

The Christmas Pageant: Prepping for the Landing of Christ



*Third Sunday
of Advent*

December 12, 2021



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 firstpresgfmt

PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

*How astounding to know that you rejoice over us, O God! (Zephaniah 3:17)
Help us live in and share this assurance of your deep love.*

The prophet Zephaniah declares: “Rejoice and exult with all your heart. ... The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst.” (3:14-15, English Standard Version) **Welcome** to worship. With voices full of excitement, attitudes full of enthusiasm, and spirits full of joy let us actively give our worship to God.

Be sure to check-in through **social media** or text message to let your family members, friends and followers know you are here to **praise God**. And like us on Facebook.

Please use the time before worship begins to prepare yourself for your **offering of worship** to God. Feel free to listen to music; read and meditate on the Scripture reading for today; or silently meditate on God’s grace, emptying your mind of all distractions.

All **music** copied, projected, and live streamed with permission, CCLI #2716126, OneLicense A-722348, CSPL 104723.

All **scripture** passages quoted or referred to are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), unless noted.

If you are comfortable standing, please do so when you see an asterisk “*”. There are **hearing enhancement** devices and **large print** bulletins available from the ushers. Please join us after worship for **fellowship** downstairs in the Social Hall.

*We are the Body of Christ
Joyfully Worshiping God
Compassionately Caring for One Another
Humbly Serving Others
Continually Growing Together in God’s Word
And Actively Sharing the Good News of Christ*

May our worship be pleasing to God!

GATHERING BEFORE GOD

Prelude

Mary Had a Baby, Arr. Mark Hayes

Time of Silence

Welcome

Lighting of the Advent Candle (Leader **People**)

Song #137

He Came Down

*He came down that we may have hope;
he came down that we may have hope;
he came down that we may have hope;
hallelujah forevermore.*

*He came down that we may have peace;
he came down that we may have peace;
he came down that we may have peace;
hallelujah forevermore.*

*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 forevermore.*

*Song of Praise #119

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

*Our Confession and God's Forgiveness (Leader **People**)

As John the Baptist called the people to repent,

as Jesus calls us now,

we turn to the one who is both judge and savior,

trusting that repentance opens the door to new life,

and that peace beyond all measure

has been promised to us.

And so,

in our need for repentance,

we confess our sins...

**We have broken your commands
then try to hide from you.**

**We refuse
and resist
your love.**

**We do not live in peace
with your creation
or your people.**

**We have not trusted your word,
and we are afraid.**

**We are sorry,
for wrongdoings that ensnare us,
and wrongdoings that we have chosen.**

**Forgive us,
restore us,
and turn our shame into praise.**

**Turn us back to you.
Turn us toward each other in love...**

(Silent Personal Prayers of Confession)

In the name of the one God
who lives
and moves
among us,

we are forgiven.

The Lord has taken away the judgments against us.

There is no need for us worry.

Live in peace.

HEARING THE GOOD NEWS

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RESPONDING TO THE GOOD NEWS

*Song of Response #134

Joy to the World

Giving of God's Tithe and Our Offerings

Offertory *In dulci jubilo (Good Christian Friends, Rejoice)*, Paul Manz, Op. 17

Prayer of Dedication (Leader **People**)

See Malachi 3:1-4

Gracious God,
in gratitude for all that you have given us,

we bring

our tithes,

offerings,

and labor

to help feed a world hungry for

healing and hope;

all for the sake of Jesus.

Amen.

Prayers of the People and *The Lord's Prayer*

(tune: *Away in a Manger*)

SENDING FOR SERVICE

*Sending Song #136

Go, Tell It on the Mountain

*Charge (Leader **People**)

We are the Body of Christ;

Joyfully worshiping God,

compassionately caring for one another,

humbly serving others,

continually growing together in God's Word,

and actively sharing the Good News of Christ.

*Blessing (Leader **People**)

See Philippians 4:4-9

Always rejoice in Jesus.

Again I say, Rejoice!

Ask God for what you need,

simply,

directly,

trustingly,

and always with thanksgiving.

We will imitate what we have

learned and received

heard and seen

in the Scriptures and the saints,

and be assured

that the peace of God,

which cannot be grasped or measured,

will guard our hearts and minds in Jesus.

Go out in peace – Christ’s peace.

Amen.

*Postlude

Go, Tell It on the Mountain, Arr. John W. Schaum

May our service be pleasing to God!

SPECIAL NOTES ABOUT TODAY’S WORSHIP

Advent is the first season of the Liturgical, or Christian, Year. It begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day. Our word “advent” comes from the Latin *adventus* which means “coming”: Christ has come, Christ is coming, and Christ will come. The season of Advent is about Jesus, the Word, “coming.” It’s about anticipating and preparing for Jesus’ arrival. God comes to us in many and various ways. God speaks to us through the prophets and saints. God comes and speaks to us when we are listening. God comes in the beauty and mysteries of nature. Most of all, God comes in the person of Jesus, speaking to his listeners face to face. The color of Advent is purple (or blue) signifying the royalty of the one who comes and our penitence at his coming.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Gift of the Nutcracker *The Nutcracker* was first performed in 1892 and quickly became a holiday tradition, one that continues for many families to this day. In *The Gift of the Nutcracker*, Matt Rawle takes a look at this Christmas classic in a new way – through the lens of faith. Rawle uses the iconic tale to help us understand God’s greatest gift of the Christ child and of the kingdom Christ came to build. Much like Clara, we are all caught in an Advent season, pondering a most extraordinary gift. Join us throughout Advent on Sundays at 8:15 a.m. or 11:30 a.m., or on Thursdays at 6:30 p.m. Books are still available.

On Wednesday, December 29th at 6:00 p.m. we will gather for dinner and to watch a performance of *The Nutcracker*.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” (Matthew 5:4) Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year; except when it’s not. During the holidays, for many of us, the magnitude of our weary world weighs on our hearts and minds. Our grief and sorrow feel stark against the backdrop of festivity and joy that everyone else seems to be feeling. Many can suffer for all kinds of reasons, whether it be chronic pain, broken relationships, shattered dreams, fragile faith, illness, disease, or unexpected loss. Grief and sorrow feel particularly sharp when compared to the festivity and joy everyone else seems to be feeling. For some, Christmas is not merry, Christmas is blue. Yes, blue as in the blues. As in “I am feeling blue.” On Sunday, December 19 from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. we’ll offer comfort to those who are feeling blue this Christmas season with our **Blue Christmas Reflections and Worship**. From 3:00 – 4:00 p.m. there will be self-guided reflection stations for those feeling blue to experience the hope that comes with waiting for Jesus to appear. From 4:00 – 5:00 p.m. we will join in worship, looking for comfort that can only come from God, in our time of mourning.

Winter Bible Bash (think winter VBS) *Finding Jesus under the Sea* will be Monday December 27 – Thursday December 30 from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. There will be snacks, games, crafts, Bible study, and much more. To volunteer to help, or to pre-register (space is limited), call the church office.

Holiday Shop n’ Drop If you are looking for a way to go Christmas shopping without little eyes and ears spying on what you are doing, bring your kiddos to this safe and fun event so that you can shop freely. Friday, December 17th from 6:00-8:00 p.m. or Saturday, December 18th from 11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. There is no charge for this event, a freewill offering will be taken. There will be a light meal, crafts, games and a variety of activities available. Register by calling the church office!

Reading a book by yourself is pleasant. Reading a book and talking about it with others who have also read it is a pleasure. **River Readers** will start 2022 by reading and discussing “Sensible Shoes “by Sharon Garlough Brown. The novel tells the story of four strangers who come together on a journey of discovery. On review says, “...this is not simply a novel. It is a spiritual experience.” Join us January 12th at 10:00 a.m. in the library.

The next Beth Moore Bible study will be **Wising Up**. This is a 4 parts series with 3 sessions in each part. The first 3-session part will be Monday, January 10th – Monday, January 24th at 6:30 p.m. in the Ross Library, and by Zoom. If you would like more information, please contact Alissa or call the church office.

Tithes and Offerings may be mailed to the church office or made online through our website, www.firstpresgfmt.org.

Our times of worship are **live streamed** on our YouTube channel and Facebook page. Search for “First Presbyterian Church Great Falls MT” on either site. Recordings of previous live streams will remain on both sites. Direct links to upcoming live streams can be found on our website and in the weekly Saturday morning email. If for some reason, the live stream fails, we will establish a new stream connection. Return to our YouTube channel home page, or Facebook page, to find the new link.

Souler Energy, our weekly Sunday Worship broadcast, can be viewed every Sunday at 9:30 a.m. on KFBB TV Channel 5 (cable channel 9).

Prayer Partners Prayer requests may be made by calling Jane Snowberger (761-0518) or Marla Wilckens (452-0226).

Upper Room, Bulletins, Sermon Manuscripts If you would like any of these mailed to you on a weekly basis, please let the office know.

Pictorial Directory We are organizing an inhouse production of an updated pictorial directory. To help us, please send us an individual picture of everyone in your household, as well as a group picture. If you prefer, we can arrange for someone to take the pictures at the church, or in your home. If it is convenient for you, today there will be an opportunity to have pictures taken after worship.

If you are not receiving **emails**, including the Saturday morning “Church Update”, please send your current email address to the office, secretary@firstpresgfmt.org.

Remember: articles for the PRESS, or eblast, are to be e-mailed directly to Faith at publications@firstpresgfmt.org. If you use her personal email address, or the office email of secretary@firstpresgfmt.org, there is no guarantee they will be noticed for inclusion in a timely manner.

All **church meetings**, classes, and events (including worship) held at the church are hybrid events, which means you can attend in person, or online through either YouTube or Zoom, depending on the event. Please respect the comfort and safety level of others, including honoring social distancing and potentially wearing a mask. Also, if you are not feeling well, please stay home and join us online (either on YouTube or Zoom).

Financial Update:	November	December to Date	Year to Date
Income	\$40,148.99	\$57,785.48	\$452,663.68
Expenses	<u>\$44,075.95</u>	<u>\$13,327.84</u>	<u>\$460,635.92</u>
Difference	(\$3,926.96)	\$44,457.64	(\$7,972.24)

WOW (Worship on Wednesday) has programs for children, youth, young adults, and adults. Our hope is to attract community members as well as congregation members. Childcare will be available for all under 3. Dinner is served at 6:00 p.m., with programs/classes to follow. Invite a neighbor and join us!

When the frost is on the pumpkin, it's time to start leafing through that cookbook collection – or the internet – for the stews, breads, soups, casseroles and cookies that seem to taste best in autumn. The new **church cookbook**, Feeding the Flock, is now available. It was put together by Presbyterian Women from recipes shared by the congregation. The book is available in the church office and soon, during Fellowship Time. Price is \$15 for one or two for \$27. As an added bonus, if you purchase the books during Fellowship Time, you may receive a vintage First Presbyterian collectible at no additional cost, as long as supplies last.

COMING WORSHIP THEMES

December 19, 2021 – 10:00 a.m.

4th Sunday of Advent

Micah 5:2-5a

The Coming Peace

Advent Candles: WOW

December 19, 2021 – 3:00 p.m.

Blue Christmas Reflections and Worship

December 24, 2021

Christmas Eve Candlelight & Communion

The Candle Creche

Advent Candles: Kerri and Jan Nelson

December 26, 2021

1st Sunday of Christmas

Colossians 3:12-17

New Clothes for Christmas

January 2, 2021

2nd Sunday of Christmas

Winter Bible Bash Celebration

January 9, 2021

Baptism of the Lord Sunday

Mark 1:1–11

Biblical Practices for Faithful Living:

Baptize – Remember Your Baptism

Communion

MAY GOD BLESS THIS WEEK

Unless noted, all events are hybrid (in person and live-streamed or via Zoom)

Today, Sunday, December 12	8:15 a.m.	The Gift of the Nutcracker Class
	10:00 a.m.	Worship
	11:45 a.m.	Christmas Mid-day Meal
Tuesday, December 14	9:00 a.m.	Staff Meeting
	4:00 p.m.	Finance Committee
	5:30 p.m.	Property Committee
Wednesday, December 15	7:00 a.m.	Men's Group
	6:00 p.m.	WOW (Worship on Wednesday) for all ages
Thursday, December 16	6:30 p.m.	The Gift of the Nutcracker Class (Zoom only)
Friday, December 17	6:00 p.m.	Holiday Drop n' Shop
Saturday, December 18	11:00 a.m.	Holiday Drop n' Shop
Next Sunday, December 19	8:15 a.m.	The Gift of the Nutcracker Class
	10:00 a.m.	Worship
	11:15 a.m.	Fellowship Time
	11:30 a.m.	The Gift of the Nutcracker Class
	3:00 p.m.	Blue Christmas Reflections & Worship

The Officers and Staff of First Presbyterian Church welcome you
to this time of worship and invite you to join us in ministry!

Head of the Church

Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior

Session

John Ritchie (Moderator)

Ginger Blevins
Alissa Brown
Mary Fagenstrom

Randy Houtz (Clerk)
Sharon Lindstrom
Gary McFerrin

Scott Royce
Jane Snowberger
Jennie Yates

Deacons

Bruce Buer (Mod.)
Shirley Davis

Barb Flaherty
Tom Hazen

Dave Herman
Chris Pfof

Deb Skinner
Marla Wilckens

Staff

Rev. John E Ritchie, Pastor (906-322-9490)

Alissa Brown, CE Director

Joan Schmidt, Ministry of Music

Craig Anton, Facilities Manager

Keyna Myers, Office Manager

Faith Janes, Publications Secretary

Liza Nosich, Accounts Payable/Payroll

Financial Secretary

Butch Steele, Worship Video Coordinator

Alex Rosenleaf, Choir Director

Kari Rosenleaf, Bell Choir Director

Johnny Ritchie, Music Assistant & Praise
Band Director

A Season of Waiting Our oven recently bit the dust, and the needed replacement part is no longer manufactured. Due to an appliance shortage, we had to wait eight weeks for a new oven! Yet even amid inconvenience, I see God's purpose. We were thankful to have a grill and slow cookers in the meantime. We creatively attempted to cook favorite meals in different ways. And though we craved anything baked in an oven – cookies, casseroles, even chicken nuggets – we realized that waiting eight weeks for an oven isn't truly a trying time. Many of us wait for much greater milestones and miracles: physical healing, the return of a prodigal child, an end to financial struggles. Paul offers us hope as we wait: "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had." (Romans 15:5, New International Version). When you're in a season of waiting – including Advent! – consider what you're thankful for and what you crave. Tell God how you're feeling and ask for endurance while you wait.

—Janna Firestone



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Prayer Requests for the Week of December 12, 2021

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. (Psalm 25:1)

This week's staff/officer:	Johnny Ritchie, Music Assistant & Praise Band Director
This week's elder:	Jennie Yates
This week's deacon:	Marla Wilckens
This week's ministry:	Spiritual Life Committee
This week's mission support:	Presbyterian Disaster Assistance
This week's home bound/care center:	June Showen
This week's families	Janet Buls Renaë Burleigh David & Tanya Cameron

Other prayer requests:

Judy	Fred	The Family of Dwight Stevenson
Nikki & Nate	Christofer Brown	Rashad
The Family of Betty Reiquam	Darrell Schamp	Cary
Themla	Deloras	Rita & Family
Gibson Flats Fire	Carla Moran	The Family of Shevy McMahan

If an update on prayer requests has not been received after three weeks, the request will be removed from this list. Please call the church to update the prayer list.

Notes from Worship – December 12, 2021
Christmas Pageant