



Foreground art by
Kately Lane (age 13)



December 14, 2025
THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT



First Presbyterian Church Covington, GA

✠ You are invited to stand in body OR in spirit ❖

Gathering As God's Beloved People

Gathering Music

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

Arr. Richard S. Willis

We Three Kings

Traditional Carol

Sing We Now of Christmas

French Carol, arr. Don Wyrzen

Loucy Hay, piano; Alice Walker, organ

Invitation to Worship

Chiming of the Hour

Prelude

The First Noel

Arr. Ted Smith & D. Hustad

Loucy Hay, piano; Alice Walker, organ

Welcome & Announcements

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

The Goddard Family

In a world full of fear, where do you see glimmers of joy?

I see glimmers of joy in birthday candles and homemade cards. I see joy in the laughter of children and the delight of grandparents. I see joy in meals around the table and in the singing of Christmas songs.

You are right. Even in a fearful world, joy is all around us.

Today we light the candle of joy as a reminder of this good news. May this flicker of light help us remember that even in a fearful world, joy is here. Joy is real.

We only have to look for it.

Thanks be to God for that good news! Amen.

✠ Call to Worship

Jeremiah said, "I am only a boy."

Moses said, "Who am I to do this work?"

Mary said, "How can this be?"

We often say, "But God, I am afraid."

Even when we are afraid, God invites us closer.

So may we trust the Inviter.

May we heed God's invitation.

May we summon our courage and sing God's praise.

Let us worship our courageous, inviting, calling God. Amen!

✦Praise Hymn 93

Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates

TRURO

✦Call to Confession

✦Community Confession

Courageous God,

you invite us to live into our call.

You invite us to act, to serve, and to trust.

Instead of responding with a resounding "yes,"

we often hide our face.

We dig our heels in.

We look for someone else to volunteer.

Spark courage in us.

Remind us that every person is capable of making a difference.

Remind us that even when we're scared, we are not alone.

You invite us forward.

With baby steps we hope, we pray, amen.

✦Assurance of God's Love & Forgiveness

Family of faith,

no matter where your path has led you in the past, today is a new day.

So join me in declaring this good news:

We are known. We are sent to serve.

May we step forward in faith, always moving closer to God's call.

Church, we are forgiven!

We are free to try again.

✦Hymn of Response 634

To God Be the Glory

TO GOD BE THE GLORY

✦Passing of the Peace

May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

And also with you!



Proclaiming the Word

Prayer for God's Wisdom & Understanding

Children's Christmas Pageant *A Very Mixed Up Christmas Pageant*

Pageant Music *Silent Night*
Away in a Manger
Go, Tell It on the Mountain

Scripture Reading *Luke 1:26-39* Pew Bible page 56

Reflection *Even in Fear, We are Called Forward* Rev. Neeley Rentz Lane



Responding to the Word

✦ **Response 100** *My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout* STAR OF THE COUNTY DOWN

Offering Our Gifts: An Invitation to Generosity

You are invited to "Text to Give" your offering! Text FPCCOV followed by your donation amount to: 73256 and follow the link to give online, or scan the QR Code to visit the giving page! Select "2025 Pledge" if you made a pledge during last year's stewardship season. Select "Non-Pledge" for a general offering.*



Offertory *What Child Is This?* Arr. Tom Fetteke
Loucy Hay, piano

✦ **Hymn of Response 137** *He Came Down* HE CAME DOWN
He came down that we may have joy; he came down that we may have joy;
he came down that we may have joy; hallelujah forever more

✦ **Prayer of Dedication & Gratitude**



Being the Church in the World

✦ **Sending Hymn 539** *We Will Go Out with Joy* WE WILL GO OUT WITH JOY

✦ **Charge & Benediction**

In a fearful world, may you look for God's spirit.
May you reach for each other's hands.
May you choose courage whenever you can.

SILENT NIGHT

Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright.

Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child.

Holy infant so tender and mild,

Sleep in heavenly peace. Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight.

Glories stream from heaven afar

Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia,

Christ the Savior is born! Christ the Savior is born.

Silent night, holy night! Son of God love's pure light.

Radiant beams from Thy holy face

With dawn of redeeming grace,

Jesus Lord, at Thy birth. Jesus Lord, at Thy birth.

AWAY IN A MANGER

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,

The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.

The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,

The little Lord Jesus asleep in the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,

But little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.

I love Thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky

And stay by my cradle, 'til morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay

Close by me forever, and love me, I pray.

Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,

And take us to heaven, to live with Thee there.

GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN

Go tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere,

Go tell it on the mountain, Our Jesus Christ is born.

When I was a seeker,

I sought both night and day

I asked the Lord to help me,

And he showed me the way.

Go tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere,

Go tell it on the mountain, Our Jesus Christ is born.

The shepherds feared and trembled,

When, lo! Above the Earth

Rang out the angel chorus,

That hailed our Savior's birth

Go tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere,

Go tell it on the mountain, Our Jesus Christ is born.

Down in a lowly manger,

our humble Christ was born

And brought us all salvation,

That blessed Christmas morn.

Go tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere.

Go tell it on the mountain, Our Jesus Christ is born.

**And in all things, may you remember that good news is louder than fear.
In the name of the one who calls,
the one who sends,
and the one who journeys with—
go in peace and be not afraid.**

Amen.

✦ Postlude

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
Loucy Hay, piano; Alice Walker, organ

Felix Mendelssohn
Arr. Ron & Linda Sprunger



Serving Today

**We would like to thank everyone who helped make today's pageant possible!
Thank you for sharing your time and talents with us and our children!**

Christmas Pageant Guardians | Kenny Compton, Jo Anna Fish, Hannah Freeman
Beverly Kratz, Ansley Holder, Nichole Howell & our FPC Nursery Workers!

Christmas Pageant Cast

Lorene Atkins	McKenna Boston	Sebastian Boston
Parker Firkus	Elizabeth Fraser Browning	James Freeman
Wesley Freeman	Theodore Goddard	Lilla Harris
Thornton Holder	Kora Howell	MaryRentz Lane
Nova Puckett	Emma Stillerman	Nora Stillerman
Layla Sullivan	Vincent Sullivan	Emmaline Usry
		Lily Wells



Usher Chair | Jodi Atkins **Tech Team** | Kraig Howell, Laramy Wells
Liturgists | Amanda Goddard, Jonathan Goddard



Advent Notes

Worship Art—This week's worship guide cover art is composed of art from some of our FPC Kids and Youth! The past several years, we have combined nativity art from Audrey F., Harper H., Kora H., and Paisley L. which can be seen in the upper corners of the cover. This year we have added to the growing nativity with a drawing of Mary and Joseph holding the light of the world, Jesus Christ, from Kately Lane (age 13) which is highlighted in the foreground of the worship guide cover.

What Do You Fear? Advent Series—Our 2025 Advent series “What Do You Fear?: Insisting on Hope This Advent” was created by the creative team at Sanctified Art. The following is their message on the series:

Luke’s Gospel begins the story of Jesus with this opening line: “In the time of Herod...” This detail may seem minor to modern readers; however, it reveals layers of information about the fearful world Jesus entered, one filled with rampant oppression, economic disparity, uncertainty, and instability. A world not so unlike our own. And yet, throughout the stories of Christ’s birth, we hear the whispers of angels delivering a surprising message: “Do not fear.” When Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and the magi are each called into God’s redemptive story, they do not deny their fears—they move through them. They ask questions, hold fast to courage, trust in good news, and say, “Here I am, Lord.” When we find ourselves in fearful times, can we acknowledge our fears while also insisting on hope?

This Advent series takes seriously the angels’ message and trusts that Christ’s birth truly is good news of great joy for all people. We will look at the fear and terror looming in the background during the time of King Herod and consider the fears we hold now. Fear can divide and paralyze us and even be used as a tool for oppression. But what if we formed a different relationship with fear? Can we acknowledge fear without letting it rule us? Might we catalyze our fears into love and action? What if naming our fears helps us see more clearly how God is breaking in and where God is at work?

As you journey through this season, may your hope become gritty and resilient. May you remember: hope that trembles is still hope. This season, let us insist on hope and trust that good news is greater than fear.



Worship Practices

Offering Cards—The offering is an act of worship! We encourage you to place something in the offering plate as it comes to you. Throughout the pews you will find a selection of “offering cards” which we invite you to use to share how you intend to be a good steward this week. *Connect* with us as a newcomer by sharing about yourself or your family. *Pray* with us by offering a prayer which will be shared with the pastor. *Serve* with us by telling us how you will use your time and talent this week. Or *Give* with us by placing either a card to represent your online gift or physical cash or check offering. These offering cards are an invitation to generosity!

End-of-Year Giving for 2025—As we approach the end of the fiscal year, some of you may be planning to make donations to the church for the 2025 tax year or to fulfill your pledge and giving for the year. If you wish your donations to be credited for this year they must reach the church or be postmarked no later than December 31st. Contact our finance administrator, Peni Kehoe, with your questions. *Peni Kehoe: (770)786-7321, ext. 1011 | peni@fpccov.org*

Accessibility—A limited supply of large print worship guides and hymns are available in the narthex. Please return the large print binder to an usher at the end of worship so it may be updated for next week. If you'd like to learn about connecting your Bluetooth hearing aids to our Sanctuary sound system we invite you to talk to our Tech Team.

Use—One License #A-728728 authorizes the use of music printed in our worship guide and streamed online. *Messages and data rates may apply when using Text to Give. Message frequency varies. Text HELP to 73256 for help. Text STOP to 73256 to cancel. “What Do You Fear?” Advent Series | Liturgy by Rev. Sarah Speed | Graphic design by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman | Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org | Christmas Pageant “A Very Mixed Up Christmas Pageant” by Gwynne Watkins; Beat by Beat Press.

First Presbyterian Church Staff		
Neeley Rentz Lane	Senior Pastor	Nursery Staff
Mark Fiddie	Dir. of Music & Worship Arts	Hattie Bellinger
Denise Gabriel	Dir. of Community Preschool	Catrina Crowe
Peni Kehoe	Finance Administrator	Akeelah Fletcher
Catherine Laseter	Dir. of Communications	Jahniyah Greene
	& Operations	Jordyn Williams
Alice Walker	Organist CAGO, AAGO	Sylvia Woods

Emergency Response Team
In the event of an emergency including tornado, fire, intruder, and medical emergencies, the Emergency Response Team will lead the church's response and may be identified by wearing yellow visibility vests. If these people are not present for an emergency secondary responders will wear ERT vests. Please follow any directions given by the following people in the event of an emergency:
Primary Point Person—Neeley Rentz Lane
Facility/Security Response—Kenny Compton, Stan Hall, John McCarthy
Medical Response—Nichole Howell, Pam Stillerman

Officers	
Reaching Out	
Sara Chini	Witness (2026)
Stephanie Scarborough	Witness (2027)
Engaging	
Charles Ardis	Faith Formation (2025)
Krista Firkus	Faith Formation (2027)
Nichole Howell	Worship (2025)
Hardy Fortson Sideris	Worship (2027)
Belonging	
Gary Boteler	Finance (2027)
Pam Stillerman	Welcome (2026)
Connecting (Deacons)	
Cathy Dobbs	Pastoral Care (2027)
Denny Dobbs	Pastoral Care (2027)
Dana Hall	Faith & Fellowship (2025)
Darcel Tabb	Faith & Fellowship (2027)
More	
Jodi Atkins	Preschool (2026)
Kenny Compton	Facilities (2026)
Jo Anna Fish	Personnel (2027)
John McCarthy	Clerk of Session
Danny Vining	Personnel (2025)

Advent Poinsettias

The poinsettias that are decorating the Sanctuary this Advent season were provided through donations in memory and in honor of the following people.

Donations over the cost of flowers are divided and given to both CarePortal and FaithWorks.

Fill out the form available in the Narthex and at fpccov.org/advent and submit it to the office by the end of the day on Tuesday, December 16 to have your dedication included in the Christmas Eve Worship Guide.

In honor of:

- ◇ The Elders & Deacons of FPC
Bart & Ruth Frankena
- ◇ Memama
Neeley Rentz Lane
- ◇ Mom, dad, sister, and brother
Yvonne Hill-Davenport
- ◇ Our Children & Grandchildren
Curtis & Carolyn Watson
- ◇ Carol McGiboney
The Weesners
- ◇ Eleanor Scarborough,
Sherri Bolton,
Betty Bailey
Miriam Wheeler
- ◇ Miriam G. Wheeler
Miriam Witherspoon-Wheeler

Given by:

In memory of:

- ◇ Brenda Buckelew
Jennifer & Reid Buckelew
- ◇ JoAnn Crews
Tom Crews
- ◇ Michael Dobbs
Cathy & Denny Dobbs
- ◇ Our parents
Larry & Day Kennon
- ◇ Frank Colladay
Neeley Rentz Lane
- ◇ Brenda Buckelew, Memaw
*Kim, Homer, Riley
& Chloe McSwain*
- ◇ Jim Stillerman
Pam Stillerman
- ◇ Our Parents
Curtis & Carolyn Watson
- ◇ Guy McGiboney,
Grady Daugherty,
Barbara & Jack Weesner
The Weesners
- ◇ Marvin Wells
The Wells Family
- ◇ Penny Blakeney,
Doug Bolton,
Jack Wheeler
Miriam Wheeler
- ◇ Jack Wheeler,
James & Miriam Gardner
Miriam Witherspoon-Wheeler
- ◇ Nana G
Braden Woodham



In Our Thoughts & Prayers

Most recent prayer requests

Requests will be moved to "ongoing" after three weeks unless the office is notified.

- ✦ Mark Wells, family of Lily Wells
- ✦ Bob Woodham, family of Angie Woodham - recovering from a fall
- ✦ Norma C. Couch, friend of Starr & Taryn Puckett - awaiting a heart transplant

Ongoing prayer requests

Requests will be removed after six weeks unless the office is notified.

- ✦ Glen Kitts, friend of Chris Martin - in hospital with collapsed lung
- ✦ Dan Walden - bone marrow transplant
- ✦ Kayla Legg, friend of Kim Lindsey - praying for a healthy pregnancy
- ✦ Bill Loeble, friend of Billy Wade - cancer

- ✦ Nancy, friend of Mark & Jennifer Fogarty - stage IV pancreatic cancer
- ✦ Donald Vining, brother of Danny Vining
- ✦ Virginia, mother of FPCP teacher Tammi Welch
- ✦ James Eason, grandfather of Hannah Freeman
- ✦ Ricky, friend of John Leavitt - colon cancer
- ✦ Jill Chandler, sister of Brad Hawley - cancer
- ✦ Katelyn Jackson, niece of Kim McSwain - stage 3 breast cancer
- ✦ Sherri Thomas, friend of Kim Lindsey - recovering from blood clot removal
- ✦ Patrick Carmichael
- ✦ Austin Belknap, friend of Angie Woodham - breast cancer

- ✦ Parker Ford, friend of Angie Woodham - cancer
- ✦ Ruth Bradshaw, mother of Kim Lindsey - home for physical therapy after fall
- ✦ Mr. Mosley, friend of Ruby Wells - seizures

Independent and Assisted Living

- ✦ Reid Buckelew - Prema at Ashton Hills
- ✦ Jean Elder - Florida with her daughter
- ✦ Dot Fincher - Madison, GA
- ✦ Louly Hay - Presbyterian Village Athens
- ✦ Carol McGiboney - Prema at Ashton Hills
- ✦ Jon Paschal - Annandale Village
- ✦ Louise White - Prema at Ashton Hills

Military Service

- ✦ Koen Ardis - Navy

Prayer requests and updates may be given the pastor, put in the offering plate, or emailed to catherine@fpccov.org

JOIN US FOR BREAKFAST & PJS ON SUNDAY, DEC. 28

All are invited to bring a breakfast dish to share to the upper elevator hallway and kids are welcome to wear their PJs as we enjoy a potluck breakfast at 9:45am!



Sunday School will not be held on the Sunday after Christmas

We invite you to bring diapers with you to worship on Dec. 28 as we bring our gifts to celebrate the birth of the Christ Child.

You may place your donations in the narthex. Diapers will be donated to a variety of non profits in need of baby care at this time.

The Witness Committee is collecting donations for the Warming Center.



A collection bin is in the Narthex. The following items are being requested:

- instant oatmeal
- instant grits
- granola bars
- pop tarts
- bottled water
- microwaveable cups of noodles/soup
- backpacks
- new gloves
- new socks
- new underwear (adult)
- baby wipes
- gloves
- hats
- travel size toiletries

Sunday School

Sunday School classes are held at 9:45am.
Children's Class (PreK-4th) | Youth Class (5th+)
Foundations Adult Class | The Wired WORD

The Longest Night

Bring your grief.
Bring your weariness.
Bring your fatigue,
and allow yourself
a quiet space to reflect
and draw near to God
in this quiet service
of healing.

**Wednesday, December 17th
5:30pm in the Sanctuary**

Staff Love Gift

Each year during the Christmas Season, we at FPC Covington, like to show our appreciation and gratitude to our church staff members who give so much of themselves on our behalf throughout the course of each year. We ask for your participation in this effort by making a contribution to the **"Staff Love Gift" fund by TODAY Sunday, December 14th**

Christmas Eve

Wed. Dec. 24 at 6:00pm

IN THE SANCTUARY AND
ON FACEBOOK LIVE

FPC Office Holiday Schedule

The FPC Office will be closed Wed., December 24
through Thu., January 1.

Questions about end-of-year giving may still be sent to our Finance
Administrator, Peni Kehoe but responses may be delayed.



YOUNG-ISH ADULTS CHRISTMAS PARTY!

DEC. 16 | 5:30PM

AT THE LANE'S HOUSE

Ask Neeley if you need the address

Childcare at FPC beginning at 5:00pm

POINSETTIAS

Dedicate a
Poinsettia for
the Sanctuary
to a loved one
this Advent

FIND THE FORM IN THE
NARTHEX OR AT
FPCCOV.ORG/ADVENT

Deadline to donate and submit
names for the Christmas Eve
worship guide is THIS TUESDAY,
December 16th

Services this Advent at FPC

IN PERSON AND ON FACEBOOK

Sundays at 11:00am

Dec. 21 Give Me Your Hand

Dec. 28 Breakfast & PJs

Jan. 4 STAR WORDS

Christmas Caroling

Sunday, December 14th at 5:00pm

Meet at FPC to carol in Dorchester Place

Sunday, December 14

Third Sunday of Advent

Staff Love Gift Deadline

9:45am Sunday School

11:00am Worship—Christmas Pageant

12:30pm Retreat Planning Team Meeting

5:00pm Christmas Caroling

Monday, December 15

6:30pm Staff Christmas Party

Tuesday, December 16

Poinsettia Dedication Deadline

12:00pm LAST Lectio Divina of the year

5:30pm Young-ish Adult Christmas Party

Wednesday, December 17

10:00am Coffee & Conversation

5:00pm Youth Operation Christmas Cheer

5:30pm Worship—The Longest Night

Sunday, December 21

Fourth Sunday of Advent

9:45am Sunday School

11:00am Worship—Take My Hand

Tuesday, December 23

Office Open with Limited Staff

Wednesday, December 24

Christmas Eve

6:00pm Worship—Christmas Eve

Saturday, December 27

9:00am Meals on Wheels Delivery

Sunday, December 28

First Sunday After Christmas

9:45am Breakfast & Pjs

11:00am Worship—Fire for Justice

Wednesday, December 24

—Thursday, January 1

Office CLOSED