



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 29, 2024
10:00 a.m.
First Sunday of Christmas

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.

Please sign and pass the Fellowship Pad, making note of new and old friends, check in on Facebook, and follow us on Instagram (firstpresathensga).

Greeting

Psalm 118:24

This is the day the Lord has made; **let us rejoice and be glad in it!**

Prelude

Noël Ecossais

Alexandre Guilmant

Words of Welcome

Congregational Response

Hymn 28, stanza 2

Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart, and soul, and voice; now ye hear of endless bliss: Jesus Christ was born for this! He hath opened heaven's door, and we are blest forever more. Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!

Call to Worship

Our God is with us,

In the child, Jesus.

Our God is with us—

This helpless baby who will redeem the world.

Our God is with us.

Thanks be to God!

*Hymn 56

The First Nowell
(Stanzas 1, 2, and 6)

THE FIRST NOWELL

*Call to Confession

*Prayer of Confession

We confess to you and to our siblings in Christ that we have made decisions which have caused harm to you and our neighbors. We have put our selfish desires ahead of the needs of others. We have sought comfort in worldly things and forgotten you. For these and for all the ways in which we have fallen short, forgive us. Lead us back into a right relationship with you, our neighbors, and all of creation.

*Silent Prayer

Lord, have mercy. **Amen.**

*Assurance of Pardon

**Those who are able may stand.*

“Nowell” is the English from the French word “noel,” a shout of joy formerly used at Christmas. It may have Latin and French roots related to “born” (*natus*) as well as “news” (*nova* or *nouvelle*).

At "The Peace," worshipers are invited to greet each other by saying, "The peace of Christ be with you," and responding, "And also with you."

Song of Simeon is an unrhymed 20th-century paraphrase by a Scottish Jesuit, which gives fresh immediacy to the *Song of Simeon* and recaptures some of that aged priest's sense of wonder in beholding the infant Christ.

Scholars debate whether this powerfully poetic text is an early Christian hymn which Paul is quoting or his own composition. It is one of the best-known and most influential passages in the Pauline corpus.



You may mail your check, set up an automatic gift through your bank, or donate online using this QR code or at firstpresathens.org/giving. Thank you for your generosity.

***Congregational Response** Hymn 28, stanza 3
**Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart, and soul, and voice;
 now ye need not fear the grave; Jesus Christ was born to save!
 Calls you one and calls you all to gain the everlasting hall.
 Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!**

***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.

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 Psalm 131, page 562

Second Lesson Luke 2:21-38, page 935
 This is the Word of God for the people of God. **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon *Recognize* The Rev. Whitney Booth Lockard

RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

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

***Affirmation of Faith** *Philippians 2:5-11*

**Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God,
 did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,
 but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave,
 being born in human likeness.
 And being found in human form, he humbled himself
 and became obedient to the point of death –
 even death on a cross.**

**Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name
 that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus
 every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and
 under the earth, and every tongue should confess
 that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

Prayers of the People and the 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; 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.**

Presentation of Our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory *In dulci jubilo* Johann Sebastian 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 29	Go, Tell It on the Mountain	GO TELL IT
*Charge and Benediction		
*Congregational Response	Hymn 23, refrain	
Gloria in excelsis Deo; Gloria in excelsis Deo.		
Postlude	Swiss Noël	Louis-Claude Daquin
Texts and music for hymns and sung responses reprinted under OneLicense.net #A-714861		

Like other material from oral traditions, African American spirituals flourished without being written down. The refrains are more consistent while narrative stanzas were often improvised to fit.

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 children 4 years old and younger, available from 9:00 a.m. to 11:15 a.m., are located next to the Children’s Ministry Suite and are accessible down the stairs in the Atrium and through the glass door.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FOOD SUNDAY, JANUARY 5

You may bring donations of **non-food items (toiletries and household/cleaning supplies)** to church next **Sunday, January 5**. You may also bring food to church office until **Friday, January 3**. Thanks for your donations in December – our neighbors in need are grateful!

2025-26 WEEKDAY SCHOOL

First Pres Weekday School registration for Fall 2025 begins for in-house students on Tuesday, January 14. On Friday, January 17 at noon, community registration begins. Our Weekday School is a half day church preschool serving 3 months through 5 years. Questions? Call our director, Elaine Johnson, at (706) 206-8180 or e-mail elaine@firstpresathens.org.

Season of Wonder@First - Outreach and Volunteering Opportunities

Holiday Benevolence Market – thank you to all who attended the HBM in person at Covenant Presbyterian Church on Sunday, December 8. If you were not able to attend, you can still choose meaningful and symbolic gifts on the shopping lists of 30+ non-profit mission partners **by December 31**. You can find printed lists in the Atrium, church office, or online at tinyurl.com/HBMkt2024.

Holiday Meals on Wheels – help cover the cost of one or more meals on Christmas or New Year’s Day by making a financial contribution* **by December 31**. Thank you to all who volunteered to deliver meals on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day. If you are interested in being a backup driver to deliver meals, please contact John Turner at johnlovickturner@yahoo.com.

* For financial contributions make your check to First Presbyterian Church and note cause in memo line, or give online at FirstPresAthens.org/giving and select appropriate fund in drop-down menu.

Wednesday@First Spring 2025

Wed@First is now a monthly gathering for mid-week intergenerational fellowship and growth at FPC. On the first Wednesday of the month (except January; see dates below), everyone is invited to participate in LIFT, our program that combines dinner, study, play, and prayer with our church friends of all ages. LIFT stands for Living in Faith Together and this new offering is already beloved by those who joined us in the fall. One of the great gifts unique to the church is the opportunity to grow alongside people from different generations and LIFT presents us with monthly gatherings for fellowship, study, and fun – all around the dinner table with friends of different ages.

This spring, we will gather for LIFT on **January 8, February 5, March 5, and April 2** from 5:30-6:30 p.m. and all are invited to participate! Please RSVP for dinner in the Atrium, online at tinyurl.com/WedAtFirst, or by contacting the church office (e-mail frontdesk@firstpresathens.org or call 706-543-4338) by Mondays at 12:00 p.m. Price is \$12/person and a \$45/family max (complimentary for children 5 and under).

NOTES ON THE SERVICE

WORSHIP LEADERS

The Rev. Whitney Booth Lockard, *Associate Pastor*
Dr. John Coble, *Director of Music and Organist*

USHERS

Jimbo LaBoon III (head),
Emily LaBoon, John Simpson

FLOWERS

The poinsettias are given to the glory of God and in celebration of the marriage of Kimberly Childers and Brett Marshall.

DECEMBER FLOWER TEAM

Susan Ferguson (chair), Susan Barrett,
Susan Banister, Patty Brantley, Greta Covington,
Shannon Ferguson, Wanda Neislar, Page Pate,
Jennifer Poole, Jennifer Trapnell, Isabelle Wallace

AUDIOVISUAL TECHNICIAN

Bryan Owens

SUNDAY MORNING MANAGERS

Aiden Dowling, Justin Winstanley

TO AID IN WORSHIP

If you need to leave the sanctuary during the service, a live video feed is available in the Atrium and online on Facebook and YouTube.

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

CONGREGATIONAL CARE

Prayer requests can be submitted to the church office, 706-543-4338, by the Prayer Request link on our church website (firstpresathens.org) or on the prayer cards in the Fellowship Pads.

THIS WEEK

Sunday, December 29

10:00 a.m. Worship Service, The Rev. Whitney Booth Lockard preaching
11:00 a.m. Atrium Fellowship Refreshments

Monday, December 30 – Church Office Closes at 2:00 p.m.

Tuesday, December 31 – Church Office Closed

Wednesday, January 1 – Church Office Closed, Meals On Wheels Delivery

11:30 a.m. Our Daily Bread Lunch, First Baptist Church

Sunday, January 5- Communion Sunday, Food Sunday

10:00 a.m. Worship Service, Dr. Ryan Baer preaching
11:00 a.m. Atrium Fellowship Refreshments
5:30 p.m. Youth Group Dinner, Fellowship Hall
6:00 p.m. Youth Group, The PIT

Stewardship: An act of joyful worship

Dear Friends,

On Commitment Sunday, we walked together to the front of the sanctuary to place our Estimate of Giving cards in a basket on the Communion table, symbolizing our individual and collective acknowledgement that the material gifts we enjoy are but tangible evidence of God's abundant love for us. Our gifts reflect the truth of John 3:16 – that God first loved and then gave. We give in response to God's love for us. And we do so joyfully as an act of worship.

We are grateful for the 147 households who have provided an Estimate of Giving. If you have not, please prayerfully consider doing so. Having a reliable estimate of your financial gifts allows the Session to prepare an accurate budget for 2025.

You may fill out a commitment card (available in Fellowship Pads, Narthex, or Atrium), or online at firstpresathens.org/give. If you have any questions about setting up an automatic gift through your bank, please contact the church accountant, Jennifer Adams, at jadams@firstpresathens.org or call 706-543-4338.

Chuck Toney, *Generosity Team*

The First Nowell

THE FIRST NOWELL Irregular with refrain

English carol, 17th century

English carol
Sandys' *Christmas Carols*, 1833

1. The first Now - ell the an - gel did say Was to cer - tain poor
 2. They look - ed up and saw a star Shin - ing in the
 3. And by the light of that same star, Three wise men
 4. This star drew nigh to the north - west; O'er Beth - le -

shep - herds in fields as they lay; In fields where they lay a - keep - ing their
 east be - yond them far, And to the earth it gave great
 came from coun - try far; To seek for a king was their in -
 hem it took its rest; And there it did both stop and

*Refrain**
 sheep, On a cold win - ter's night that was so deep.
 light, And so it con - tin - ued both day and night.
 tent, And to fol - low the star wher - ev - er it went. Now - ell, Now -
 stay, Right o - ver the place where Je - sus lay.

ell, Now - ell, Now - ell, Born is the King of Is - ra - el.

5. Then entered in those wise men three, 6. Then let us all with one accord
 Fell reverently upon their knee, Sing praises to our heavenly Lord,
 And offered there in His presence, That hath made heaven and earth of
 Their gold, and myrrh, and nought,
 frankincense. And with His blood our life hath bought.
 (Refrain) (Refrain)

Song of Simeon

603

Nunc Dimittis

LAND OF REST CM

Para. James Quinn (b. 1919)

American folk melody
Arr. Annabel Morris Buchanan, 1938

C F B $\flat$ F C Dm C C7 F Am

1. Lord, bid Your ser - vant go in peace, Your word is now ful - filled.
2. This is the Sav - ior of the world, The Gen - tiles' prom-ised light,

Dm C $\sharp$ Dm Am B $\flat$ F C7 F B $\flat$ C7 F

These eyes have seen sal - va - tion's dawn, This child so long fore - told.
God's glo - ry dwell - ing in our midst, The joy of Is - ra - el.

Go, Tell It on the Mountain

29

GO TELL IT 7.6.7.6 with refrain

African-American spiritual

Arr. John W. Work III, 1940

Stanzas, John W. Work II (1872–1925)

Harm. and adapt. Melva Wilson Costen, 1987

Refrain

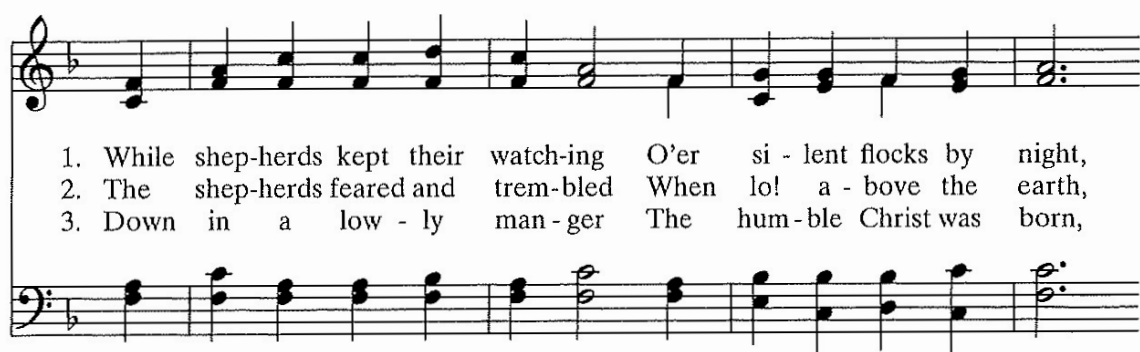


Go, tell it on the moun - tain O-ver the hills and ev - ery - where;

Fine



Go, tell it on the moun - tain That Je - sus Christ is born!



1. While shep-herds kept their watch-ing O'er si - lent flocks by night,
2. The shep-herds feared and trem-bled When lo! a - bove the earth,
3. Down in a low - ly man - ger The hum-ble Christ was born,

D.C.



Be - hold through-out the heav-ens There shone a ho - ly light.
Rang out the an - gel cho - rus That hailed our Sav - ior's birth.
And God sent us sal - va - tion That bless - ed Christ-mas morn.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH SESSION

Ryan Baer, Moderator Pat Waldrup, Clerk of Session

CLASS OF 2025	CLASS OF 2026	CLASS OF 2027
Shannon Brooks	Lindsay Griffeth	Susan Baldwin
Phyllis Crowell	Dan Nadenicek	Bill Bushnell
Denise Horton	Karen Phillips	Amy Cowser
Paul Lee	Ethelyn Simpson	Matt Crim
Sharon Neff	Jeffrey Trapnell	Jay Holloway
Bruce Middendorf	Pat Tritt	Tom Lane
Randy Riner	John Turner	Joan Pinson
Chuck Toney	Pat Waldrup	Paige Simmons

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH STAFF

Dr. Ryan Baer, *Senior Pastor* (ryan@firstpresathens.org)
The Rev. Whitney Booth Lockard, *Associate Pastor* (whitney@firstpresathens.org)
The Rev. Margaret Davis, *Parish Associate* (margaret@firstpresathens.org)
Dr. John Coble, *Director of Music and Organist* (jcoble@firstpresathens.org)
Ms. Hannah Knight, *Interim Director of Children and Youth Ministries* (hannah@firstpresathens.org)
Mrs. Elaine Johnson, *Director of Weekday School* (elaine@firstpresathens.org)
Mrs. Lucy Bell Johnson, *Office Administrator* (lbell@firstpresathens.org)
Mr. Paulo Santos, *Director of Communications* (paulo@firstpresathens.org)
Ms. Jennifer Adams, *Church Accountant* (jadams@firstpresathens.org)
Mrs. Joli Winstanley, *Receptionist* (frontdesk@firstpresathens.org)
Mrs. Marcy Fabris, *Weekday School Administrative Assistant* (wds@firstpresathens.org)
Ms. Rita Raines, *Nursery Coordinator*
Mrs. Charlotte Chromiak, *Children's Music Assistant* (charlotteposs@gmail.com)
Mrs. Madeline Van Dyck, *Parish Nurse*
Mr. Wayne Brock, *Sexton*