

REFLECTIONS

That the Creator himself comes to us and becomes our ransom—this is the reason for our rejoicing.

Martin Luther

Peace is the rest of will that results from assurance about how things will turn out.

Dallas Willard
from *Renovation of the Heart*

There is no way to peace along the way of safety. For peace must be dared. It is itself the great venture and can never be safe. Peace is the opposite of security. To demand guarantees is to want to protect oneself. Peace means giving oneself completely to God's commandment.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Real forgiveness means looking steadily at the sin, the sin that is left over without any excuse, after all allowances have been made, and seeing it in all its horror, dirt, meanness, and malice, and nonetheless being wholly reconciled to the man who has done it.

C. S. Lewis

In the history of the Church, if you look at every difficulty or division, at the root of the problem you will find an unwillingness to forgive unilaterally. On the other hand, where you find strength and power in the Church, you will find people who have learned this simple secret of forgiveness that does not depend upon what the other person says or does, but is a unilateral outflowing of the love of Christ.

Larry Christenson
from *The Renewed Mind*

RIVERWOOD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

T U S C A L O O S A , A L A B A M A

December 20, 2020 • 8:30 & 10:30 Services • Rev. Jeff Pate, Pastor

Fourth Sunday of Advent

8:30am

Leader In Worship: Assisting Elder Jimmy Hopper
Joann Williams, piano

10:30am

Leader In Worship: Assisting Elder Gene Martin
Dr. Linda Graham, piano

WELCOME

Program all communication devices to be in silent mode. Thank you.

SCRIPTURE READING & LIGHTING OF THE FOURTH ADVENT CANDLE: *Luke 1:26-38*

PRELUDE

Please use this time for prayer and meditation as we prepare to go before the living God in worship.

PRAISE

CALL TO WORSHIP: *Luke 1:46-53*

Pastor: My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant...

All: **...for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.**

Pastor: And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

All: **He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts,**

Pastor: he has brought down the mighty from their thrones
and exalted those of humble estate.

All: **he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.**

Pastor: Come, hear the mighty deeds of our God. Come, let us worship.

HYMN: 700 "Come, We That Love the Lord"

Come, we that love the Lord,
and let our joys be known;
join in a song with sweet accord,
and thus surround the throne.

Let those refuse to sing
that never knew our God;
but children of the heav'nly King
may speak their joys abroad.

The men of grace have found
glory begun below;
celestial fruits on earthly ground
from faith and hope may grow.

The hill of Zion yields
a thousand sacred sweets,
before we reach the heav'nly fields
or walk the golden streets.

Then let our songs abound,
and ev'ry tear be dry;
we're marching through Immanuel's ground
to fairer worlds on high.

PRAYER OF PRAISE 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.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.

CONFESSION

SCRIPTURE READING: *Proverbs 19:11; 20:22; 24:29; 25:22*

¹¹Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.

²²Do not say, "I will repay evil"; wait for the Lord, and he will deliver you.

²⁹Do not say, "I will do to him as he has done to me;

I will pay the man back for what he has done."

²¹If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink,

^{22c}for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God!

CORPORATE CONFESSION OF SIN:

Lord, you come to us, but we do not recognize you; you call, but we do not follow; you command, but we do not obey, you bless us, but we do not thank you. Please forgive and help us. Lord, you accept us, but we do not accept others; you forgive us, but we do not forgive those who wrong us; you love us, but we do not love our neighbors. Please forgive and help us. Lord, you showed us how to carry out your mission, but we still insist on our own; you identified yourself with outcasts, the needy, and the poor, but we do not bother to find out what is happening to them; you suffered and died for the sake of all, but we do not give up our comfortable lives. Please forgive and help us, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

SILENT REFLECTION AND CONFESSION

WORDS OF ASSURANCE & PEACE OF GOD: *based on Ephesians 1:7-10*

Pastor: Because of his sovereign and undeserved love, God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, the Beloved, and you have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of your trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,

All: **...which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ,**

Pastor: ...this according to his plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

The peace of Christ be with you all.

All: **And also with you.**

CONFESSION

HYMN: 201 “O Little Town of Bethlehem”

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie;
above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by:
yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light;
the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary; and gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wond’ring love.
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King, and peace to men on earth.

How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is giv’n!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heav’n.
No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him still, the dear Christ enters in.

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.

COMMITMENT

OFFERING

**Tithes and offerings will be collected by deacons following the morning service as congregants leave the sanctuary.*

COMMITMENT

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH:

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Questions and Answers #21, 22, 27, & 28

Leader: Who is the redeemer of God's elect?

All: The only redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continues to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever.

Leader: How did Christ, being the Son of God, become man?

All: Christ, the Son of God, became man, by taking to himself a body and a soul like ours, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin.

Leader: In what did Christ's humiliation consist?

All: Christ's humiliation consisted in being born, and that in a poor circumstance; in being subject to God's law; in undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the curse of death on the cross; in being buried; and in continuing under the power of death for a time.

Leader: In what does Christ's exaltation consist?

All: Christ's exaltation consists in his rising again from the dead on the third day; in ascending into heaven; in sitting at the right hand of God the Father; and in coming to judge the world at the last day.

RESPONSE: "Gloria Patri"

Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be,
world without end.
Amen, amen.

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

HYMN: 226 “As with Gladness Men of Old”

As with gladness men of old
did the guiding star behold;
as with joy they hailed its light,
leading onward, beaming bright;
so, most gracious God, may we
evermore be led to thee.

As with joyful steps they sped
to that lowly cradle-bed,
there to bend the knee before
him whom heav'n and earth adore;
so may we with willing feet
ever seek thy mercy seat.

As they offered gifts most rare
at that cradle rude and bare;
so may we with holy joy,
pure, and free from sin's alloy,
all our costliest treasures bring,
Christ, to thee, our heav'nly King.

Holy Jesus, ev'ry day
keep us in the narrow way;
and when earthly things are past,
bring our ransomed souls at last
where they need no star to guide,
where no clouds thy glory hide.

In the heav'nly country bright
need they no created light;
thou its light, its joy, its crown,
thou its sun which goes not down;
there forever may we sing
alleluias to our King.

HYMN: 213 “What Child Is This”

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.

Why lies he in such mean estate, where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear; for sinners here the silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear, shall pierce him through; the cross be borne for me, for you:
hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe, the son of Mary.

So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh; come, peasant, king, to own him;
the King of kings salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone him.
Raise, raise the song on high, the virgin sings her lullaby:
joy, joy for Christ is born, the babe, the son of Mary.

RESPONSIVE READING:

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them up to the Lord.

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All: It is right for us to give thanks and praise.

Pastor: With joy we praise you, gracious God, for you created heaven and earth, made us in your image, and kept covenant with us—even when we fell into sin. We give you thanks for Jesus Christ, our Lord, who by his life, death, and resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. Therefore we join our voices with all the saints and angels and the whole creation to proclaim the glory of your name.

All: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD’S SUPPER

Riverwood Presbyterian uses wine in the celebration of Holy Communion. If you would prefer non-alcoholic grape juice, please take a cup from the inner circle of the tray.

BENEDICTION

HYMN: 203 “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing”

Hark! the herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King;
peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!”

Joyful, all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies;
with th’angelic host proclaim, “Christ is born in Bethlehem!”

Hark! the herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King.”

Christ, by highest heav’n adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold him come, offspring of the Virgin’s womb.

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail th’incarnate Deity,
pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.

Hark! the herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King.”

Hail the heav’n-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!

Light and life to all he brings, ris’n with healing in his wings.

Mild he lays his glory by, born that man no more may die,
born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth.

Hark! the herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King.”

BENEDICTION

DISMISSING HYMN: 263 “Lift High the Cross”

Refrain:

Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim,
till all the world adore his sacred name.

Thy kingdom come, that earth’s despair may cease
beneath the shadow of its healing peace.

(Refrain)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

HAPPY BIRTHDAYS

December 22	Gabe Henson	December 25	Lakethia Clark
December 22	Eric Williams	December 25	Zae Finch
December 24	Sarah Vander Wal	December 25	Allyson Jones

LECTIONARY READINGS FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Luke 1:46b-55; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

YOUTH CHRISTMAS CAROLING

The youth are planning to go Christmas caroling tonight in the front yards of some of our church members. We will plan to meet in the church parking lot at 4:30 pm. There will be a youth Christmas party afterwards to include a gift exchange. If you have questions, ask Pastor Jeff, Eli, or Gracen.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

Each Christmas Eve we gather as followers of Jesus to read through the narrative of our Savior's incarnation, hear the Word proclaimed, and worship in song and Sacrament. This year we are planning to have two services on Christmas Eve to provide plenty of space for everyone to spread out. The services will begin at 3:30 pm and 5:30 pm, and there will be a livestream available of the 5:30 service.

2020 CONTRIBUTIONS

If you are planning to give before the end of the calendar year, please ensure that your gifts make it into the offering plate by Sunday, December 27 or are postmarked by Thursday, December 31. Any contributions received after that date will be posted to 2021.

CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED

The church office will be closed the weeks of December 21 & 28. If you need immediate assistance during this time, please feel free to contact your elder or deacon.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Through November 2020:

Operating Income:	\$361,595.33
Operating Expense*:	\$374,148.47
Net Income:	(\$12,553.14)
Designated gifts:	\$88,349.43
Building loan balance:	\$746,149.12

**Includes the minimum monthly building loan payment*