

# First Presbyterian Church Hackettstown, NJ

December 14, 2025



The Third Sunday of Advent | What do you fear?  
**EVEN IN OUR FEAR, WE ARE CALLED FORWARD**  
Luke 1:26-39 | Jeremiah 1:4-10

**PRELUDE**

*Preludes on Hyfrydol*



**THE RINGING OF THE BELL**

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

Jeremiah said, "I am only a boy."

**Moses said, "Who am I to do this work?"**

Mary said, "How can this be?"

**We often say, "But God, I am afraid."**

Even when we are afraid, God invites us closer.

**So may we trust the Inviter.**

May we heed God's invitation.

**May we summon our courage and sing God's praise.**

Let us worship our courageous, inviting, calling God. Amen!

**LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE**

Sophie, Elizabeth Russell &  
Elise Bates Russell

**\*HYMN**

*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

**88**

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom  
captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile  
here until the Son of God appear. (Refrain)

Refrain

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, thou Wisdom from on high, who orderest  
all things mightily: to us the path of knowledge  
show; and teach us in her ways to go. (Refrain)

O come, O come, thou Lord of might, who to thy  
tribes on Sinai's height in ancient times didst give the  
law in cloud and majesty and awe. (Refrain)

O come, thou Root of Jesse, free thine own from  
Satan's tyranny; from depths of hell thy people  
save and give them victory o'er the grave. (Refrain)

## **ANTHEM**

*Carol of the Bells*  
FPCH Ringers

*arr. Krug*

## **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.

## **LORD'S PRAYER**

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.

## **CALL TO CONFESSION**

### **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Courageous God, you invite us to live into our call. You invite us to act, to serve, and to trust. Instead of responding with a resounding "yes," we often hide our face. We dig our heels in. We look for someone else to volunteer. Spark courage in us. Remind us that every person is capable of making a difference. Remind us that even when we're scared, we are not alone. You invite us forward. With baby steps we hope, we pray, Amen.

### **ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

Family of faith, no matter where your path has led you in the past, today is a new day. So join me in declaring this good news:

**We are known. We are forgiven! We are sent to serve. May we step forward in faith, always moving closer to God's call. 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**

**Jeremiah 1:4-10 & Luke 1:26-39**

## **SERMON**

**Rev. Erin Hayes-Cook**

**\*HYMN***My Soul Gives Glory to My God***99**

My soul gives glory to my God; my  
heart pours out its praise. God lifted up my  
lowliness in many marvelous ways.

My God has done great things for me: yes,  
holy is God's name. All people will declare  
me blessed, and blessings they shall claim.

From age to age to all who fear, such  
mercy love imparts, dispensing justice  
far and near, dismissing selfish hearts.

Love casts the mighty from their thrones,  
promotes the insecure, leaves hungry spirits  
satisfied; the rich seem suddenly poor.

Praise God, whose loving covenant supports  
those in distress, remembering past  
promises with present faithfulness.

**\*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***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.

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

### **\*CLOSING HYMN**      *O Lord, How Shall I Greet You*      **104**

O Lord, how shall I meet you, how welcome you aright?  
Your people long to greet you, my hope, my heart's delight!  
O kindle, Lord most holy, a lamp within my breast,  
to do in spirit lowly all that may please you best.

Love caused your incarnation: love brought you down to me;  
your thirst for my salvation procured my liberty.  
O love beyond all telling, that led you to embrace  
in love, all loves excelling our lost and fallen race.

You come, O Lord, with gladness, in mercy and good-will,  
to bring an end to sadness and bid our fears be still.  
In patient expectation we live for that great day  
when your renewed creation your glory shall display.

### **\*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**      *God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen*      **arr. Young**

### **Serving Our Congregation Today**

***Preacher: Rev. Erin Hayes-Cook***

***Worship Leader: Jessica McDonagh***

***Music Director: Lorinda Ravo***

***Video: Jean Zetterberg***

***Greeting: Carol & Pete Miller***

***The cards this week on the piano for you to sign are for our friends:  
Barbara Henning & Brenda Zellars***



**To Build and to Plant**

by Hannah Garrity

Inspired by Jeremiah 1:4-10

## **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!

## **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 & February 1**.

## **ADVENT EVENTS- What do you Fear?**

**December 20 - Jazz Band Concert at 2:00pm in the sanctuary**

**December 21 - Children's Christmas play during worship, 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), did you find Stewie last week? He was hiding in the poinsettias by the Christmas tree. Did you find him? This week, Stewie has moved again. The Stew's Clue is sleigh .

## **NEWSLETTER - LAST CHANCE TO PICKUP**

Your December Newsletter is ready for you to pick up at the signup table (if you have your Newsletter printed). We are trying to be good stewards of our finances, so please pick up your Newsletter today and save the church \$2.00 per copy by not having to mail it. Thank you!

## **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.

## **TODAY'S MUSIC**

This morning, our FPCH Ringers play a very popular Christmas song, *The Carol of the Bells*. The carol is based on the Ukrainian New Year's Song *Shchendryk*. The music for the carol comes from the song written by a Ukrainian composer named Mykola Leontovych. It was written in the early 1900's and English lyrics were added in 1936 by Peter Wilhousky, an American composer of Ukrainian descent. Next Sunday, our Senior Choir will be singing Natalie Sleeth's touching Christmas anthem, *Were You There on that Christmas Night?* and the choir will also be providing some of the music for the Sunday School play. We will also welcome soloist, Torey Ravo and a trio of our confirmation students, Lila, Angel, and Makayla, who will sing during the play as well.





The Third Sunday of Advent | What do you fear?  
EVEN IN OUR FEAR, WE ARE CALLED FORWARD



## Mary's Yes

by Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Inspired by Luke 1:26-39

*Photography with digital drawing*

In the *sixth month* of Elizabeth's pregnancy, the angel goes to Nazareth to find Mary. I was six months pregnant with my second daughter when I reread this scripture and began this image, so at first, this detail seemed like a happy coincidence. But as I pondered it, I wondered if Elizabeth's pregnancy might have everything to do with Mary's willingness to say yes to this wild, wonderful—but risky and terrifying—undertaking.

Elizabeth's pregnancy provides reassurance that Mary can trust the angel's impossible news. By the sixth month, Mary will be able to see for herself that Elizabeth is truly pregnant. By the sixth month, Mary can place her hands on Elizabeth's belly and giggle as

the baby leaps and kicks. By the sixth month, the risk of miscarriage has significantly decreased. By the sixth month, Elizabeth will be emotionally, mentally, and physically preparing for birth. Her miracle is real, even as it is yet to be born. Therefore, Mary can rest her hope in an emerging—not empty—promise.

Mary's willingness to say "yes" is also fortified by the assurance that she is not stepping forward alone. Even as fears surely surround her, Mary will go to Elizabeth for protection and comfort. She won't fulfill her calling without support. Her hope will be strengthened in solidarity.

In this image, we see the angel greeting Mary in the form of dappled light.<sup>6</sup> Mary's back is turned to the angel, but we see her in the process of pivoting toward the warmth of the cascading light. I imagine this is the moment after the angel responds to her initial question, "How can this be?" After hearing the angel's response, Mary closes her eyes, imagining her cousin Elizabeth and perhaps her many ancestors holding her up as she prepares to step forward. The wrap around her head carries the angel's good news, anointing her with the promise that fear won't stop her. Embroidered along her neckline is Mary's willing response: "Here I am." Her lantern earring is a sign to each of us, to anyone who is fearful. It's as if Mary herself becomes a lantern, emanating courage in the face of a fearful calling, lighting a way forward.

—REV. LISLE GWYNN GARRITY

## **FYI-INFORMATION**

12/7/24

In Person Attendance

87

Virtual Attendance

127

Offering

\$6,205.40

## **WEEKLY ACTIVITIES at FPCH - December 14 - 20, 2025**

Sunday	10:00 am	Worship
	11:10 am	Joyful Noise Bells rehearsal
	11:20 am	Unity Chimes rehearsal
	11:30 am-1:30 pm	Second Sunday
Mon/Fri	9:00 am-12:00 noon	Church Office Open
Mon/Fri	9:00 am-12:00 noon	Heaven Sent Nursery School
Thursday	7:30-8:30 pm	Senior Choir Rehearsal
Saturday	10 am-12 noon	Christmas play practice

## **WEEKLY ACTIVITIES in our Chapel - December 14 - 20, 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](mailto:revehayes@gmail.com)

Call the church office at: 908-852-4011

Church email: [fpchnj@gmail.com](mailto:fpchnj@gmail.com)

Church Website: [www.fpchackettstown.org](http://www.fpchackettstown.org)