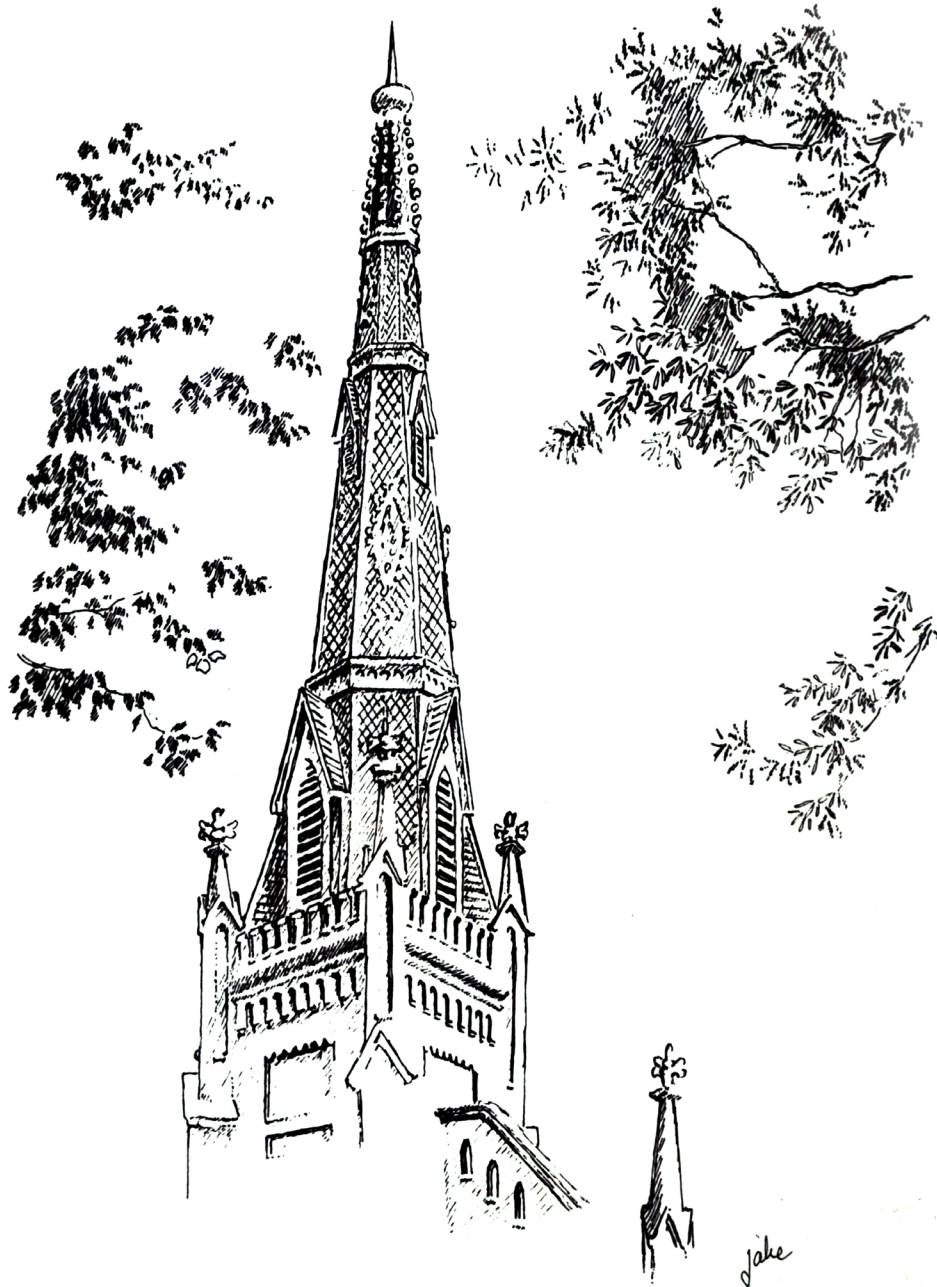


# First Presbyterian Church

CONTEMPLATIVE WORSHIP | 9 AM | DECEMBER 21, 2025  
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT



*We invite you, whoever you are and whoever God is helping you to become, to join First Presbyterian Church of Charlotte in our journey of faith. God is love, and that love is for you. You belong as a child of God, and we welcome you. Come experience how that belonging might change you and our world as we seek to be for Christ in the heart of Charlotte.*



First Presbyterian  
Church of Charlotte

**Time of Quiet Meditation and Reflection** | Silence begins in the Chapel at 8:50 a.m.

**Words of Welcome** | Reverend Mary Margaret Porter

**Opening Prayer** | Luke 1:46-55 | “The Magnificat”

Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors.”

**Moment of silent reflection**

Faithful God, you have loved your people with an everlasting love, lifting the lowly and gathering the scattered. In the fullness of time, you revealed that love in Jesus Christ, sending your Son so that we might live through him. As we wait and rejoice this Advent season, shape us by your promise fulfilled, that your love may be made known in our lives. Amen.

**Meditative Music** | “It Came Upon The Midnight Clear” | Choir of Westminster School

It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,  
From angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold:  
“Peace on the earth, good will to men, from heaven’s all-gracious King.”  
The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come with peaceful wings unfurled,  
And still their heavenly music floats o’er all the weary world;  
above its sad and lowly plains, they bend on hovering wing,  
and ever o’er its babel sounds the blessed angels sing.

Yet with the woes of sin and strife the world has suffered long;  
Beneath the angel-strain have rolled two thousand years of wrong;  
And man, at war with man, hears not the love-song which they bring;  
Oh hush the noise, ye men of strife and hear the angels sing.

For lo! the days are hastening on, by prophet bards foretold,  
When with the ever-circling years come round the age of gold;  
when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,  
and the whole world bring back the song which now the angels sing.

**Prayer for Illumination** | Tom Bunn

**Old Testament Reading** | Jeremiah 31:3–9

The Lord appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you. Again I will build you, and you shall be built, O virgin Israel! Again you shall adorn yourself with your tambourines and go forth in the dance of the merrymakers. Again you shall plant vineyards on the mountains of Samaria; the planters shall plant and shall enjoy the fruit. For there shall be a day when sentinels will call in the hill country of Ephraim: “Come, let us go up to Zion, to the Lord our God.”

For thus says the Lord: Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and raise shouts for the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, “Save, O Lord, your people, the remnant of Israel.” See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, those with child and those in labor together; a great company, they shall return here. With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back; I will let them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path where they shall not stumble, for I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God!**

**New Testament Reading** | 1 John 4:7-12 | Claire Tate

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God!**

**Moment of Reflection**

**Meditation** | "Divine Love" | Mary Margaret Porter

**Moment of Reflection****Offering**

The Christian life is marked by the offering of one's self to God to be shaped, empowered, directed, and changed by God. In worship, God presents us with the costly self-offering of Jesus Christ. We are claimed by Christ and set free. In response to God's love in Jesus Christ we offer God our lives, our gifts, our abilities, and our material goods for God's service. The offering plates are located at the back of the chapel if you are interested in giving regularly as a spiritual practice.

**Invitation to the Table** | Reverend Mary Bowman

**Meditative Music** | "Love Came Down" | London Voices and Ben Parry | from a poem by Christina Rossetti

Love came down at Christmas,  
Love all lovely, Love divine;  
Love was born at Christmas;  
Star and angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead,  
Love incarnate, Love divine;  
Worship we our Jesus,  
But wherewith for sacred sign?

Love shall be our token;  
Love be yours and love be mine;  
Love to God and all men/others,  
Love for plea and gift and sign.  
Love came down at Christmas.

**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.**

**Sacrament of Communion**

All are welcome to participate in communion. To receive the gluten-free bread and the cup, come forward, take a piece of bread, and then dip the bread into the cup. It is still communion if you prefer to take only the bread. Please do not drink out of the cup directly. If for any reason you prefer not to come forward, please raise your hand and the officers will be glad to serve you in your pew.

**Closing Prayer**

**God of steadfast love, you have kept your promise and come near to us in Jesus Christ. As we leave this place, carry with us the song of your faithfulness and the assurance of your everlasting love. Send us out to live what we have received—to love as you have loved us, to bear your mercy into a waiting world, and to prepare the way of your coming through our words and our lives. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**Charge and Blessing**

We have been fed by the presence of God in the silence, by the Word, and through communion. Please feel free to greet one another in a warm and quiet way that allows an easing out of the silence. The minister is available for prayer or conversation after the service. Sunday School begins at 9:45 a.m. If you would like to visit longer with other members, you are invited to gather in the Welcome Center.

**IN LOVING MEMORY** 

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*The Rev. Dr. David Scott Lindsay (former Associate Pastor of First Presbyterian Church)*  
December 3, 1947 - December 15, 2025

This service is now available via livestream. You can access the recording of the service or an audio or written version of the sermon at: <https://firstpres-charlotte.org/sermons/>



**VIRTUAL  
CONNECT  
CARD**



**PRAYER  
REQUESTS**



**TEXT  
TO GIVE**



**GIVE  
ONLINE**

## Welcome!

We're so glad you decided to join us for worship today! Whether you are a member, a frequent visitor, or it's your first time here, keep reading for details about today's worship.

**Are you new here?** Please fill out a Connect Card, which can be found in the seatback of the pew in front of you, or scan the "Virtual Connect Card" QR code in the front of your bulletin.



### **Children's Offerings:**

**9 a.m. Service:** A nursery is available for children ages birth through first grade in room P311.



Our church is a member of the Covenant Network of Presbyterians, which seeks equity still not fully realized for LGBTQIA+ people in church.



### **Do you need support?**

We are a Stephen Ministry Congregation. Stephen Ministers are trained to engage in confidential, structured, and caring relationships with people who are going through a difficult period. If you are in a tough season and need extra support, email Mary Bowman ([mbowman@firstpres-charlotte.org](mailto:mbowman@firstpres-charlotte.org)).

If you have a pastoral emergency outside of regular church hours, dial 704.927.0256 for the on-call voicemail. Your call will be returned promptly.

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### CONNECT WITH US!



@firstprescharlotte

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# Announcements

## Alternative Gift Market

Honor a loved one this Christmas by sharing a gift that makes a difference. You can purchase a lovely Christmas card, designed by our own talented Lucy Caldwell, and designate funds to go to the wonderful organization of your choice. Scan the QR code to purchase a card online or in person following worship on Sundays.

## Pastor Nominating Committee Recommendations

The Transition Team is beginning the search for First Presbyterian's next senior pastor by forming a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) to identify, recruit, and recommend a candidate to the congregation. Nominees should be actively involved at FPC, wise and discerning, and able to meet regularly for the next 12–18 months (with possible travel). The deadline to make a recommendation is January 18. Scan the QR code to submit a recommendation online.

## Room In The Inn Set Up

*Sundays and Tuesdays through March 31*

Can you help support our Room in the Inn Ministry with just 15 minutes of your time? If evenings aren't for you, consider staying a few minutes after worship on Sunday and making a few beds. Scan the QR code to sign up.

## Christmas Eve Offering for Roof Above

Our congregation supports the emergency winter overflow program "Room in the Inn" through our outreach partner Roof Above. Through this program, unsheltered individuals and families stay overnight at our church. They receive a hearty dinner, a warm bed, and breakfast and lunch for the next day. On Christmas Eve, 100% of the offering will go to support Roof Above's programs.

## Christmas Eve Services

- 11 a.m. Children and Family Service  
(Sanctuary and livestream)
- 8 p.m. Candlelight Service  
(Sanctuary and livestream)
- 11 p.m. Candlelight and Communion Service  
(Sanctuary, livestream, and broadcast on WAXN-Channel 64 and WSOC-Channel 9)

**There will be no services on Christmas Day.**

## Save the Date: Women's Spring Retreat

*May 1-3, 2026, Montreat Conference Center*

Registration opens on January 8 for our 2026 women's retreat. Scan the QR code to learn more or pick up a brochure in the Welcome Center.



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