

THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF LANSING



Grief, ca 21st Century, unknown artist, San Francisco, Vanderbilt University Divinity Library

510 W. Ottawa Street ■ Lansing, Michigan 48933

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Facebook3 – Lansing First Presbyterian

Church Office Hours (M-F) 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 & 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

SERVICE FOR THE LORD'S DAY

Dec. 17, 2023 10:00 a.m.

Third Sunday of Advent

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

In order to maintain our worship environment, please turn off your cell phones. Thank you.

PRELUDE "Holly and the Ivy" arr. Mizzy McCaskill & Dona Gilliam, Sue Carey, flute

CALL TO WORSHIP

Sherri DeMarco

With open hands, we proclaim:

**God promises to bring good news to the afflicted,
the disenfranchised, the oppressed, the tormented,
the grieving, and the imprisoned.**

With open spirits, we shout with joy.

**God calls us to rejoice, pray,
and give thanks constantly.**

With open minds, we gather in God's covenant.

**God sanctifies us so that we will be ready
for the coming of the Lord.**

Let us worship God!

++HYMN #100 [GTG] My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout

By implying an energetic Irish folk song for its melody, this ballad-like paraphrase of the Magnificat, Mary's song at her meeting with her relative Elizabeth (Luke 1:46-55), recaptures both the wonder and the faith of the young woman who first recognized what God was doing.

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

Brian and Darla Jackson

JOY

We sing the response:

84[GTG] *Creator of the stars of night, your people's everlasting light,
O Christ, Redeemer of us all, We pray you hear us when we call.*

SERVICE OF RENEWAL

Call to Confession

Sherri DeMarco

++Indicates to stand in body or spirit

Unison Prayer of Confession

**Your love is good news for the oppressed, O Lord,
and you bind up the brokenhearted.
Forgive us, O God,
when we think that your good news is only for us.
Forgive us, O God,
when we twist your gospel into something that fits comfortably into our lives.
By your light,
let us see you leading us beyond ourselves and into the world you love.
By your grace,
forgive us, and free us to try again.**

Assurance of Pardon

Sherri DeMarco

Every valley is lifted up; every mountain, made low.
Now the glory of the Lord is revealed,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.
In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!
Thanks be to God.

++Response to Forgiveness #87 [GTG]

***"Comfort, comfort now my people; tell of peace!" So says 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."***

++PASSING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

Sherri DeMarco

May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
And also with you.

#752 [GTG] (verse one)

Dona nobis pacem. Dona nobis pacem.

RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS

Summer Foster, Matthew Foster, Natasha Williams, Desmond Williams, Rev. Robert Higle
(affiliate)

MOMENT OF THANKS

Pam Blair, Rev. Stanley Jenkins

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Sherri DeMarco

Holy God, our hope and strength,
by the power of your Spirit
prepare the way in our hearts
for the coming of your Word,
so that we may see the glorious signs
of your promise fulfilled;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON

Psalm 126

Sherri DeMarco

¹When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.
²Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them." ³The LORD has done great things for us, and we rejoiced. ⁴Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like the watercourses in the Negeb. ⁵May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy. ⁶Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL LESSON

John 1:6-8, 19-28

Rev. Stanley Jenkins

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

¹⁹This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." ²¹And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." ²²Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" ²³He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said. ²⁴Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" ²⁶John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, ²⁷the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." ²⁸This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

Children's Pageant - THE KING'S BIRTHDAY

THE KING'S BIRTHDAY

Angel: In Bethlehem town, A long time ago. A baby was born, God's love to show.

The shepherds all worshiped; the angels did sing. For it was the birthday of Jesus the King!

Narrators:

The birthday of a king! Doesn't that sound wonderful???

What are you talking about?

A king! Doesn't it make you think of satin, velvet, crown jewels and royalty?

It wasn't like that at all. As a matter of fact, this birth was anything but glamorous.

No chariots??

Not exactly. Emperor Augustus had ordered a census. Joseph had to go from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea, because it was the birthplace of King David, and Joseph was one of his descendants. It was a long trek.

But they must have had a chariot!

Nothing like it, in fact. We're not sure if Mary, Joseph's wife, walked or rode a donkey, but she was pregnant and probably arrived exhausted. When they finally arrived in Bethlehem, the time had come for Mary to have her baby.

Uh-oh. No hospitals, I take it. Maybe I'll stop complaining about some of my less-than- stellar birthdays.

Good idea. But even in the midst of all that dust, and mud, and walking for what must have seemed like forever...good things were beginning to happen. It started in the outlands, outside the city limits, where shepherds were watching over their flocks by night.

*The first noel, the angels did say was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay
In fields where thy lay keeping their sheep on a cold winter's night that was so deep.*

Noel, noel, noel, noel. Born is the King of Israel!

Narrators:

But Mary and Joseph didn't know about this. They had even more problems to face down. The town of Bethlehem did have an inn, but when Joseph tried to get a room, there weren't any. The inn was full.

A strange thing happened. The Innkeeper couldn't turn his back on the couple from Galilee. He had already turned a dozen people away that day, and it didn't bother him, but something about this couple did...

Innkeeper: Why can't I put that couple out of my mind? I've got all these employees. I have plenty to do myself. My inn is totally full! Why can't I stop thinking about them?

First of all, she looked exhausted. It was obvious that she was very pregnant. And the way that young man stared with his eyes pleading-- But it was more than that. There was an aura about the couple that said they had a secret—that they knew something that no one else in the world knew. They understood that something monumental was about to happen, and it would change the world forever.

“Something In His Eyes”

*I CANNOT DEFINE, WHAT CAUSED HIS EYES TO SHINE
THAT INTRICATE DESIGN, ALL THAT'S GOOD AND FINE*

*I THOUGHT IT WAS A SIGN, THAT SOMETHING WAS
DIVINE YES THE SHINE, WAS A SIGN, WAS DIVINE.*

Innkeeper: And I still have that strange feeling that I can't explain—as if something monumental is about to happen—as if this woman is not going to give birth to an ordinary baby, but to – well– to royalty, or some really special person– like a king. Now, isn't that ridiculous? That baby could never be a king. His father is a carpenter from Galilee. But why do I feel so adamant that this is no ordinary birth and no ordinary occasion.

THERE'S MYSTERY IN THE AIR, A SECRET OH, SO RARE,

I ONLY CAN SURMISE, THAT IT'S A BIG SURPRISE.

SOME-THING IN THIS BIRTH, WILL CHANGE ALL THINGS ON EARTH

WHAT A DAY, WHAT A NIGHT, THIS WILL BE.

Innkeeper: I can't stop thinking about that man's eyes. I thought he wanted me to understand something that he was not at liberty to explain.

SOMETHING IN HIS HEART, SEEMED ALL TORN APART.

YET HIS SOUL SHOWN THROUGH, WITH MESS-AGES SO NEW.

IT CAME FROM GOD ABOVE, A MESSAGE FULL OF LOVE

FROM A-BOVE, CAME THE WORD, GOD IS LOVE.

Innkeeper: I feel this urgency to do something. They need shelter, a roof over their heads, and a place to sleep, protected from the chill night air. But I can't turn people out to give them a room. The stable! Why didn't I think of it sooner? If only I can catch him. Joseph! Joseph, from Galilee! Joseph!

Narrators:

So this king wasn't born in a palace, he was born in a stable?

That's right.

But if this baby is really a king, wouldn't people have known what was going on? Shouldn't trumpets have been blowing, or maybe a display of lightning to announce his birth?

God announced his birth with a star.

A star?

A star so bright no one knew what to make of it. People all over the world saw it. Some recognized it as a message from God, but others had no idea what it meant.

Shepherd: Why, it's a star. It's so bright it woke me up. I thought it was morning and the sun was shining in my eyes. But you're not a *little* star. You're the biggest, brightest star I ever saw.

*TWINKLE, TWINKLE CHRISTMAS STAR, WHAT A WONDROUS SIGHT YOU ARE. UP
ABOVE THE WORLD SO HIGH,*

*YOU'RE THE BRIGHTEST IN THE SKY. TWINKLE, TWINKLE CHRISTMAS STAR. WHAT A
WONDROUS SIGHT YOU ARE.*

*TWINKLE, TWINKLE CHRISTMAS STAR, BRINGING WISE MEN FROM AFAR. BRINGING
SHEPHERDS TO THEIR KNEES, BRINGING HOPE FOR CENTURIES. TWINKLE, TWINKLE
CHRISTMAS STAR. WHAT A WONDROUS SIGHT YOU ARE.*

Shepherd: There are lots of stars out tonight. But they're smaller. It's like all the little stars want to sing to the big star!

Narrators:

There were many shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace to men."

***Joy to the world! The Lord is come
Let earth receive her King!
Let every heart prepare Him room
And heaven and nature sing, And heaven and nature sing
And heaven, and heaven and nature sing***

Narrators:

Back in Bethlehem, Mary and Joseph had no idea about this. All they knew was that the Innkeeper had a sudden change of heart.

Let me guess! He gave them the best room in the whole place.

Not quite. He felt bad for them, Mary being pregnant and all, but he wasn't about to kick somebody out of the inn. He told them they could stay in the barn.

You're kidding.

Unfortunately, no. Mary had been visited by an angel, who told her she was going to give birth to a Savior. At this point she probably thought she had hallucinated!

We're talking...sharing your bed with a cow?

And a mule, a couple of sheep, and maybe even some squawking chickens.

What a mess.

Yes...and no. Mary had been through a lot already. She was very tired, but it's likely that she felt that peace...that peace that passes all understanding when you know good things are coming.

"Mary Did You Know" by Mark Lowry

Bailey Kendrick , soloist

Narrators:

A king, born in a stable, sleeping in a manger and wearing rags. Anybody who found him in the manger might have considered him a pauper.

I think God made sure that didn't happen. That's why he sent the angels and the star. I think he wanted people to know that this prince was real, but different.

The Bible predicted this night for thousands of years. Some people were "wise" to it

Three wise men from the east looked for the star and followed it. They found the savior wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. There was Balthasar who brought the gift of Gold.

Melchior brought Frankincense, and Caspar brought the gift of Myrrh.

***We three kings of Orient are Bearing gifts we traverse afar.
Field and fountain, moor and mountain, Following yonder star.
O star of wonder, star of night, Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding, Guide us to thy perfect Light.***

Narrators:

Now, I think I see the meaning of all of this. Born in a stable, a manger for a bed-- everything about this baby was as humble as it could be. I think it meant that he was going to be a truly different kind of king, and a different kind of leader.

And I think that is what the Christmas story is all about.

This night—so tiring, so painful, so historic, and so unforgettable—shows us what royalty really is. Jesus would grow up and say, “He who is last will be first. He who is first will be last.” He proved it to us this night.

What more can we say?

***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***

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Gwen Botting

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.

(Prayers continue)

Lord's Prayer (**unison**)

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 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.

Amen #600 [GTG]

Amen, Amen, Amen

PRESENTING OUR GIFTS

Offering

OFFERTORY

Bells of First Silent Night arr. Jason Krug

++ Doxology (Tune of #145 [GTG] Greensleeves)

***We bring our gifts to celebrate your gift of incarnation:
The Word made flesh in Jesus Christ, the Lord of all creation.
Praise, praise to you, O God, and to your Son, forever be;
Praise Holy Spirit, praise the blessed Trinity.***

Prayer of Dedication

++HYMN #112 [GTG] On Christmas Night all Christians Sing

The words of this carol first appeared in 1684 in a collection by an Irish bishop, Luke Wadding. Whether they were his own work or something gleaned from popular use is not clear. The tune name (SUSSEX CAROL) recalls that the tune was collected in 1904 from Mrs. Verrall of Monk's Gate, Sussex.

BENEDICTION

BLEST BE THE TIE 306[GTG]

***Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love:
The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.***

POSTLUDE

Chrisann Lowe

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INFORMATION FOR THE DAY

Participants in this morning's service:

Liturgist

Organist/Pianist

Director of Music

Bells of First Director

Pastor

Sherri DeMarco

Chrisann Lowe

Megan Hagle

Darin Showalter

Rev. Stanley Jenkins

Concerns of the congregation:

In care facilities:

Jean Dietrich (Story Point of Grand Ledge)

Dianne Rector (Rosewood Adult Foster Care- DeWitt)

HEARING ASSISTANCE (The devices have been recently checked and they DO work!) **LARGE PRINT AND BRAILLE BULLETINS** (If you would like a Braille bulletin, please let the church office know ahead of time.) We also have **CUSHIONS** available if you find the pews uncomfortable! Please see one of the ushers if any of these aids to worship will enhance your participation in the service.

FLOWER CHART There are many dates available on the chart to celebrate special days in our church family. The new price is \$50. Simply sign up on the chart (in the office hall), indicate the occasion that you would like celebrated or honored (birthday, anniversary or memorial), write a check to the church and give it to Betsy, and we will order for you. If you would like to purchase or provide a silk arrangement for use when we don't have a fresh arrangement scheduled, please see Judy Whitman. Thank you! - Worship Committee.

"YOUR SUPPORT IS VITAL TO OUR MISSION! PLEASE SCAN THIS CODE WITH YOUR SMARTPHONE TO GIVE SECURELY ONLINE." Take a picture with your phone and it will take you to the website to make a donation.



MORE LIGHT
PRESBYTERIANS

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Sunday, Dec. 17

10:00 a.m. Morning Worship - Sanctuary
11:30 a.m. Adult Forum – Litten Hall
12:30 p.m. Victory in Jesus Ministries Worship - Chapel

Monday, Dec. 18

9:00 a.m. GIL Class
10:00 a.m. Staff Meeting
5:00 p.m. – 9 GIL class
5:30 p.m. Yoga – Yoga Room
6:30 p.m. Bells of First rehearsal – Choir room

Tuesday, Dec. 19

9:00 a.m. GIL Class
6:30 p.m. Glen Erin Pipe Band Rehearsal – Litten Hall
7:00 p.m. Capital City Chordsmen rehearsal – Chapel

Wednesday, Dec. 20

9:00 a.m. GIL Class
5:30 p.m. Yoga – Yoga Room
7:30 p.m. Lectionary Bible Study – Zoom

Thursday, Dec. 21

9:00 a.m. GIL Class
7:00 p.m. Chancel Choir rehearsal – choir room
7:00 p.m. Victory in Jesus Ministries– Library

Friday, Dec. 22

5:30 p.m. Yoga – Yoga Room

Saturday, Dec. 23

Sunday, Dec. 24

10:00 a.m. Morning Worship - Sanctuary
11:30 a.m. Adult Forum – Litten Hall
12:30 p.m. Victory in Jesus Ministries Worship – Chapel

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Happy Anniversary! On December 17, 1847, our church, First Presbyterian, Lansing was founded in a wooden schoolhouse on N. Cedar Street. Our congregation was the first in Lansing to affiliate with a major denomination. Our current location is the third church building in the history of our congregation. Today, we note the 176th anniversary of the founding of our church. As the congregation of First Church, Lansing let us extend congratulations! to one another.

The Paul Keller Big Band Ensemble will be coming to FPC tonight, December 17 at 7:00 pm to present "Christmas For Jazz Lovers". This is a FANTASTIC time spent with some your favorite holiday tunes! Big Band, Soloist, Christmas Sweaters. Free Will Donations accepted to help support this wonderful FPC tradition. This is the PKO's 4th time coming to Lansing - we are the "western" venue that they venture out to from Detroit/Ann Arbor area. Family friendly, clapping, laughing, smiling and singing along is encouraged!

Handbell choir rehearsals are Mondays, 6:30pm in the Sanctuary. All are welcome! Contact Darin Showalter for more information.

Adult Bible Study: has been moved from 10:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., Wednesdays by ZOOM. All are welcome as we explore two readings from the Revised Common Lectionary. Here is a link to the lectionary: <https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/> Here is the Zoom link to connect: <https://bit.ly/3Q2iBKZ> Meeting ID: 832 1565 8039, Passcode: 661418
Pastor Bob Higle / bob.higle@gmail.com / 517-512-8018

ADULT FORUM

(11:30-12:30 in Litten Hall downstairs or on Zoom).
(Childcare can be available through this time.)
Children's Faith Formation also happening Dec. 10.

DECEMBER 17

Rev. Stanley Jenkins

The Scottish Highlands! the Isle of Skye!

Come see fabulous castles, fairy pools, waterfalls, and highland cattle!

Rev. Jenkins will talk about and show pictures from his Sabbatical trip to Scotland.

DECEMBER 24

(no Adult Forum today)

**Join the congregation this evening
in our beautiful candlelight service.
7:00 PM**

Adult Education Committee wishes everyone a blessed holiday.