



First Presbyterian Church of Athens

In response to God's grace, the mission of First Presbyterian Church is to create a community where people seek the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, rejoice in worship, and go forth sharing the love of Christ with Athens and the world!

December 30, 2018

10:00 a.m.

First Sunday after Christmas Day

GATHERING IN THE NAME OF GOD

Welcome to all who are worshipping with us. As we enter a holy space this morning, **please silence your cell phone**. The nursery is available downstairs during both services. Consult an usher if you need a personal hearing device, large-print bulletin or large-print hymnal.

The congregation is invited to speak or sing the liturgy in **bold** type.

Greeting

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Prelude

Noël

Louis-Claude Daquin

Words of Welcome and Concerns of the Church

Song of Gathering

Hymn 53, Stanza 1

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!

Please sign and pass the Fellowship Pad, making note of new and old friends, and check in on Facebook.

Call to Worship

The Good News has been emblazoned across the skies
the great starry night of Jesus' birth,

sung by angels,

celebrated by shepherds,

witnessed by animals,

and pondered by Mary.

**May we together sing, celebrate, witness,
and ponder this birth anew.**

Let us worship God!

The original form of Hymn 28, dating from the 14th century, belongs to a special group called "macaronic," which means it was in two languages (German and Latin). The English text in the present version is not a literal translation, but it is sung to the traditional German folk melody.

*Hymn 28

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice IN DULCIJUBILO

*Those who are able may stand.

***Call to Confession**

***Prayer of Confession**

Forgiving God, we confess that we often walk in the darkness of sin. We let selfishness and fear overshadow us. We ignore the needs of others and think only of ourselves and our tribe. Shine the light of your grace into our lives that we might show compassion and justice to all people, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

***Silent Prayer**

Lord, have mercy. **Amen.**

***Assurance of Pardon**

***Congregational Response**
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Hymn 23, refrain

***The Peace**

Since God has forgiven us in Christ, let us forgive one another. The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

And also with you.

Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you.

Worshippers may greet each other by saying, "The peace of Christ be with you," and responding, "And also with you."

HEARING THE WORD OF GOD

Congregational Prayer for Illumination Hymn 68, Stanza 3

O Jesus, while the star of grace impels us on to seek your face, let not our slothful hearts refuse the guidance of your light to use.

First Lesson Isaiah 42:5-9, page 657

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

***Hymn 56** The First Nowell THE FIRST NOWELL
Stanzas 1, 2, & 6

Second Lesson Luke 2:25-39, page 936

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon The Story in Song: Song of Simeon Dr. Carol Strickland

"Nowell" (in Hymn 56) is the English form of the French "noel," a shout of joy formerly used at Christmas (as in Chaucer's "Franklin's Tale"), a clue that the word is older than its first printing. It may have Latin and French roots related to "born" (natus/né) as well as "news" (nova/nouvelle).

RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

***Hymn 603** Song of Simeon LAND OF REST

***Affirmation of Faith** John 1:1-5, 14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Hymn 603, an unrhymed 20th-century paraphrase by a Scottish Jesuit, gives fresh immediacy to the Song of Simeon and recaptures something of that aged priest's sense of wonder in beholding the infant Christ. The shape note tune enhances the text's down-to-earth quality.

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer Hymnal, p. 16
... and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. . .

Presentation of Our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory In dulci jubilo Johann Michael Bach

***Doxology** Hymn 592

**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.**

***Prayer of Dedication**

SENDING IN THE NAME OF GOD

***Hymn 40** Joy to the World! ANTIOCH

***Benediction**

***Congregational Response** Hymn 68, Stanza 4

**To God the Father, God the Son
And Holy Spirit, Three in one,
May every tongue and nation raise
An endless song of thankful praise.**

***Postlude** Toccata on ANTIOCH Craig Phillips

While Isaac Watts did not write the text of Hymn 40 strictly for Christmas, he did purposely cast his paraphrase of Psalm 98 in Christian terms, titling it "The Messiah's coming and kingdom." So "the Lord" here is Jesus Christ, rather than the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Texts and music for hymns and sung responses reprinted under OneLicense.net #A-714861

A special word of welcome to our guests: thank you for joining us for worship this morning. Please fill out the fellowship pad so that we may be in touch. We are delighted you are here and look forward to seeing you again.

Nurseries for infants and toddlers, available from 9:30 a.m. to 11:15 p.m., are located next to the Children's Ministry Suite and are accessible down the stairs in the Atrium and through the glass door.

NOTES ON THE SERVICE

WORSHIP LEADERS

Liturgist
Leslye Queen

Lay Reader
Kitty Donnan

USHERS
Jim Dove (head),
Bill Woolbright, Mary Ben Woolbright

GREETERS
Carroll Gaillard, Cheryl Gazlay,
Chris Gazlay, Jo Carol Nessel-Sale

FELLOWSHIP HOSTS
Judy and Mark Harrison

FLOWERS
The Sanctuary flowers are given to the glory of God in celebration of the marriage of Lauren Rebecca Thurston and Brandon Sidney Childs on December 29, 2018.

The Narthex flowers are in loving memory of Erwin Veres and Ingeborg Veres, given by Diana Owen.

We have a rosebud in honor of the birth of Isabelle Anne Buss on December 22, 2018. Isabelle is the daughter of Nathaniel & Sarah Buss and the granddaughter of Carla Buss.

SUNDAY MORNING MANAGER
Paulo Santos

TO AID IN WORSHIP
If you need to leave the sanctuary during the service, a live video feed is available in the Atrium.

Available in the narthex or from an usher:

- **Personal hearing receivers** usable anywhere in the sanctuary
- **Large-print** hymnals, Bibles, bulletins, and hymnsheets
- **Sermons** from the previous six weeks

Advent & Christmas Sermon Series

For this Advent and Christmas season, our sermon series has been built around the theme, “The Story in Song.” Each Sunday, we have been led by a hymn that has moved us through the season and brought to mind the story we love to tell. Today we conclude with “Song of Simeon.”

One Service, 10:00 a.m. January 6

For one more Sunday we will have one service at 10:00 a.m. and Sunday School will not meet.

Called Congregational Meeting January 6, 11:00 a.m.

The Session has called a Congregational meeting for January 6 to act on a recommendation from the Pastor Nominating Committee. There will be one worship service at 10:00 a.m. with the meeting immediately following the service. A brochure with information about the Senior Pastor/Head of Staff candidate to be presented by the PNC will be available on January 6.

HOLIDAY BENEVOLENCE MARKET Through December 31

“Shopping lists” for local non-profit agencies are available in the Narthex and church office. Checks can be received until December 31.

FOOD SUNDAY January 6

On Sunday, January 6 we will collect items for the Athens-Area Emergency Food Bank. This month they request **cold breakfast cereal and saltine crackers**. Thank you for donating 542 items in December!

2019-20 WEEKDAY SCHOOL Registration Begins January 15

Please call our director, Elaine Johnson, at 706-206-8180 to schedule a tour. Our Weekday School is celebrating 52 years of serving Athens children, ages infant through 5 years.

OFFERING ENVELOPES

2019 offering envelopes are available for pickup in Fellowship Hall. If yours are not there and you would like some, please contact Roger or Laura in the church office at 706-543-4338.

BRINGING CHRISTMAS CHEER

Thanks to your generosity, 107 baskets were given to Casa de Amistad, 105 angels were adopted from the Salvation Army Angel Tree, approximately \$5,000 has been given so far through the Holiday Benevolence Market, meals were delivered on Thanksgiving Day, and more will be delivered on Christmas Day and New Year’s Day for Meals on Wheels. What a loving congregation!

AUCTION DONATIONS NEEDED

Can you donate an item, service, or experience for the silent auction at our Mardi Gras Mission Gala next March? Maybe a treasure in your attic, an hour of professional services, cooking for a dinner party, or a weekend at your vacation home? Donation forms are online and in the church office.

2018 CONTRIBUTIONS

Those who wish to make a contribution to the church before the end of the year please note the following: for tax purposes the contribution must be claimed in the year in which it is delivered. One exception is a check, which is deductible in the year it is mailed (and postmarked) even though it is received by the church early in the new year.

COMMITMENT SUNDAY UPDATE

Thank you to all who have made a financial commitment for 2019. We depend on the generosity of everyone to support our ministries and missions. If you have not yet made your commitment, please do so by the end of the year so the Session can plan the 2019 budget. You may turn in your pledge in the offering plate, in the church office, or online at firstpresathens.org/home/giving.

THIS WEEK

Sunday, December 30 - 1st Sunday after Christmas Day

10:00 a.m. Service, Dr. Carol Strickland preaching, No Sunday School

11:05 a.m. Fellowship, Atrium

Monday, December 31 - Church Office Closed for New Year's Holiday

Tuesday, January 1 - Church Office Closed for New Year's Holiday

10:00 a.m. New Year's Day Meals on Wheels Delivery, Council on Aging, 135 Hoyt St.

Wednesday, January 2

12:00 p.m. Our Daily Bread, First Baptist Church, 355 Pulaski St.

12:30 p.m. Prayers for Healing, Sanctuary

3:00 p.m. Bridge, Room 302

4:00 p.m. Chair Yoga, Room 310

Friday, January 4

9:00 a.m. Weekday School Teacher In Service Day

Sunday, January 6 - Communion Sunday, Food Sunday

10:00 a.m. Service, Dr. Bruce Lancaster preaching, No Sunday School

LOOKING AHEAD

January 6 - Called Congregational Meeting, 11:00 a.m.

January 9 - Fellowship@First: Pizza Night

Bookless Book Group

January 16 - Wed@First Programs Begin

January 20 - Ecumenical Martin Luther King, Jr. Service, Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, 5:00 p.m.

January 21 - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service

January 23 - Bookless Book Group

January 27 - Congregational Meeting & Lunch

February 3 - Youth Sunday

Souper Bowl of Caring

February 6 - Fellowship@First: Pizza Night