



Cover of *Honest Advent* by Scott Erickson

December 19, 2021
Fourth Sunday of Advent

Welcome to worship this morning with the First Baptist Church of Christ. We are thrilled to be back worshipping in our sanctuary after a year outside of our building. As we gather this morning know that we are committed to everyone's safety and comfort as we create sacred space and time together.

Things to Know

- Masks are required at all times during worship, when moving through the building, and when with children. Each Sunday school class is making its own decisions regarding masks in class.
- Please keep social distance by avoiding gathering in groups before and after the service.
- Be mindful of others. Err on the side of caution out of respect for those who are abiding by stricter practices.
- Participate in the service as much or as little as you like. Stand when others stand, or remain seated. Sing when others sing, or enjoy the way this old sanctuary fills with sound. Invitations to stand as you are able are marked with an asterisk (*). Invitations to respond in word or song are noted in bold.
- If you have any questions or concerns, please find an usher.

For Those With Children

Thank you for bringing a child to worship! Take a deep breath and know they are welcome here. Parents with infants are more than welcome to remain in the sanctuary, or ushers can direct you down the back stairs to a comfortable room with sound from the sanctuary so all can still hear the service. A nursery is provided for children younger than 3. Preschoolers (age 3-kindergarten) are invited to leave after "Let the Children Come" for our W.O.W. (Working on Worship) experience.

For Those with Special Needs

Thank you for joining us for worship! We love our historic buildings, but know they can be a challenge for those with mobility needs. Know that we are committed to doing all we can to make this space welcoming to everyone. Reserved seating for those in wheel chairs and those sitting with them is found near the elevator, and is marked with signs on the walls and on the back of the pews. Please don't hesitate to ask an usher for assistance. Large print bulletins are available at both entrances. If you have special hearing needs, please ask one of the ushers to bring you a hearing assistance device from the sound booth in the back, or feel free to go back there and get one. An accessible restroom is located up one floor across from the office. If you, or someone with you, requires special assistance for any reason, please find a minister or an usher.

THE OFFERING OF PRAISE

The Sounding of the Hour

Anne Armstrong

The Call to Worship

“Prepare the Way of the Lord”

Jacques Berthier

(At the appointed time, the congregation will sing with the soloist)

Prepare the way of the Lord,

Prepare the way of the Lord,

And all people will see the salvation of our God!

Patrick Johns, acolyte

The Prelude

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

arr. Anna Laura Page

Anne Armstrong, organ

The Litany

Charles and Tricia Whitby

God of love, our souls magnify you and our spirits rejoice. For you have looked with favor on the lowliness of your servants. You have done great things for us, and holy is your name.

O Come, O come Emmanuel! Come to your world, which waits for you!

Like a mother loves her children, you loved us before we could love you.

O Come, O come Emmanuel! Come to your world, which waits for you!

We light this candle of love against a world of indifference. Help us to be people of love, O God for whom we wait.

O Come, O come Emmanuel! Come to your world, which waits for you!

Luke 1:46b-55; Isaiah 49:15

The Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Charles and Tricia Whitby

The Congregational Response 103 O Come, All Ye Faithful
(refrain)

ADESTE FIDELES

O come, let us adore him

O come, let us adore him

O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

*The Hymn of Praise 84

BEREDEN VÄG FÖR HERRAN

The People Who in Darkness Walked

**The people who in darkness walked have seen a great light shining,
And those who in the shadows live have seen the new day's dawning;**

**For unto us a Child is born, to us a Son is given,
And on His shoulders He shall bring to earth the peace of heaven.**

**His name shall be called Counselor, the everlasting Father,
The Mighty God, the Prince of Peace whose reign will be forever:**

**For unto us a Child is born, to us a Son is given,
And on His shoulders He shall bring to earth the peace of heaven.**

**This child will reign on David's throne and over David's kingdom
With justice and righteousness, with God's eternal wisdom:**

**For unto us a Child is born, to us a Son is given,
And on His shoulders He shall bring to earth the peace of heaven.**

*The Invocation

Scott Dickison

*The Gloria Patri 705

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.**

The Welcome

Kelsey Stillwell

"Let the Children Come"

JD Granade

Children in 3K-K are invited to W.O.W., a preschool worship experience! We will meet with the W.O.W. Shepherds at the end of "Let the Children Come." Parents, please come pick up your children immediately after worship. The W.O.W. shepherds this week are Lesley and Nate Myrick

THE OFFERING OF GIFTS

*The Hymn of Offertory 105 Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

ES IST EIN ROSE

**Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming from tender stem hath sprung,
Of Jesse's lineage coming as saints of old have sung.
It came a floweret bright, amid the cold of winter,
When half spent was the night.**

**Isaiah 'twas foretold it, the Rose I have in mind:
With Mary we behold it, the virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright she bore to us a Savior,
When half spent was the night.**

**This flower, whose fragrance tender with sweetness fills the air,
Dispels with glorious splendor, the darkness everywhere.
True Man, yet very God, from sin and death He saves us,
And lightens every load.**

*The Offertory Prayer

Laura Lease
Deacon of the Week

The Offertory Anthem

“Comfort, Comfort Ye My People”
Chancel Choir
John Brainard, percussion

Claude Goudimel
arr. Howard Helvey

Comfort, comfort ye my people, speak ye peace, thus saith our God;
Comfort those who sit in darkness, mourning 'neath their sorrows' load.
Speak ye to Jerusalem of the peace that waits for them;
Tell her that her sins I cover, and her warfare now is over.
Hark, the voice of one that crieth in the desert far and near,
Calling us to new repentance since the kingdom now is here.
Oh, that warning cry obey! Now prepare for God a way;
Let the valleys rise to meet Him and the hills bow down to greet Him.
Make ye straight what long was crooked, make the rougher places plain;
Let your hearts be true and humble as befits His holy reign.
For the glory of the Lord now o'er earth is shed abroad;
And all flesh shall see the token that the word is never broken.

Text: Johann G. Olearius (1611-1684),
trans. Catherine Winkworth (1827-1878), alt.

*The Offertory Response 131

In the Bleak Midwinter
(stanza 4)

CRANHAM

**What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man I would do my part;
Yet what can I give Him: give Him my heart.**

Christina Rossetti

THE OFFERING OF THE WORD

The First Lesson

Luke 1:46b-55

Monica Stevens-Kirby

And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

For the Good News of God,

Thanks be to God

The Pastoral Prayer and Lord’s Prayer

Kelsey Stillwell

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespassed against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever, Amen.

The Anthem

“I Saw Three Ships”
The Chancel Choir

traditional English carol
arr. Andrew Carter

I saw three ships come sailing in,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day,
I saw three ships come sailing in,
On Christmas day in the morning.
And what was in those ships all three?
Our Saviour Christ and his lady. (mother)
Pray whither sailed those ships all three?
Oh, they sailed into Bethlehem.
And all the bells on earth shall ring.
And all the Angels in Heaven shall sing.
And all the souls on earth shall sing.
Then let us all rejoice, amain. (with all your strength)

Text: anon, 17 th century

The meaning of “three ships” is open to interpretation with many and varied references found within the English oral tradition. Bethlehem then, as now, is landlocked. Since the “ships” are figurative, they could “be a reference to camels (sometimes called the “ships of the desert”) that carried the magi.

The Second Lesson

Luke 3:7-18

Scott Dickison

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

And the crowds asked him, “What then should we do?” In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.” Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?” He said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what should we do?” He said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.”

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the

wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”
So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.
For the Good News of God,
Thanks be to God

The Sermon

“What Should We Do?”

Scott Dickison

THE OFFERING OF COMMITMENT

*The Hymn of Commitment 132

CAROL

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

**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, good will to men,
From heaven’s all gracious King.”
The world in solemn stillness lay,
To hear the angels sing.**

**Still through the cloven skies they come
With peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heavenly music floats
O’er all the weary world.
Above its sad and lowly plains,
They bend on hovering wing,
And ever o’er its Babel sounds
The heavenly angels sing.**

**All ye, 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
Comes round the age of gold;
When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendors fling,
And the whole world give back the song
Which now the angels sing.**

* The Benediction

Scott Dickison

*The Congregational Response

“Alleluia”

traditional chant

The Postlude

“Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gate”

arr. James Mansfield

Anne Armstrong, organ

CHRISTMAS EVE

Join us as we return to our sanctuary for our annual Christmas Eve candlelight service. The service will be live-streamed to Facebook and YouTube as well. As has been our tradition, there will be no nursery on Christmas Eve so that families can enjoy the service together.

This year, however, we will have the Fellowship Hall set up with the live stream and interactive activities for any families who wish to take advantage of this.

We'll be sure the kids make it up for the children's sermon and that everyone is together for the candlelight circle at the end.

We also have LED flameless candles for any families who want to enjoy this beautiful service without worrying about active flames.



THE FRIDGE DOOR



A place to display the small moments that make up the larger story of the church

Two weeks ago our college students led the lighting of the Advent candle in worship. They walked to the chancel from their seats around the sanctuary; from the choir loft, sitting with the youth, sitting with family, and the pew near the back. This is what makes our college ministry so unique. Because our students are involved in the life of the church and are awesome! They teach children's Sunday school, lead Wednesday night Children's activities, sing in the choir, conduct youth choir, work in the nursery, teach and lead the youth, lead WOW, and have found their own Sunday school class to join.

It has been an especially challenging year for all students, and I am amazed at how our college students have still found time to be involved and lead at church. I am so grateful for these students who share their gifts and time with us. We are blessed to have them!

DEACON AND CHURCH COUNCIL CHRISTMAS DROP IN

Sunday, December 19, 5:30 - 8:00 pm.
The Dickisons, 167 Buford Place.
Indoor/Outdoor, Children welcome!



SERVICE FOR THE LONGEST NIGHT

As the world prepares for Christmas, we are inundated with twinkly lights and messages of joy, sometimes neglecting to remember that those lights shine in the face of growing darkness. While the holidays are joyful, they can also bring reminders of what we've lost, whether it's the death of a loved one or an unexpected life change. So we gather on the longest night of the year to recognize that pain and comfort one another. Whether you've experienced loss or simply want to lend your comforting presence, we hope you'll join us.

2022 OFFERING ENVELOPES

If you would like to use paper offering envelopes in 2022, please let the office know. They will be left in the back of the sanctuary for you or other arrangements can be made.

HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS

The church office will be closed for Christmas on Monday and Tuesday, December 27-28. The office will be open regular hours on Wednesday and Thursday, and then will be open from 8:30 am-1:30 pm on Friday, December 31. The office will be closed Monday, Jan. 3 for New Year's Day.

You may drop off year end gifts in the office during office hours, or after hours in the mail slot on High Pl, to the left of the main entrance to the sanctuary.

WOMEN'S BOOK CLUB

All About Love: NEW VISIONS by bell hooks. We will meet at the home of Anita Gustafson, 340 College Street (red door, red mailbox) on January 9, 2022 at 6 pm. We plan to bring snacks and welcome back so many of you who have not been able to attend over these last couple of years. We have missed you and would love to visit together and get your input. PLEASE join us. We, of course, will revisit this plan if needed.

POINSETTIAS IN THE SANCTUARY

There were two poinsettias omitted from the list last week:

- Given in memory of Doris Dellinger by Lillian Rice.
- Given in memory of Lillian Rice by her daughters, Jill Hanke and Jan Kunzelmann.

One of the donors names was also listed

incorrectly. It should have read:

- Given in memory of Harry & Blanche Burkett and Leann Fowler by Fay Burkett Boie.

Please remember to take home your poinsettias either today after worship or after the Christmas Eve service.

GROUP SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

First, we all have an inner teacher whose guidance is more reliable than anything we can get from a doctrine, ideology, collective belief system, institution, or leader. Second, we all need other people to invite, amplify, and help us discern the inner teacher's voice. Parker Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life*

Lately I've been telling anyone who will listen (and unfortunately lots of people who don't really want to listen) that the most life-giving thing I've done for myself in the past two years has been a spiritual direction group I've been attending with some fellow travelers at a sister congregation across town. Once a month we sit quietly in a circle, holding space for one another as each in turn shares a struggle, a joy, a question, or simply a status update. The group listens closely and offers questions and responses. It's really as simple as that. But there's a kind of magic in being with people whose only focus is trying to listen deeply for the voice of God in my life, who are there to truly see me.

It's a rare gift to offer and to receive such kind attention. Most of us long for that sort of recognition in our friendships, in our Sunday school groups, and in our life partnerships. Spiritual guidance is one way we can clear the space to attend to the inner teacher, the Holy Spirit, the true self.

It's a gift I'd love for us to share at First Baptist. To that end, we are meeting for an introductory session on January 23 from

4-6. If you are curious about giving spiritual direction a try, I invite you to come!

Meetings monthly, 3rd Sunday 4-6 at FBCX

For more details on format and grounding principles, consult the book above.

Shaun Kell



Now. Here. This.

Christmas was illegal in Massachusetts from 1659 to 1681, and anyone caught celebrating would be subject to a fine of 5 shillings.

Who knew “the war on Christmas” was that old!

Of course, the irony is that it was Christians who outlawed Christmas, specifically the Puritans who ran Massachusetts in those days—though their opposition to Christmas celebrations was part of a larger posture within Protestantism. Their piety was shaped by what’s been called the “regulative principle of Biblicalism,” meaning that not only should one do what the Bible says to do, but when it comes to practices of spiritual significance, one should avoid that which the Bible does not expressly say to do. And while the birth of Christ is of course included in the gospels, the celebration of Christmas is not.

And the emphasis is on celebration. Another reason the Puritans and other Protestant traditions were suspicious of Christmas and other holiday celebrations was that they were known to involve “social disorder”—drunkenness, carousing, irreverence, and other behavior the Puritans found unacceptable.

Dr. David F. Holland, a professor at Harvard Divinity School describes this period in church and American history on a recent podcast. (Check out the most recent episode of “The Harvard Religion Beat,” hosted by Jonathan Beasley entitled, “When Boston Banned Christmas,” for the full story.)

It turns out that the anti-Christmas sentiment persisted in New England and other parts of

the country well into the 19th-century, until Christmas became a national holiday in 1870. And the reason behind the shift wasn’t some new interpretation of the scriptures, but instead a new understanding of human development.

As Holland puts it, what really gave Christmas its legitimacy in the culture of New England was the rise of what some scholars have called “the birth of childhood.” Or rather, “the recognition of childhood as a distinctive stage of human development that deserved a certain kind of indulgence and a certain kind of happiness.”

In other words, an appreciation of what Christmas could mean to a child was able to warm even the hardest Puritan hearts.

And as it turns out, what is good for children is usually good for the rest of us. Vegetables and enough sleep, to be sure. But also the deeper things that mark this time of year. Things like wonder and anticipation. Things like the occasional excess and time spent with loved ones. Things like hope, peace, joy, and love.

Yes, we can say that we do it all for the kids. But deep down we know that we never stop needing these things. And every year as we move into this season (that the Puritans were surely not entirely wrong about, with its rampant commercialism and all the rest of it), we remind ourselves again just how essential these things are. We re-tune our hearts to sense them and feel them. We retrain our mouths to speak them, and our hands to give them.

We can say it’s for the kids, but to paraphrase Christ in the gospels, the best parts of us never grow up.

SHD

Signs of the Season

The paraments on the pulpit and Communion table and the ministers' stoles are visual reminders of the current season of the church year. Advent is the beginning of the Christian year. The word "Advent" means "coming" or "arrival," and the season anticipates the birth of Jesus and the return of Christ in his Second Advent. Purple symbolizes penitence and fasting as well as royalty to welcome the Advent of Christ.

Sanctuary Flowers

The poinsettias are given in honor, appreciation, or loving memory of family, friends and loved ones by church members.



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