



First Presbyterian Church of Ridgewood NJ

We are a welcoming community formed in Christ, committed to sharing his love with others – with feet that carry us out into the world, with hands that serve, and with hearts in fellowship and faith.
– First Presbyterian Church Mission Statement, adopted October 2018



SECOND SUNDAY of ADVENT SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2024

Watch live: <https://www.youtube.com/live/14e8v12HF7A>

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PRELUDE

In the Bleak Midwinter ~ Hymn 36 – Joseph M. Martin
Linda Sweetman Waters, Piano

LIGHTING of the ADVENT CANDLE ~ The Torres Family

Longing for peace, our world is troubled. Longing for hope, many despair. Your word alone has power to save us. Make us your living voice. Christ be our light! Shine through the darkness. Christ be our light! Shine in your Church gathered today....

Congregation:

God of mercy and compassion, scripture says that if we draw near to you, you will draw near to us. In a shadowy world where human weakness and weariness reside, we ask for you to draw near and dispel the darkness around us. May the light of this season illuminate our hope, strength, and steadfast endurance as we await the coming Savior. We pray this in the name of Christ, our Lord. Amen.

WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS ~ Rev. Bruce Ballantine

MINUTE for MINISTRY ~ Dawn Murdock
Longest Night Service

CALL to WORSHIP

A voice cries:

In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

*HYMN 8 - *Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates*

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Cleansing God, we hear the call to repentance, but we struggle to respond. A voice tells us to turn around, but we prefer our own ways. You seek to purify us in love, but we constantly elude your searching hand. Our sin leads us in other directions, away from you, away from life. Look with mercy upon us, O God, and forgive us. Clear a place within us so that something new might be born, something that might return us to the way you have shown us in Jesus Christ.

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE of FORGIVENESS

*HYMN 579 – *Gloria Patri*

*PASSING of the PEACE

ANTHEM

I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light - arr. Erik Dewar and Dan Forrest

The Chancel Choir

Dr. Edward Schmiedecke, Director

I want to walk as a child of the light; I want to follow Jesus. God set the stars to give light to the world; the star of my life is Jesus. In Him there is no darkness at all; the night and the day are both alike. The Lamb is the light of the city of God; shine in my heart, Lord Jesus. I want to see the brightness of God; I want to look at Jesus. Clear Sun of righteousness, shine on my path, and show me the way to the Father. In Him there is no darkness at all; the night and the day are both alike. The Lamb is the light of the city of God; shine in my heart, Lord Jesus. I'm looking for the coming of Christ; I want to be with Jesus. When we have run with patience the race, we shall know the joy of Jesus. In Him there is no darkness at all; the night and the day are both alike. The Lamb is the light of the city of God; shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

MaryEllen Castaldo, Director of Children & Family Ministries

Following the Children's Message, children and youth are invited to attend Sunday School.

EPISTLE READING ~ Maddy Eliya

Philippians 1:3-11

GOSPEL READING ~ Rev. Bruce Ballantine

Luke 3:1-6

SERMON

John's Call to Spiritual House Cleaning ~ Rev. Bruce Ballantine

PRAYERS of the PEOPLE and THE LORD'S PRAYER

Compassionate God, in this time of darkness, we wait for the One who will come and redeem us. As we revel in the merriment of the season and the sparkle of decorations, we need to remember there are also many for whom the holiday season isn't one of joy and good cheer. We pray for those who cannot see the light in the darkness, that they would find hope, not in the commercial side of Christmas, but in the promise of the Christ child.

Silent Prayer

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who grieve this Advent season, fearing the first Christmas after losing a beloved family member or dear friend, that they would know your comfort and find hope in the promise of the resurrection.

Silent Prayer

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who struggle to feel joy because they're mired in mounting bills and experiencing despair due to underemployment or lack of employment, that they would have faith that you will provide.

We pray for those whose physical ailments and pain make it difficult to celebrate this year.

May they experience your healing and your peace.

Silent Prayer

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for military families who are separated by great distance from their loved ones serving in far away places and whose tables have an empty seat this Christmas, that they would rely on you for strength.

Silent Prayer

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those whose family dynamics make holidays, not a time of festive joy, but a season of stress and anger. We pray that through your grace, hearts can be softened, old hurts released, and the way opened to reconciliation.

Silent Prayer

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for people in faraway places whose lives have been destroyed by war. We pray for those who have lost loved ones, those who have lost homes and businesses and entire cities, those who have lost any sense of security they might have once had, those who have lost hope. And we pray for the day when swords will be beaten into plowshares, and nations will make war no more.

Silent Prayer

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God, we lift up our concerns, our hopes and our dreams,
those we have spoken and those offered in silence, to your tender care.

And now we are bold to pray as Jesus taught us:

**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.**



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CALL to OFFERING

You may make your offering via Tithe.ly,
place an offering in the plate as it is passed,
or mail a check to the church office. Thank you!



 Tithe.ly

OFFERTORY SOLO

A Cradle Carol by Dan Forrest

Vera Coleman, Soprano

Lord Jesus, Savior, infant weak, why come to earth as one so meek? A newborn babe, helpless and small; And yet Creator of us all. Thou hast no beauty, form, or grace; no fortune, rank, no fame, no place that men should see Thee and adore a babe so humble and so poor. But to the soul whose eyes are healed, to whom the truth has been revealed, Thy glory challenges the sun; Thou art a thousand joys in one. Though strangers see a babe in straw, Thy children see the Lord of all who laid aside his rightful reign to take away our sin and shame. This sacrifice of love divine, this condescension to mankind with beauty robes Thy lowly frame, and sanctifies Thy simple name. O aid my worship, mighty King, that I might with the angels sing, "Glory to God on high!" Now crowned again beyond the sky! Oh, help me see Thee and adore this little child, my God and Lord.

*DOXOLOGY – Hymn 592

*PRAYER of DEDICATION

*HYMN 10 – *On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry*

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying – Paul Manz

Linda Sweetman Waters, Organ

We are pleased to welcome the following new members during today's worship service:

Matthew Cardona, Susan King, Bing Lu, and Justin and Michelle Torres.

We rejoice with Matthew, Susan, Bing, Justin and Michelle on this meaningful day in their lives!

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CHANCEL FLOWERS

Chancel Flowers are given by Kimber and Tom Gibson

with much gratitude for this congregation's prayerful support during Kimber's illness.

We're happy to say she's doing well and the outlook is very positive.

*Please stand if you are able.

SCRIPTURE READINGS
for SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8

EPISTLE READING

Philippians 1:3-11

³ I thank my God every time I remember you, ⁴ constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, ⁵ because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷ It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸ For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight ¹⁰ to help you to determine what is best, so that on the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, ¹¹ having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

GOSPEL READING

Luke 3:1-6

³ In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, ² during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. ³ He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, ⁴ as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, 'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. ⁵ Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; ⁶ and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." '

Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates



1. Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates; be - hold, the
2. Fling wide the por - tals of your heart; make it a
3. Re - dee - mer, come, with us a - bide; our hearts to
4. Thy Ho - ly Spi - rit lead us on un - til our



King of glo - ry waits; the King of kings is
tem - ple, set a - part from earth - ly use for
thee we o - pen wide; let us thy in - ner
glo - rious goal is won; e - ter - nal praise, e -



draw - ing near; the Sa - vior
heaven's em - ploy, a - dorned with
pre - sence feel; thy grace and
ter - nal fame be of - fered,



of the world is here!
prayer and love and joy.
love in us re - veal.
Sa - vior, to thy name!

On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry

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WINCHESTER NEW LM

Charles Coffin, 1736

Trans. John Chandler, 1837; alt.

Musikalisches Handbuch, 1690

Harm. William Henry Monk, 1847; alt.

1. On Jor - dan's bank the Bap - tist's cry An -
 2. Then cleansed be ev - ery life from sin; Make
 3. We hail You as our Sav - ior, Lord, Our
 4. All praise to You, e - ter - nal Son, Whose

noun - ces that the Lord is nigh; A - wake and heark - en,
 straight the way for God with - in, And let us all our
 ref - uge, and our great re - ward; O let Your face up -
 ad - vent has our free - dom won, Whom with the Fa - ther

for he brings Glad tid - ings of the King of kings!
 hearts pre - pare For Christ to come and en - ter there.
 on us shine And fill the world with love di - vine.
 we a - dore, And Ho - ly Spir - it, ev - er - more.