



# *Service For The Lord's Day*

## *Fourth Sunday of Advent*

**December 24, 2023      \*Those who are able, please stand.      10:00 A.M. Worship**

**WELCOME!** We are glad you are worshipping with us today. We pray that you will be challenged and find joy, hope, and celebration in this time spent together in the presence of God. *Please sign and pass the "Ritual of Friendship" booklet; then, return it to the first person.*

### **PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP**

*God of hope, peace, joy, and love, this day is so full! For children, this day is one of excitement and anticipation; for others, this day is filled with responsibilities and activity. Be with us in all our varied circumstances and moods, and help us to dwell in the knowledge that You have come to dwell among us in Jesus Christ, full of grace and truth.*

### **GOD'S PEOPLE GATHER TO WORSHIP**

#### **WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### **PASSING OF THE PEACE**

Leader: The Peace of Christ be with you

**All:      And also with you.**

**\*PASSING OF THE PEACE** *(Please greet nearby worshipers and return to your seat.)*

#### **PRELUDE**

"On Christmas Night All Christians Sing"

arr. Larson

#### **LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH**

Susan Nadenichek

#### **CALL TO WORSHIP**

*(Responsive)*

Leader: Good news of great joy!

**All:      People who walked in darkness now live in great light.**

Leader: Good news of great joy!

**All:      Oppression and war will not have the last word.**

Leader: Good news of great joy!

**All: A Savior is born, Who is the Messiah, the Lord. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace.**

**\*PRAYER OF INVOCATION** *(In Unison)*

**Glorious God, on this Christmas Eve, we sing beloved carols of Bethlehem, of shepherds and angels, of Mary and Joseph, and the infant Son, Jesus, our savior. Is there yet a new song we can sing to You? A song to be learned from the heavens and the earth: Where the roar of the sea, the exultation of the fields, and the joy of the trees are already raised in a chorus of glad rejoicing, ready to welcome You. Even if no ear may hear Your coming, help us hear the music of creation. Then, with the whole cosmos, we will sing of Your salvation, declare Your glory, and in a crescendo of praise, bless Your name: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace! Amen.**

**\*OPENING HYMN** “Good Christian Friends, Rejoice” No. 132

**\*CALL TO CONFESSION** *(Lay Reader)*

**\*PRAYER OF CONFESSION** *(In Unison)*

**God of Love Incarnate, we confess that, with the shepherds, we are terrified of Your glory; in glory’s light we see plainly all that is wrong in the world: how oppression still enslaves; how garments of war are still stained with blood; how those seeking refuge still find no place of safety. We also see what is wrong in us: how passionately we pursue the things of this world but forget to ponder the mystery of faith; how we do not practice the peace You intend in our relationships, our community, or even in the church. Forgive us, we pray, and help us not to be afraid. Like the shepherds, we want to follow and find You. In the Savior’s name, we pray. Amen.**

**\*KYRIE** No. 574

**\*ASSURANCE OF PARDON** *(Lay Reader)*

**\*GLORIA PATRI** No. 579

**GOD’S PEOPLE LISTEN FOR GOD’S WORD**

**PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION** *(In Unison)*

**We would make room for You this night of all nights, dear Lord: room in our minds and hearts; room also in our life together. Let Your Word be born in us anew so that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Your splendor shines in us and through us. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.**

**FIRST READING**

Isaiah 9:2-7

**SPECIAL MUSIC**

“Masters in This Hall”

Hayes

**SECOND READING**

Luke 2:1-20

**SERMON**

“It’s not a Fairy Tale”

Mary Ann Bromley, CRE

**RESPONSIVE READING**

Insert

**GOD’S PEOPLE RESPOND**

**AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

Excerpt from the Brief Statement of Faith

**In life and in death we belong to God. Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, we trust in the One Triune God, the holy one of Israel, Whom alone we worship and serve.**

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

**JOYS AND CONCERNS**

**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, the power and the glory forever. Amen.”**

**OFFERTORY**

“O Holy Night”

Rice

**\*DOXOLOGY**

No. 592

**\*OFFERTORY PRAYER**

*(In Unison)*

**Great God, accept these gifts we offer as we wait in hope for Your coming again. Use all that we have and all that we are as You bring light in every darkness, ease heavy burdens, and turn our endless warring into Your endless peace. In Christ’s name, we ask this. Amen.**

**\*HYMN**

“Joy to the World”

No. 134

**GOD’S PEOPLE GO FORTH TO SERVE**

**\*CHARGE AND BLESSING**

***THE CELEBRATION HAS ENDED;  
LET OUR SERVICE BEGIN!***



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
Welcome Visitors!

The Nursery is available for infants to 4-year-olds-see Donna Latessa  
FPC Vision: Glorify and enjoy God through worship, education, and service.  
FPC's Web Page: <http://www.fpcwarren.org>  
Email address: [info@fpcwarren.org](mailto:info@fpcwarren.org)  
Facebook: First Presbyterian Church of Warren  
Hearing Devices to better enable you to hear the service are available from one of the ushers. Please return the device at the end of the service.

**THE FLOWERS IN THE CHANCEL** this morning are dedicated to the glory of God and in memory of **Loved Ones** by the **Vlad and Ward Families**.

**THE FLOWERS IN FRONT OF THE LECTERN** are dedicated to the Glory of God and in loving memory of **Doug** from **Mary Ann Bromley**.

**THE DEACONS** would like to thank all who remember the Deacons' Cupboard while shopping. They are requesting **toilet paper, Kleenex, and shampoo** for the month of **December**. You may leave your items in the Deacons' box in Fellowship Hall.

**RADIO MINISTRY** is funded today by **Cindy Athya**. Our service is broadcast at 10:00 a.m. Sundays on 1570 AM and 97.7 FM. If you would like to contribute to this ministry, donations designated for the Radio Ministry may be placed in the offering box; contributions may also be mailed to the Church Office with "Radio Ministry" in the memo of the check. Our Radio Ministry costs \$125.00 per week; your financial support will keep this ministry alive.

**2024 OFFERING ENVELOPES** You can pick up your 2024 offering envelopes in Fellowship Hall throughout the month. Names and addresses are printed on the boxes. Any questions, please call the Church Office @ 330-393-1524.

**CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES:** We offer two Christmas Eve services today. The early service will begin at 5:00 p.m., and the candlelight service will be at 10:00 p.m. Join us as we celebrate Christ's birth.

**THE CHURCH OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED** on **Monday, December 25,** and **Monday, January 1.** Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

**OPENING NIGHT** is a family-fun celebration held in downtown Warren on **Dec. 31, 2023,** starting at **6:00 p.m.** There will be entertainment at different venues, and the Chosen Vessel Worship Band will play at FPC. The cost for adults is \$10.00; children ages 3 – 10 are \$5.00, and under 3 are free. You may purchase your tickets at the log cabin on the Square.

**THE ALTERNATIVE GIFT-GIVING COMMITTEE** thanks all who participated in this year's mission. By uniting "heart to heart and hand to hand" (Dr. Seuss), this outreach was another great success because of the ongoing generosity of FPC members and friends. Many will benefit from your kindness. A complete report will be given in an upcoming *Spire*. Thank you! Merry Christmas!

**VACATION:** Marissa Welke and Dave Skipper will be on vacation **December 26 through December 30, 2023.**

**DECEMBER 31 WORSHIP:** The Worship Committee and Session of FPC have decided to cancel the regularly scheduled in-person service of Dec. 31. In its place, a pre-recorded service will be offered by Synod that can be heard on the radio or viewed on Facebook. If you have any questions, please contact the Church Office.



Online giving can be done with your phone using the QR code on the left or use the pew card.

## WEEK-AT-A-GLANCE

Sun, Dec. 24	- <b>Fourth Sunday of Advent</b>
	- <b>Worship</b> ..... 10:00 am
	- <b>Sunday School</b> ..... 10:15 am
Christmas Eve	- <b>Early Service</b> ..... 5:00 pm
	- <b>Candlelight Service</b> ..... 10:00 pm
Mon, Dec. 25	- <b>Merry Christmas</b>
Tues, Dec. 26	- Al-Anon, MC ..... 9:30 am
	- Girl Scouts, FH ..... 5:00 pm
	- NA, MC ..... 7:00 pm
Wed, Dec. 27	- AA, MC ..... 6:30 pm
Thur, Dec. 28	- <b>Prayer Talk</b> ..... 9:00 am
Fri, Dec. 29	- <b>Church Office Closed</b>
Sat, Dec. 30	- AA, MC ..... 11:00 am
Sun, Dec. 31	- <b>New Year's Eve</b>
	- <b>Worship on the Radio and on Facebook</b> ..... 10:00 am
Opening Night	- <b>Chosen Vessel Worship Band</b> .....6:00-9:00 pm

FH-Fellowship Hall   MC-Mable Culver   P-Parlor   B-Badger Hall   T-Tieffle Lounge   Z-Zoom

GUEST PASTOR:  
DIRECTOR OF MUSIC MINISTRY:  
DIRECTOR OF FAMILY AND YOUTH MINISTRY:  
LAY READER:  
RADIO, LIGHTS AND SOUND SYSTEM:  
VIDEO PROJECTION:

*Mary Ann Bromley, CRE*  
*Melanie A. Vlad*  
*Marissa Welke*  
*Susan Nadenichek*  
*Alexis Musgrove*  
*Bob Stahl*

## **There Was a Time: An Advent Poem** *(responsive)*

There was a time when there was no time,  
When darkness reigned as king,  
When a formless void was all that there was  
in the nothingness of eternity,  
When it was night.  
But over the void and over the night, Love watched.  
There was a time when time began.  
It began when Love spoke.

**Time began for light and life, for splendor and grandeur.  
Time began for seas and mountains, for flowers and birds.  
Time began for the valleys to ring with the songs of life  
and for the wilderness to echo with the wailing of wind  
and howling of animals.  
And over the earth, Love watched.**

There was a time when time began to be recorded.  
A time when Love breathed and a new creature came to life.  
A new creature so special that it was in the image and likeness of Love -  
Of Love who is God.  
And so man was born and the dawn of a new day shone on the world.  
And over man, Love watched.

**But there came a time when the new day faded.  
A time when man who was like God tried to be God.  
A time when the creature challenged the creator.  
A time when man preferred death to life and darkness to light.  
And so the new day settled into twilight.  
And over the darkness, Love watched.**

There was a time of waiting in the darkness.  
A time when man waited in the shadows,  
And all creation groaned in sadness.  
There was waiting for Love to speak again--for Love to breathe again.  
And kings and nations and empires rose and faded in the shadows.  
And Love waited and watched.

**Finally, there came a time when Love spoke again.  
A Word from eternity--a Word  
Spoken to a girl who belonged to a people not known by the world  
Spoken to a girl who belonged to a family not known by her people  
To a girl named Mary.  
And all creation waited in hushed silence for the girl's answer.  
And Mary spoke her yes.  
And Love watched over Mary.**

And so there came a time when Love breathed again  
When Love breathed new life into Mary's yes.  
And a new day dawned for the World  
A day when light returned to darkness, when life returned to dispel death  
And so a day came when Love became man--a mother bore a child.  
And Love watched over Love--a Father watched His Son.  
And, lastly, there came a time when you and I became a part of time.  
Now is the time that you and I wait.  
Now we wait to celebrate what the world waited for.  
And as we wait to celebrate what was at one time, we become a part of  
that time,  
A time when a new dawn and a new dream and a new creation began for  
man.  
And as a part of time, Love waits and Love watches over us.

*– Fr. Joseph Breighner*

