



LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN  
*Presbyterian Church*

**IN PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP**

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*All glory to you, great God, for the gift of your Son,  
light in darkness and hope of the world, whom you sent to save us.  
With singing angels let us praise your name and tell the earth his story,  
that all may believe, rejoice, and bow down.  
— from The Worship Sourcebook*

DECEMBER 31, 2023 • SANCTUARY SERVICE



Lord Jesus Christ, you deigned to dwell among us here on earth  
as God with us, Emmanuel, to bring this holy birth.

Though rich, you willingly became one with our poverty,  
that we might share your wealth and name for all eternity!

*text by Stephen Starke, 1996; traditional English melody, arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1906, FOREST GREEN*

**\* Prayer of adoration**

**\* Affirmation of faith**

The Nicene Creed

**We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.**

**And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried; and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.**

**And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets; and we believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church; we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

**Call to confession**

from 1 Peter 1 and 2

We have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. Therefore, let us rid ourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, let us crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it we may grow up in our salvation, now that we have tasted that the Lord is good.

**Silent prayers of confession**

**Choral prayer**

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”

Chancel Choir

O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;  
cast out our sin and enter in; be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel. Amen.  
*text by Phillips Brooks, 1868; music by Lewis H. Redner, 1868, ST. LOUIS*

**Assurance of God’s pardoning grace**

from Ephesians 2

**Leader:** As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions.

**All:** **For it is by grace we have been saved, through faith—and this not from ourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.**

**\* Hymn of assurance 241, vv. 1, 4, 5**

“Thou Dost Reign on High”

Thou dost reign on high with a kingly crown, yet thou camest to earth for me, and in Bethlehem’s home was there found no room for thy holy nativity: O come to my heart, Lord Jesus, there is room in my heart for thee.

Thou camest, O Lord, with the living word that should set thy people free; but with mocking scorn, and with crown of thorn, they bore thee to Calvary: O come to my heart, Lord Jesus, thy cross is my only plea.

When heav’n’s arches shall ring, and her choirs shall sing, at thy coming to victory, let thy voice call me home, saying, “Yet there is room, there is room at my side for thee.” And my heart shall rejoice, Lord Jesus, when thou comest and callest for me.  
*text by Emily E. S. Elliott, 1864; music by T. Richard Matthews, 1876, MARGARET*

**Worship in the giving of God’s tithe and our offerings**

**Offertory**

“Come, Thou Redeemer of the Earth”

Chancel Choir

Come, thou Redeemer of the earth, and manifest thy virgin birth: let every age adoring fall; such birth befits the God of all.

Begotten of no human will, but of the Spirit, thou art still the Word of God in flesh arrayed, the promised fruit to man displayed.

Thy cradle here shall glitter bright, and darkness breathe a newer light, where endless faith shall shine serene, and twilight never intervene.

All praise eternal Son to thee, whose advent sets thy people free,  
with whom the Father we adore, and Holy Ghost forevermore.

*text by St. Ambrose, 340-397, tr. by J. M. Neale, music arr. Mark Schweizer, PUER NOBIS NASCITUR*

**\* 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.**

**\* Prayer of dedication and thanksgiving**

**\* Scripture reading from John 3:1-15**

John Mark Scruggs

<sup>1</sup>Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

<sup>2</sup>This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." <sup>3</sup>Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." <sup>4</sup>Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" <sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup>That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

<sup>7</sup>"Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' <sup>8</sup>The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."  
<sup>9</sup>Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? <sup>11</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. <sup>12</sup>If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?"

<sup>13</sup>"No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup>And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup>that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

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

**Prayer of preparation for the study of God's Word**

**Sermon**

“Miraculous Births: Us!”  
Frank Hitchings, senior associate pastor

1. The absolute necessity of a new birth (vv. 1-6)
2. The extraordinary nature of the new birth (vv. 3-12)
3. The essential fruit of the new birth (vv. 13-15)

**Pastoral prayer**

**\* Hymn of response**

“The First Noël”

The first Noël the angel did say  
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;  
in fields where they lay keeping their sheep  
on a cold winter’s night that was so deep.  
Noël, Noël, Noël, Noël, born is the King of Israel.

And by the light of that same star,  
three wise men came from country far;  
to seek for a King was their intent,  
and to follow the star wherever it went.  
Noël, Noël, Noël, Noël, born is the King of Israel.

Then let us all, with one accord,  
sing praises to our heavenly Lord  
that hath made heav’n and earth of naught,  
and with his blood mankind hath bought.  
Noël, Noël, Noël, Noël, born is the King of Israel.  
*traditional English carol, 17th century*

**\* Benediction**

**\* Congregational response**

“Threefold Amen”

**\* Postlude**

“For Unto Us a Child Is Born”  
*arr. W. T. Best*

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**Musicians for this week:**

**Joy Gibbons – director**

**Joshua Knight – organ**

**The rosebud in the service today** is for the birth of Amelia Ruth Curtis, born to Kayley and Tucker Curtis on December 15.

## **WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**WE ARE EXTREMELY THANKFUL** for your faithful giving this past year; we still need approximately \$950,000 in giving to ensure we can meet all our 2023 financial obligations. Please remember us in your year-end giving so that we might enter into 2024 financially strong.

**CHOIRS FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS** will resume on Wednesdays in January. Chancel Choir will resume meeting on January 3 and children's choirs will resume on January 10. Parents, please register your child(ren) on Realm Connect. Adults, if you are interested in joining Chancel Choir, please email Joy Gibbons, [joy@lmpc.org](mailto:joy@lmpc.org).

**WOMEN'S WINTER SUPPER** is a great opportunity to connect with women across various ages and stages of life. Join us for a fellowship dinner at an individual home on Thursday, January 18 at 6:00 p.m. Bring your friends, and register on Realm Connect by January 15. Interested in hosting? Contact Caroline Scruggs, [caroline@lmpc.org](mailto:caroline@lmpc.org).

*To find out more about happenings at LMPC, visit [lmpc.org/events](http://lmpc.org/events).*