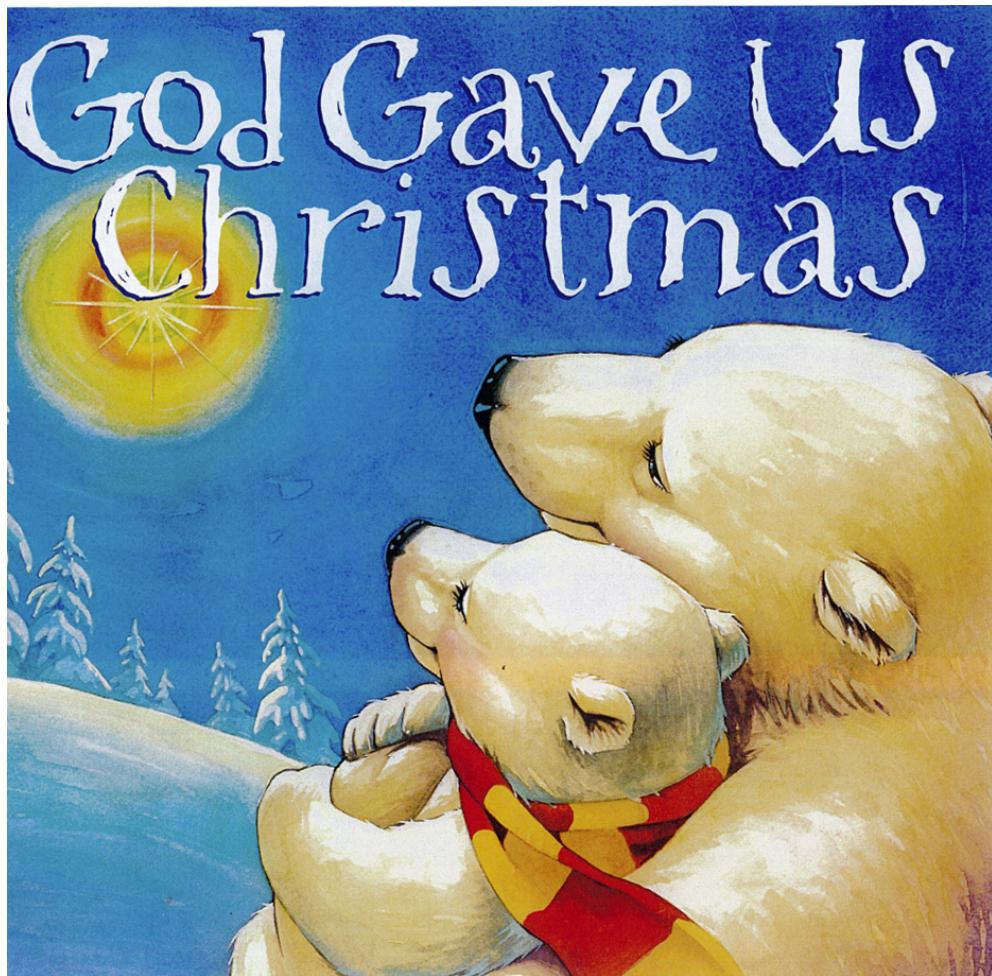


First Presbyterian Church

Hackettstown, NJ

December 21, 2025



The Fourth Sunday of Advent | What do you fear?
WHEN YOU'RE AFRAID, GIVE ME YOUR HAND

4th Sunday of Advent

December 21, 2025

PRELUDE *Were You There on the Christmas Night?* **Sleeth**

Senior Choir



Were you there, were you there on that Christmas night, when the world was filled with a holy light? Were you there to behold when the wonder foretold came to earth?

Did you see, did you see how they hailed him King, with the gifts so rare that they chose to bring? Did you see how they bowed as they praised him aloud at his birth?

Did you hear how the choirs of angels sang, at the glory of the sight?
Did you hear how the bells of heaven rang all through the night?

Did you know, did you know it was God's own son, the salvation of the world begun? Did you know it was love that was sent from above to the earth? Did you know it was love that was sent from above to the earth?
Were you there?

THE RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP

Here in worship
we pray together,
we stand together,
we sing together,
we listen together.

Here in worship

we are not alone.

So when life gives you reason to grieve, to fear, or to worry,
remember this moment.

We are not alone.

Let us worship our with-us God.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

Ratti Family

Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing; the poor baby wakes,
but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky;
and stay by my side until 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 fit us for heaven to live with thee there.

ANTHEM*Carol of the Bells***arr. Krug**

FPCH Ringers

CALL TO CONFESSON**PRAYER OF CONFESSON**

When you were afraid, did I stay by your side? Did I offer my hand, or did I leave you alone? When you were afraid, did I choose solidarity? Did I see your fear, or did I only see mine?

Friend, none of us are perfect. We all make mistakes. Fortunately, God offers grace, and we do too. So take a deep breath, and let's start again.

Thank you. Your mercy is a gift.

Now we must ask when you were afraid, did we stay by your side? Did we offer our hands, or did we leave you alone? When you were afraid, did we choose solidarity? Did we see your fear?

Or did we only see ours?

Friends, none of us are perfect. We all make mistakes. Fortunately, God offers grace, and I do too. So take a deep breath, and let's start again.

Thank you. Your mercy is a gift. We accept your grace and would love to start again.

May it be so, with God's help.

Alleluia, Amen.

RESPONSEThis 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.

**In Too Deep**

by Nicolette Faison

Inspired by Matthew 1:18-25

*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.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

OFFERING INVITATION

OFFERTORY

Christmas Lullaby

*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.

SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PLAY

Based on the book *God Gave Us Christmas*
by Lisa Tawn Bergren, adapted by Lorinda Ravo
You are invited to follow along on the bulletin insert.

*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.

Serving Our Congregation Today

Preacher: Rev. Erin Hayes-Cook

Worship Leader: Al Aquino

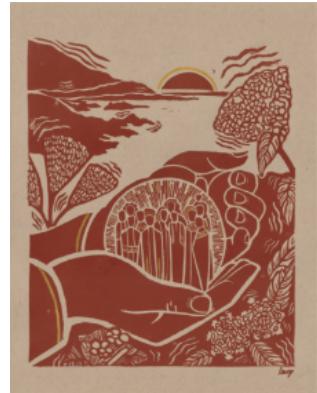
Music Director: Lorinda Ravo

Video: Jean Zetterberg

Greeting: Kathy Maier & Kathy Slater

The cards this week on the piano for you to sign are for our friends:

Barbara Henning & Brenda Zellars

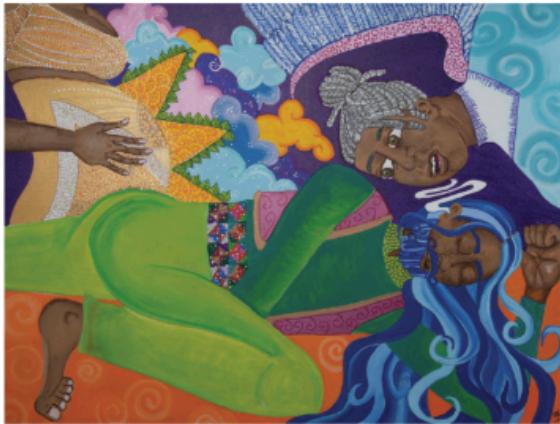


I Am With You

by Lauren Wright Pittman
Inspired by Isaiah 41:5-10



The Fourth Sunday of Advent | What do you fear? WHEN YOU'RE AFRAID, GIVE ME YOUR HAND



In Too Deep

by Nicolette Faison

Inspired by Matthew 1:18-25

30"x40" Acrylic and marker on canvas

My inaugural contribution to *A Sanctified Art* in 2023 focused on the relationship between Mary and Elizabeth.⁷ After having a challenging pregnancy of my own, I used my art to explore the divine connections of people who carry pregnancies and how that special type of relationship benefits the community. But even after reading these pregnancy stories time and time again, I have struggled to sit with Joseph and how he processes all of this change with his new wife.

Somehow life is always in alignment with the text, and now, as I process a divorce, I think more often of what it would feel like for someone else to come in and try to fit into my established family system.

This made me think of a Joseph who can't sleep well at night, as his mind is uneasy with the words of Gabriel in his ear. I wanted Joseph to have an uncomfortable sleep form with a clenched fist that shows us he is tense even while he dreams. His foot is raised up in a way that looks almost as if he could pop up at any moment. Funny enough, this is how I slept throughout my own pregnancies. His hair, while luxurious, has flowy movement to it, leaning into the uneasiness. The soft spiral pattern in the background also implies movement. We don't see Joseph often in holy art. We receive the occasional holy family portrait, which is often not detailed, but Joseph does not really get his own place in the story. He is almost like the forgotten father after Jesus comes

of age, so his time is really now. I don't think his position needs to be a cornerstone for the birth story; however, as my own life changes, I can appreciate the importance of his devotion and obedience to God.

In the artwork, the angel Gabriel is talking to Joseph as he sleeps, with silver locs reminiscent of God from the children's book I illustrated, *God's Holy Darkness*.⁸ This is a nod to my own work, which honors holiness as brown, coarse textured, and wise. Why wouldn't an angel both resemble God and the people they are called to speak to?

The dreamy pregnant body we see in the top left is styled in an outfit that is a nod to Beyoncé's 2017 Grammys performance costume for the song, "Love Drought." At that time Beyoncé was pregnant with her twins, Sir and Rumi, and gave one of the most outstanding performances someone so far along could provide. Her full costume also included a golden headpiece that resembled that of an icon, a goddess even. How appropriate for a woman of faith carrying twins—performing a song from an album where she experienced betrayal, heartbreak, and reconciliation—to perform at this last supper-like

table in such an outfit, knowing her marriage and pregnancy could have killed her. In my painting, the pregnant belly is celebrated with rays beaming from it followed by soft clouds, reminding us this is a dream. The color choices are bright, detailed, and whimsical to keep us in the fantasy. There is vibrancy here because, while Joseph is uncomfortable, this is still something to be celebrated. **—REV. NICOLETTE FAISON**

⁷ sanctifiedart.org/image-licensing-library-advent/two-mothers

⁸ God's Holy Darkness. Written by Sharei Green and Beckah Selnick. Illustrated by Nikki Faison. (Beaming Books, 2022).

⁹ Beyoncé. "Love Drought." Track 7 on Lemonade. Parkwood Entertainment and Columbia Records, 2016.

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!

MANY THANKS TO THOSE WHO HELPED

We are so grateful to all who contributed to today's Christmas play by our Sunday School students. To the students' teachers, their parents, the Session, and especially a congregation that continually shows the kids of our church that they are valued and appreciated, we are blessed by your commitment. The cast will remain "on stage" at the end of the service so that you can take as many photos as you'd like! Special thanks to Mrs. Ravo who arranged and directed our play.

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT WORSHIP

Our entire community is invited to be part of our candlelight worship service on Wednesday, **December 24** at 7:30 pm. We will celebrate Jesus' birth with song, scripture, meditation and the light of the world.

NEW MEMBERS

Would you like to officially join the church? Have you already been a part of the community and are ready to say yes to being a member? Then join us for new members class in January. You are invited to come to all three in person meetings. We will discuss our church, what it means to become a member and how you might become more involved. Join us on **January 11, 18 and February 1**.

STEW'S CLUE!

Kids (and grown-up kids too), did you find Stewie last week? This week's Stew's Clue is sleigh.

FREE CONCERT THIS AFTERNOON

Join the SwingTime Jazz Band this afternoon at 2:00 pm in our sanctuary for their Christmas concert. It is free and open to the public.

CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING

Thank you to all who have given for the Christmas joy offering with the PCUSA. When we give to the Christmas Joy offering we make a path for current and future leaders of the church. Did you know that 50% of the offering smooths the path for current and retired church workers and their families in need? The other 50% prepare students to learn and grow in faith at Presbyterian related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. As always remember just a little goes a long way.

JANUARY SECOND SUNDAY!

On January's Second Sunday, **January 11**, we'll be welcoming Ms. Diann Carrajat back to help us paint a winter scene. Please be sure to pre register so that Ms. Carrajat can have enough supplies for all participants.

FYI-INFORMATION

12/14/24 Snowstorm	In Person Attendance Virtual Attendance	N/A N/A
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WEEKLY ACTIVITIES at FPCH

Sunday	10:00 am
	10:00 am
Mon, Tues & Wed	9:00 am-12:00 noon
Wednesday	7:30 pm

December 21 - 27, 2025

Worship
Sunday School play
Church Office Open
Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES in our Chapel - December 21- 27, 2025

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