated with that community of God's people, their gifts, and their challenges and suffering. He once told an interviewer, "My dad was born in Parker County in the 1890s. My grandparents were North Texas pioneers. I never heard them or their friends say a kind word about the Plains Indians; and I don't imagine the Southern Plains Indians had a kind word to say about the pioneers either. Yet from my earliest memories, I always wanted to be a Plains Indian. My parents, who were very considerate people, encouraged me in that. My dad was sympathetic and understanding."

The Native Americans, of course, were originally the "the locals" on this continent, who by pressure from the new arrivals were pushed over and pushed out and finally were pushed onto land called reservations. Across his years, interrupted only by World War II, Gordon Smith cultivated friendships among Native Americans. He came to understand their gifts, their art, their stories of struggles. What does that have to do with this over-sized/ figment-of-your-imagination angel in a faceted glass window?

The Letter to the Hebrews of the New Testament, chapter 13, begins with these words: "Let God's neighborly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for in such encounters many have encountered angels and not been aware. Remember those who are in prison, as though (you are) in prison with them; and those who are ill-treated, since you also will experience struggles." Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for in such encounters many have encountered angels and not been aware. I'm suspecting that Gordon Smith believed that, and wanted to convey such a message, both through artifacts he collected and life-relationships he developed. The First Presbyterian Building Committee may or may not have known about Gordon Smith's avocation and cultivated interest in Native Americans, their historical struggles, their art. Yet they hired him for these windows, because of the person he was and the talent he brought to this project. So we ask, "What, then, did Gordon Smith and that FPC Building Committee leave us?"

In 1977, Archie Jordan wrote a song which launched the career of a young Christian vocalist named Amy Grant (which is a bit different, in context, from the implied romantic Country music version sung by Ronnie Milsap): "What a Difference You Make in My Life" ... "Love to me was just a word in a song that had been way overused. But you gave love a meaning, so I joined in the singing. That's why I want to spread the news. What a difference you've made in my life." It's an easy tune to sing and wonderful lyrics, but it would be a mistake, Amy Grant would tell us, to think that love is easy from God either in your life or in anyone else's life in this world in any time or place. As romanticized as Christmas and faith are characterized as being, this window shows how a stable is not romantic, but the best of a few hard options on a dark night for a woman in labor and her partner. A livestock stall: the best of a few hard options, where a baby embodying the love of the universe is born, recognized by only a very few shepherd-ranch-hands at the time. Poet James Russell Lowell would describe in 1845, how this baby became a man and his life was taken from him upon the scaffold which was a cross prescribed by authorities of Empire and religion; yet the baby grown to be an adult who is crucified on "that cross/ that scaffold (wrote Mr. Lowell) sways the future, and behind . . . standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above God's own."

Friends, the story portrayed through this window by an architectural artist from Fort Worth and authorized by a Church Building Committee in Bryan fifty-four or fifty-five years ago is a story alive before them and after them of God who both becomes involved personally in the time of the Roman Empire as much as in the time of any other empire, and of God, who "from the shadow, keeps watch both above and behind God's own." So much more than an oversized angel is the reality into which Gordon Smith and a Bryan church building committee have hoped you and I and others will grow: It's a reality of life-journeys which will make a supreme difference to each and every other one because we will recognize and partner with all others of God's people in the hard journeys we all share, as God stands within the shadow and keeps watch above and behind God's own." – All honor and praise be to God.