

### covenant.presbyterian.church

# Gospel Centered CHRIST EXALTING

The Lord's Day
December 24, 2023

#### **Covenant's Mission Statement**

"To build a faithful community of joyful disciples."

#### **Covenant's Values**

Covenant is **biblical** by affirming the Bible as the authoritative Word of God, **connectional** by affiliating with the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA),

confessional by adhering to the Westminster Standards,missional by seeking to spread the Gospel worldwide, andrelational by encouraging the church family to build community.

#### The Fourth Sunday in Advent Love

"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you." Isaiah 60:1

The Christmas Service of Lessons and Carols

Prelude

During the prelude selection, prepare for worship by reflecting on Isaiah 60:1 printed above.

Life of the Church and Explanation of the Service

Call to Worship

2 Corinthians 4:6

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Invocation

**Opening Carol** 

"O Come, All Ye Faithful"

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.

God of God, Light of Light; lo, He abhors not the Virgin's womb: very God, begotten, not created; refrain

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation, sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above; glory to God in the highest; **refrain** 

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning:
Jesus, to Thee be all glory giv'n;
Word of the Father, late in flesh appearing;

refrain

CCLI 209271

Today's Advent Readers are Will and Kristin Webb

Responsive Reading

Reader: The Lord our God is with us and is mighty to save us.

Congregation: God will take great delight in us and will quiet us in love. God will rejoice over us with singing.

[15] He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

[16] For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.

[17] And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

[18] And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

[19] For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,

[20] and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

[21] And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds.

[22] he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,

[23] if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Lighting of the Advent Candle

**Prayer** 

**Receiving Communicant Members** 

Corporate Profession of Faith

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried; and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets; and we believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church; we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

"There Blooms a Rose in Bethlehem"

Ensemble

There blooms a rose in Bethlehem from tender stem hath sprung of Jesse's line, this flower grows as men of old have sung.

Isaiah told us long ago about this rose we'd find in virgin arms we shall behold the Savior of mankind.

The glories of the heavens surrounded shepherds bright; the angels sang, a sign was shown the Christ was born at night.

What mystery they came upon the sign the heralds laud, in manger slept the Holy One in flesh the Son of God.

This flower in bloom, a scent so sweet that greet us in the air, it has dispelled with hopefulness the sting of death's despair.

Foretold, this rose was born to die but would not see decay, so those who place their faith in Him shall blossom from the grace, so those who place their faith in Him shall blossom from the grace.

Sovereign Grace/CCLI 209271

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Presentation of the Offering

Kurt Smith, Deacon

**The First Lesson:** The Fall of Man and the First Proclamation of the Gospel. Genesis 3:1-15

Pastor Coyle

[1] Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden??" [2] And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, [3] but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die." [4] But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. [5] For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." [6] So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. [7] Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. [8] And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. [9] But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" [10] And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." [11] He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" [12] The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." [13] Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." [14] The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. [15] I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

#### Corporate Confession of Sin

Almighty God, You who shaped out of nothing all that is, forgive us for returning empty-handed. You who called forth light, forgive our preference for the dark! You who sent John to be a voice crying, forgive our unwillingness to say anything at all! Create in us clean hearts, O God, and renew a right spirit within us. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Individual Prayer and Meditation (Silent Prayer)

Assurance of Pardon

Galatians 4:4-5

[4] But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, [5] to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

The Carol

"Comfort, Comfort Ye My People"

Comfort, comfort ye my people, speak ye peace, thus saith our God; comfort those who sit in darkness, mourning 'neath their sorrow's 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.

Yea, her sins our God will pardon, blotting out each dark misdeed; all that well deserved His anger He no more will see or heed. She hath suffered many a day now her griefs have passed away; God will change her pining sadness into ever-springing gladness.

For the herald's voice is crying in the desert far and near, bidding all men to repentance, since the kingdom now is here.

O 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 His word is never broken.

CCLI 209271

**The Second Lesson:** The Prophet foretells of the coming Messiah. Isaiah 7:10-14; 9:2, 6-7

Jim Lewis, Ruling Elder

[7:10] Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz: [11] "Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." [12] But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test." [13] And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? [14] Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

[9:2] The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.

[6] For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. [7] Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

The Carol

"Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"

Come, Thou long expected Jesus, born to set Thy people free; from our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in Thee. Israel's strength and consolation, Hope of all the earth Thou art, Dear desire of ev'ry nation, Joy of ev'ry longing heart.

Joy to those who long to see Thee, Dayspring from on high, appear; come, Thou promised Rod of Jesse, of Thy birth we long to hear!

O'er the hills the angels singing news, glad tidings of a birth;

"Go to Him, your praises bringing; Christ the Lord has come to earth."

Come to earth to taste our sadness, He whose glories knew no end; by His life He brings us gladness, our Redeemer, Shepherd, Friend.

Leaving riches without number, born within a cattle stall; this the everlasting wonder, Christ was born the Lord of all.

Born Thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a King, born to reign in us forever, now Thy gracious kingdom bring. By Thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone; by Thine all sufficient merit, raise us to Thy glorious throne.

CCLI 209271

**The Third Lesson:** The Prophet foretells the glory of little Bethlehem. Micah 5:2-5

Dan Butkowski, Ruling Elder

[2] But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. [3] Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. [4] And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. [5] And he shall be their peace. When the Assyrian comes into our land and treads in our palaces, then we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight princes of men.

#### "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie; above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by: yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light; the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary; and gathered all above, while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wond'ring love.

O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth!

And praises sing to God the King, and peace to men on earth.

How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heav'n.
No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive Him still, the dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray; cast out our sin, and enter in; be born in us today.

We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel.

CCLI 209271

**The Fourth Lesson:** The angel Gabriel meets the Virgin Mary.

Luke 1:26-38

Josh Sanford, Ruling Elder

[26] In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, [27] to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. [28] And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" [29] But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. [30] And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. [31] And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. [32] He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, [33] and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." [34] And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" [35] And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy - the Son of God. [36] And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. [37] For nothing will be impossible with God." [38] And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

"God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen"

God rest you merry, gentlemen, let nothing you dismay, remember Christ our Savior was born on Christmas day. to save us all from Satan's pow'r when we were gone astray;

refrain: O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy, O tidings of comfort and joy.

From God our heav'nly Father, a blessed angel came; and unto certain shepherds brought tidings of the same: how that in Bethlehem was born the Son of God by name.

#### refrain

"Fear not, then," said the angel, "Let nothing you affright; this day is born a Savior of a pure virgin bright, to free all those who trust in Him from Satan's pow'r and might."

#### refrain

The shepherds at those tidings rejoiced much in mind, and left their flocks a-feeding, in tempest, storm, and wind: and went to Bethlehem straight-way, the Son of God to find.

#### refrain

CCLI 209271

**The Fifth Lesson:** The Virgin Mary responds to the words of the angel in worship and humility.

Luke 1:46-56

William Fennell, Ruling Elder

[46] And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, [47] and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, [48] for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; [49] for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. [50] And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. [51] He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; [52] he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; [53] he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. [54] He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, [55] as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever." [56] And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.

#### The Carol

"All Praise to Thee, Eternal Lord"

All praise to Thee, Eternal Lord, clothed in a garb of flesh and blood; choosing a manger for Thy throne, while worlds on worlds are Thine alone.

Once did the skies before Thee bow; a virgin's arms contain Thee now: angels who did in Thee rejoice now listen for Thine infant voice.

A little child, Thou art our guest, that weary ones in Thee may rest; forlorn and lowly is Thy birth, that we may rise to heav'n from earth.

Thou comest in the darksome night to make us children of the light, to make us, in the realms divine, like Thine own angels round Thee shine.

All this for us Thy love hath done; by this to Thee our love is won: for this we tune our cheerful lays, and shout our thanks in ceaseless praise.

CCLI 209271 8

[1:18] Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. [19] And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. [20] But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. [21] She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." [22] All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: [23] "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). [24] When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, wife, [25] but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

[2:1] In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. [2] This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. [3] And all went to be registered, each to his own town. [4] And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, [5] to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. [6] And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. [7] And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

The Carol

"Infant Holy, Infant Lowly"

Infant holy, infant lowly, for His bed a cattle stall: Oxen lowing, little knowing Christ, the babe, is Lord of all. Swift are winging angels singing, noels ringing, tidings bringing: Christ the babe is Lord of all, Christ the babe is Lord of all.

Flocks were sleeping: shepherds keeping vigil till the morning new Saw the glory, heard the story, tidings of a gospel true. Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow, praises voicing, greet the morrow: Christ the babe was born for you. Christ the babe was born for you.

CCLI 209271

**The Seventh Lesson:** The Shepherds are led to the Manger.

Luke 2:8-16

Carl Monroe, Ruling Elder

[8] And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. [9] And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. [10] And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. [11] For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. [12] And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

[13] And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, [14] "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" [15] When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." [16] And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.

The Carol

"Angels, from the Realms of Glory"

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

**refrain:** Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn King.

Shepherds in the fields abiding, watching o'er your flocks by night, God with man is now residing, yonder shines the infant light:

#### refrain

Sages, leave your contemplations, brighter visions beam afar; seek the great Desire of nations; ye have seen His natal star: **refrain** 

Saints before the altar bending, watching long in hope and fear, suddenly the Lord, descending, in His temple shall appear: **refrain** 

All creation, join in praising God the Father, Spirit, Son; evermore your voices raising to th'eternal Three in One:

#### refrain

CCLI 209271

**The Eighth Lesson:** The Wise Men are led by the star to Jesus. Matthew 2:1-11

Bill Scholl, Ruling Elder

[1] Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, [2] saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." [3] When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; [4] and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. [5] They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: [6] "And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel." [7] Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. [8] And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." [9] After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. [10] When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. [11] And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

#### "What Child Is This"

What Child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping? Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherds watch are keeping? This, this is Christ the King, Whom shepherds guard and angels sing; haste, haste, to bring Him laud, the Babe, the Son of Mary.

Why lies He in such mean estate, where ox and ass are feeding? Good Christian, fear; for sinners here the silent Word is pleading. Nails, spear, shall pierce Him through; the cross be borne for me, for you: hail, hail the Word made flesh, the Babe, the Son of Mary.

So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh; come, peasant, king to own Him; the King of kings salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone Him.

Raise, raise the song on high, the virgin sings her lullaby:
joy, joy for Christ is born, the Babe, the Son of Mary.

CCLI 209271

## **The Ninth Lesson:** St. John unfolds the great mystery of the incarnation. John 1:1-14

Pastor Reed

- [1] In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- [2] He was in the beginning with God.
- [3] All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.
- [4] In him was life, and the life was the light of men.
- [5] The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.
- [6] There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
- [7] He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through Him.
- [8] He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.
- [9] The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.
- [10] He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.
- [11] He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.
- [12] But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,
- [13] who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.
- [14] And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

"Go, Tell It on the Mountain"

refrain: Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere; go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.

While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night, behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. **refrain** 

The shepherds feared and trembled, when, lo! above the earth rang out the angel chorus that hailed the Savior's birth.

\*refrain\*

Down in a lowly manger our humble Christ was born, and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. **refrain** 

CCLI209271

**Scriptural Benediction** 

Postlude

#### **MEMBERS OF SESSION**

#### **RULIING ELDERS**

Class of 2023 Mr. Bruce Hurlbut Mr. Carl Monroe Mr. Jason Van Goor Class of 2024 Mr. Jim Lewis Mr. Josh Sanford Dr. Brandon Walser Class of 2025 Mr. Dan Butkowski Dr. Bob Tramel

#### **TEACHING ELDERS**

Rev. Dr. Tim J. Reed, Senior Pastor Rev. Derek W. Coyle, Associate Pastor

#### **BOARD OF DEACONS**

Class of 2023 Mr. Scott Freydl Dr. David Matlock Mr. Jeff Rooker Class of 2024 Mr. David Beuerman Dr. Ken Knecht Mr. Kurt Smith Class of 2025 Mr. Peter Bogaards Dr. Jonathan Goodwin Mr. Jason Guenther

#### **STAFF**

Mr. Ben Russ, Bookkeeper Mrs. Peggy Washburn, Administrative Assistant

#### **MUSICIANS/VOCALISTS**

Mrs. Liz Baker, Choir Director Mr. David Beuerman, Violinist Mr. Jake Hilburn, Guitarist Mr. Mike Walsh, Pianist Mrs. Roanna Wilson, Vocalist

#### COVENANT'S MISSIONARY FAMILLIES

Paul & Connie Backstrom, Bentonville Peter & Jenny Boling, Mexico Dan & Nancy Butkowski, Little Rock Scott & Kathy Craig, Mexico Roger & Laura Dye, South Carolina Jamie & Jacki Gildard, France Rob & Jenny Ilderton, England Darlene Johnson, Japan Tom & Karen Mirabella, Japan Pete & Ruth Mitchell, France Jim & Karan Romaine, New York City Julian & Christiana Russell, Bahamas Jim Wroughton, Peru (retired) Will & Martha, International Wes & Kim, Undisclosed

#### **COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

One Covenant Drive • Little Rock, AR 72211 • 501-228-5903 cpc@covenantpca.com • www.covenantpca.com A Congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America