

**THE WORSHIP OF GOD  
DECEMBER 20, 2020  
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**PRELUDE**

**O Come, Emmanuel  
(Variations on an Advent Hymn)**

Daniel Pinkham  
(1923-2006)

*As the prelude is played, prepare your home, yourself, and your family to enter into this time of worship.*

**OPENING PRAYER (IN UNISON)**

**Heavenly Father, as we prepare for our Christmas celebration, we come into your presence this morning to be fed by your Holy Spirit. We need the peace, hope, love, and joy that this season represents. We need to listen again with wonder to the story of your most miraculous gift. Open our hearts this day, Lord, to receive the words and the blessings, to rejoice over your promises, and then to be those who will share with others as you have shared with us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.**

**LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE (RESPONSIVELY)**

Ken and Marcy McAdams

*"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty." (Luke 1:46b-48a; 51-53, NRSV).*

These familiar words were spoken by Mary upon greeting Elizabeth. Imagine the joy of this meeting when they can discuss their own, and each other's, pregnancy together for the first time. And what did they talk about first? a boy? a girl? baby clothes? new furniture? No. Mary says,

*"My soul magnifies the Lord; I declare the greatness of God, and my spirit rejoices."*

Mary ... a young woman ... a teenager ... pregnant and unmarried and probably scared ... declares the greatness of God and recognizes the unique calling she has received. As with so many other mothers before and after her, she does not know what joys or sorrows may follow the birth, but she is ready to rejoice in God, her Savior.

It is for Mary that we light this fourth candle. Mary – blessed among women. Mary – the Lord's lowly servant. Mary – who believed that God was about to fulfill the promise made to Abraham so long ago.

***[Light the fourth candle.]***

**Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.**

1. Hail to the Lord's A - noint - ed, great Da-vid's great-er Son!  
 2. He comes with suc-cor speed - y to those who suf-fer wrong;  
 3. He shall come down like show - ers up - on the fruit-ful earth;  
 4. To him shall prayer un - ceas - ing and dai - ly vows as - cend;

Hail in the time ap - point - ed, his reign on earth be - gun!  
 to help the poor and need - y, and bid the weak be strong;  
 love, joy, and hope, like flow - ers, spring in his path to birth.  
 his king-dom still in - creas - ing, a king-dom with-out end.

He comes to break op - pres - sion, to set the cap-tive free;  
 to give them songs for sigh - ing, their dark-ness turn to light,  
 Be - fore him, on the moun - tains, shall peace, the her-ald, go,  
 The tide of time shall nev - er his cov - e - nant re - move;

to take a - way trans-gres - sion, and rule in eq - ui - ty.  
 whose souls, con-demned and dy - ing, are pre-cious in his sight.  
 and righ-teous-ness, in foun - tains, from hill to val-ley flow.  
 his name shall stand for - ev - er; that name to us is love.

**CALL TO CONFESSION**

When the Lord comes, he will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness, and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Therefore, in the light of Christ let us confess our sins.

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION (IN UNISON)**

**Eternal God, in whom we live and move and have our being, your face is hidden from us by our sin, and we forget your mercy in the blindness of our hearts. Cleanse us from all our offenses, and deliver us from proud thoughts and vain desires. With lowliness and humility may we draw near to you, confessing our faults, confiding in your grace, and finding in you our refuge and strength; through Jesus Christ your Son, our Savior. Amen.**

## PERSONAL CONFESSION AND MEDITATION (IN SILENCE)

### WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Leader: In Lamentations, we are reminded that the faithful love of the Lord never ends. His mercies never cease. So, in the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!

**People: In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!**

**All: Glory to God. Amen.**

### THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Hannah Clarke Huneycutt

### PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION (IN UNISON)

**Calm us now, O Lord, into a quietness that heals and listens. Open wounded hearts to the balm of your Word. Speak to us in a clear voice so that we might feel our spirits leap for joy at your promises. Amen.**

### SCRIPTURE LESSON

#### Jeremiah 31:31-34; 33:14-22

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."

For thus says the LORD: David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel, and the levitical priests shall never lack a man in my presence to offer burnt offerings, to make grain offerings, and to make sacrifices for all time.

The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: Thus says the LORD: If any of you could break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night would not come at their appointed time, only then could my covenant with my servant David be broken, so that he would not have a son to reign on his throne, and my covenant with my ministers the Levites. Just as the host of heaven cannot be numbered and the sands of the sea cannot be measured, so I will increase the offspring of my servant David, and the Levites who minister to me.



**CALL TO PRAYER**

Minister: The Lord be with you.

**People: And also with you.**

Minister: Let us pray.

**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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

**GIVING**

A dark grey rectangular graphic with the title "3 WAYS TO GIVE" in large white font at the top. Below the title are three white circular icons: a smartphone for "TEXT", a computer monitor for "ONLINE", and an envelope for "MAIL". Under each icon is the label in white capital letters. Below the labels is contact information in white text: "Text \$ amount to 336.489.4483" under TEXT, "www.frontstreetumc.org/give" under ONLINE, and "PO Box 2597 Burlington, NC 27216" under MAIL.

**3 WAYS TO GIVE**

**TEXT**  
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**OFFERTORY**

**Call to Advent**  
Chancel Choir

J. Jerome Williams  
(b. 1938)

O come, O come Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lowly exile here until the Son of God appears. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

*-Latin hymn, trans. by John Mason Neale (1818-1866)*

Let all mortal flesh keep silence, and with fear and trembling stand; ponder nothing earthly minded, for with blessing in His hand, Christ our God to earth descendeth, our full homage to demand.

*-Liturgy of St. James (4<sup>th</sup> century)*

**DOXOLOGY**

**Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow LASST UNS ERFREUEN**

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;**

**Praise God, all creatures here below:**

**Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**Praise God, the source of all our gifts!**

**Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts!**

**Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit!**

**Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**BENEDICTION**

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**Copyright Acknowledgements**

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**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**The Altar Flowers** are given to the glory of God.

**The Upper Room:** The January-February issue of The Upper Room is available. Please feel free to stop by the church and pick up a copy. Copies are located in the Welcome Center.

**Offering Envelopes:** Offering envelopes are now available for pick-up outside the church office. Please collect your envelopes by the end of December. Thank you.

**Church Office Hours:** Until January 4, the office hours are Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The office will be closed on Fridays. The church office will be closed **December 24, 25, and 28** for Christmas and **Friday, January 1** for New Year's Day. Merry Christmas and a very happy New Year from all the staff at FSUMC!

**Trees of Love:** Thank you to everyone who has adorned our Trees of Love to share Christ with our neighbors this season. Please return all items (unwrapped) to the trees by **today, December 20.**

**Christmas Eve Offering:** An offering will be taken at all three services. This year's Christmas offering for the noon and 8 p.m. services will be divided between missions and the church budget. The children's service offering will go towards the Eastlawn Backpack Ministry.

**Christmas Eve Services at noon | 5 p.m. | 8 p.m.:** You are invited to join us as we celebrate the birth of our savior this Christmas Eve. As with most events this year, these services will be slightly different than in the past. All services (20-30 mins) will be held outside (weather permitting) on the grassy area by the playground and will include the reading of scripture and singing of Christmas carols. Our 5 p.m. service is designed especially for children and their families. Votives will be distributed during the 8 p.m. service for the singing of *Silent Night*.

For the health of everyone please:

- Maintain a distance of 6 feet between families
- Wear a mask
- Bring your own lawn chair or blanket, if you wish to sit during the service. Of course, standing is also an option. Alternatively, worship with us from your car with the windows rolled down.

**2020 Contribution Deadline:** A friendly reminder from the Church Office: in order for contributions to be included as a contribution towards your 2020 statement, please have mail postmarked or dropped at the church office NO LATER THAN **December 31**. All contributions received after December 31 will be applied to your 2021 statement.

**Sanctuary Flowers:** The **2021** flower calendar is available in the Welcome Center. If you are interested in placing flowers in the Sanctuary in honor or in memory of a loved one, please write your name on the Sunday you wish to put flowers in the church. For more information, please contact Linda Paul at 336-543-5081 (cell) or kpaul5@triad.rr.com (email).

## **WORSHIP NOTES**

### **Prelude**

Daniel Pinkham was a prolific American composer who taught at Simmons College, Boston University, Dartington Hall (Devon, England), and was Visiting Lecturer at Harvard University (1957-58). His variations on "O Come, Emmanuel" were written for and dedicated to Andrew Paul Holman, who first performed the work on Christmas Eve, 1995, at Harvard-Epworth United Methodist Church, Cambridge, Massachusetts. The work includes seven variations written to correspond with each stanza of the hymn. These stanzas are a paraphrase of the "Great O Antiphons" for the Magnificat, which are appointed to be sung, a different one each day, from December 17<sup>th</sup> to December 23<sup>rd</sup>. As each variation is played, read the words of the corresponding stanza to see how it is musically depicted.

**December 17** – O come, thou Wisdom from on high, who order'st all things mightily; to us the path of knowledge show, and teach us in her ways to go. (Refrain *after each verse*) Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

**December 18** – O come, O come, thou Lord of might, who to thy tribes on Sinai's height in ancient times didst give the law, in cloud, and majesty, and awe.

**December 19** – O come thou Branch of Jesse's tree, free them from Satan's tyranny that trust thy might power to save, and give them vict'ry o'er the grave.

**December 20** – O come, thou key of David, come, and open wide our heavenly home; make safe the way that leads on high, and close the path to misery.

**December 21** – O come, thou Day-spring from on high, and cheer us by thy drawing nigh; disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadow put to flight.

**December 22** – O come, Desire of nations, bind, in one the hearts of all mankind; bid thou our sad divisions cease, and be thyself the King of Peace.

**December 23** – O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.

*-Adapted by Thomas Helmore (1811-1890)*

### **Offertory**

Jim Williams, a native of Morganton, North Carolina, is a former high school band and choral director and the Chancel Choir Director Emeritus of First United Methodist Church in Hickory, North Carolina. He earned degrees from Mars Hill College, East Carolina University, and Appalachian State University. His numerous accomplishments include NC Teacher of the Year in 1982-83, the Lara Hoggard Award from the NC-ACDA in 1991, and the NC High School Choral Hall of Fame in 2013. The "Call to Advent" is a quodlibet for two-part mixed choir that uses the tunes VENI EMMANUEL and PICARDY. A quodlibet is a musical composition that combines several different melodies in counterpoint.