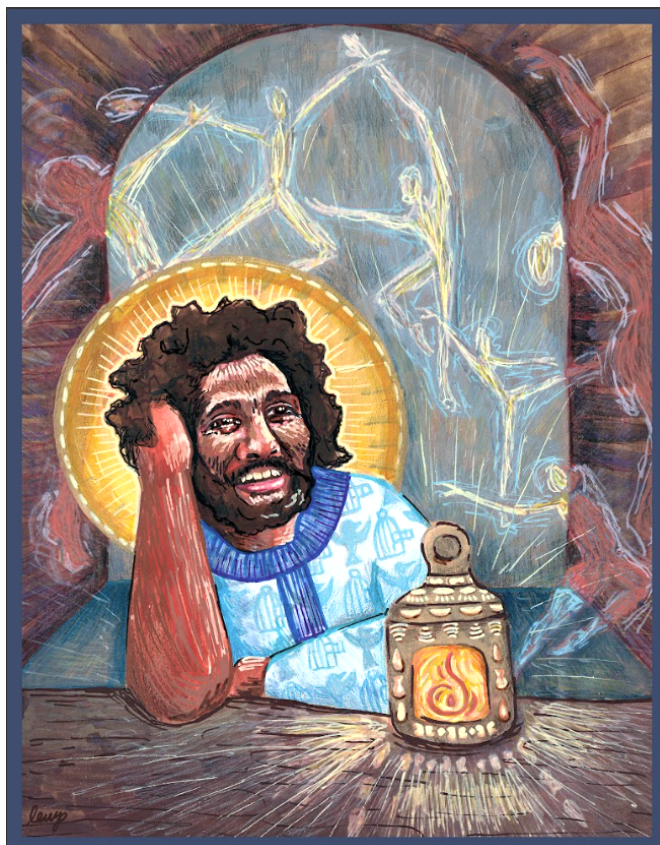


First Presbyterian Church Hackettstown

December 7, 2025



Hope Like a Dancer

by Lauren Wright Pittman

Inspired by Matthew 11:1-11



The Second Sunday of Advent | What do you fear?
WHEN WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF HOPE,
GOD IS AT WORK

PRELUDE *Prelude on The First Noel*

arr. Young



THE RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP

Family of faith, God is at work!

God is healing and creating,

redeeming and dreaming,

calling and sending,

listening and loving.

Yes, indeed, God is at work!

So may we worship our God who never gives up.

May we worship our God who holds onto hope. Amen.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

The Tischler Family

***HYMN** *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus*

82

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 every nation, joy of every longing heart.

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.

ANTHEM

Advent Celebration

J. Paige

Senior Choir

Hear the glorious song in the distance, carried on the wings of praise. Soon the heavens will shout and proclaim it. All the earth will celebrate. **(Refrain)** Jesus is coming, Jesus is coming, Jesus is coming, prepare the way. Jesus is coming, prepare the way.

See the light of the sun in the distance. See the hope that wakes the day. Soon the morning will greet the Messiah. All the earth will celebrate. **(REFRAIN)**

Lift a joyful hymn of gladness. Let the alleluias start, for Messiah soon will be coming. Love will rule in every heart.

Hear the glorious song in the distance sweeping 'cross the hills and plains, telling all that Messiah is coming, Soon the King will come and reign! (Refrain)

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE *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. O come let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

On-the-move God, we have every reason to hold onto hope. We have every reason to believe that spring will come, that flowers will bloom, that the sun will rise. And yet, too often hope slips through our fingers. With anxious hearts we cry out to you, "Will change ever come? Will things ever get better? Will I ever make a difference?" Soothe our wandering hearts and show us the places where the sun is shining. Show us the places where you are on the move. With open hearts we pray, amen.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Family of faith, in our honesty,
we are heard.

In our worries,
we are held.

In our failings,
we are forgiven.

In our fear,
we are not alone.

Friends, this is the good news of the gospel!

When we're running out of hope, God is still at work.

Thanks be to God!

Amen.

***RESPONSE** *This Little Light of Mine*

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine,
let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

Isaiah 43:19-21, Matthew 11:1-11

SERMON

Rev. Erin Hayes-Cook

*HYMN

Comfort, Comfort Now My People

87

"Comfort, comfort now my people; tell of peace!" So say our God.
"Comfort those who sit in darkness mourning under sorrow's load.
To my people now proclaim that my pardon waits for them!
Tell them that their sins I cover, and their warfare now is over."

For the herald's voice is crying in the desert far and near,
calling us to true repentance, since the reign of God is here.
O, that warning cry obey! Now prepare for God away.
Let the valleys rise in meeting and the hills bow down in greeting.

Straight shall be what long was crooked, and the rougher places plain.
Let your hearts be true and humble, as befits God's holy reign.
For the glory of the Lord now on earth is shed abroad,
and all flesh shall see the token that God's word is never broken.

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We have seen the valley. We have seen a sky without stars. We have seen the longest night, and still we believe. We believe in a with-us God. We believe in the hope of tomorrow. We believe that good news is louder than fear. We believe this good news is for all people. So even when our knees shake, even when our voice trembles, even when fear is all around us, we will hold onto that good news. We will reach for each other. We will look for God in our midst. We will sing songs of joy. We will proclaim: Unto us, love is born. We have seen the longest night, and we have seen unimaginable love. So still, we believe. Amen.

OFFERING INVITATION

OFFERTORY

Let Us All with Gladsome Voice

*DOXOLOGY

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.
Praise Him all creatures here below.
Praise Him above ye heavenly host,
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

***COMMUNION HYMN** *While We Are Waiting, Come* **92**
While we are waiting come; while we are waiting come. (Refrain)

Refrain

Jesus, our Lord, Emmanuel, while we are waiting, come.

With power and glory, come; with power and glory, come. (Refrain)

Come, Savior, quickly come; come, Savior, quickly come. (Refrain)

SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

As a sign of hospitality we serve gluten free bread for communion

INVITATION

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise...(Pastor continues)

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. 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 and the power and the glory forever, Amen.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

SHARING THE ELEMENTS

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

***CLOSING HYMN** *Live Into Hope* **772**

Live into hope of captives freed, of sight
regained, the end of greed. The oppressed shall be the
first to see the year of God's own jubilee!

Live into hope! The blind shall see with insight
and with clarity, removing shades of
pride and fear, a vision of our God brought near.

Live into hope of liberty, the right to
speak, the right to be, the right to have one's
daily bread, to hear God's word and thus be fed.

Live into hope of captives freed from chains of
fear or want or greed. God now proclaim our
full release to faith and hope and joy and peace.

***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

***RESPONSE** *Christ, Be Our Light* **314**

Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light! Shine in your church gathered today.

POSTLUDE **While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks** arr. Young

Serving Our Congregation Today

Preacher: Rev. Erin Hayes-Cook

Worship Leader: James Tischler

Music Director: Lorinda Ravo

Video: Erin Roguso

Liturgy by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC |
sanctifiedart.org

Greeting: Della & Jose Irby

The cards this week on the piano for you to sign are for our friends:
Barbara Hall & Katy Groover

WELCOME TO OUR CHURCH

Interested in joining our church as a member? We would love to talk more with you
about our ministry here. Feel free to fill out a visitors card and hand it to one of our
ushers or Pastor Erin and we will make sure to reach out to you!



Something in the Water

by T. Denise Anderson

Inspired by Isaiah 43:19-21

TODAY'S MUSIC

This morning, our Senior Choir sings the lively and inviting *Advent Celebration*. With its repeated refrain "Jesus is coming, prepare the way!" it is a perfect reminder of this season of preparation. Next Sunday, our FPCH Ringers Chime Choir will be playing the familiar piece associated with this season: *The Carol of the Bells*.

ADVENT EVENTS- What do you Fear?

December 13 - Wreaths Across America at 12:00 (noon)

Stone Soup Concert at 3:00pm

Community Dinner at 5:30pm

On Saturday, **December 13**, we will host our Christmas themed community dinner at the chapel across the street. Anyone is invited to come and share a good meal and good company. If you would like to help cook, serve, or set up please let us know and we would be happy to connect you.

DECEMBER' SECOND SUNDAY

Get your Christmas on! On **December 14**, Mrs. Shepherd will be helping us make a special Christmas ornament, and Miss Winnie will be bringing her delicious Christmas cookies for participants to decorate. Please be sure to sign up to help us prepare for both lunch, and to have enough supplies for all who want to be part of the fun.

December 14 - Worship, Advent Candlelighting, Christmas Sweaters, Ties, Cookies and Cocoa

This is your invitation to break out that Christmas sweater, shirt, or tie (festive or ugly!) and wear it to church. We'll also have a Christmas photo station where confirmation students will happily use your own phone to take photos of your friends and family to celebrate the outfits. There will even be a hot cocoa bar after worship, and we hope that if you can, you'll bring a dozen or two of your Christmas cookies to share too! Let's have some Christmas fun here at FPCH!

December 20 - Swingtime Jazz Band Concert at 2:00pm

December 21 - Children's Christmas play, Advent Candlelighting

December 24 - Christmas Eve Worship with candlelight at 7:30 pm

The entire community is invited to worship with song, scripture and candlelighting.

STEW'S CLUE!

Kids (and grown-up kids too), can you find Stewie? The clue this week is poinsettia.

ADVENT BIBLE STUDY

Calling All Angels - Bible Study has begun but you can still join us on Mondays at 7:00pm. An Advent study of fearlessness and strength with the book called *Calling All Angels*. We still have 5 copies of the book left, please let Pattie know if you would like a book.



The Second Sunday of Advent | What do you fear?
WHEN WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF HOPE, GOD IS AT WORK



Hope Like a Dancer

by Lauren Wright Pittman

Inspired by Matthew 11:1-11

11"x14" Gouache, paint pens, colored pencils, and ink on paper

John the Baptist was thrown in prison after publicly questioning the legality of Herod's marriage (Matthew 14:3-5). He was not afraid to go toe-to-toe with the powerful, and perhaps he expected Jesus' ministry to look more confrontational and politically strategic. In questioning Jesus, I wonder if John sought a particular answer to hang his hope on, that maybe the Messiah would be how he'd imagined him. Maybe Jesus would bust him out of jail and take things straight to Herod, but Jesus offers something else.

In this image, John sits in prison, letting the disciples' testimony settle in. People with hearing, visual, and physical impairments experience new senses and mobility. Those with skin diseases are cleansed.

Those with little material comfort are offered irrepressible hope, and the lungs of the dead are filled with the breath of life. I decided to image this good news through the dancing light of a lantern¹ in John's prison cell. I chose dancing figures because dancing feels like a primal response to the radical healing taking place outside the prison walls. As these six dancers illuminate the cell, I imagine John, even if for a moment, breaking into a bit of laughter at the magnitude of Jesus' ministry. Jesus was quite literally doing the unimaginable. He was removing barriers so that the marginalized were no longer reduced to begging and sitting on mats, shoved to the edges of society. He was not only healing physical ailments; perhaps more importantly, he was restoring people to community.

Out of all the miraculous actions mentioned, the news did not include "release of the captives" (Luke 4:18-19).² With this message, John would know that he was not going to be freed,³ and so, the number of dancers would remain one short of seven.⁴ As we know all too well, God's work isn't completed in Jesus' time. We are still woefully short of realizing the fullness of God's desire for all of creation, and the work is ours to see through. Until then, let us keep our eyes peeled for the glimmers of hope dancing all around us and work toward a day when all can join in that dance of wholeness.

—REV. LAUREN WRIGHT PITTMAN

FYI-INFORMATION

11/30/25

In Person Attendance

66

Virtual Attendance

153

Offering

\$1,559.40

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES at FPCH

Sunday	10:00 am	Worship
	11:10 am	Joyful Noise Bells rehearsal
	11:20 am	Unity Chimes rehearsal
Mon/Fri	9:00 am-12:00 noon	Church Office Open
Mon/Fri	9:00 am-12:00 noon	Heaven Sent Nursery School
Thursday	6:30-7:15 pm	FPCH Ringers rehearsal
	7:30-8:30 pm	Senior Choir Rehearsal

December 1 - 7, 2024

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES in our Chapel December 1 - 7, 2024

Monday	10:30-11:30 am	AA Step by Step
	7:00-9:00 pm	Jazz Band
Tuesday	7:30-9:00 pm	NA Change or Die
Wednesday	7:30-9:00 pm	Stone Soup Symphony
Thursday	10:30-11:30 am	AA New Beginnings
Friday	Storage use only	Colonial Musketeers
	7:00-9:00 pm	Colonial Musketeers Sr.
	7:30 pm	GA Meeting
Saturday	7:00 pm	12 Steps



FOR PASTORAL CARE

Pastor Rev. Erin Hayes-Cook Cell:908-963-8341

Email: revehayes@gmail.com

Call the church office at: 908-852-4011

Church email: fpchnj@gmail.com

Church Website: www.fpchackettstown.org