

First Sunday of Advent  
November 30, 2025  
11:00am — Sanctuary



“Hope” mixed media artwork by Laura Bowman



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

WEST WAYNE STREET

*\*Those who are able, please stand*

*Congregation responds in bold*

## **GATHERING**

**Prelude**

Veni Emmanuel

Calvin Hampton

### **Chiming of the Hour**

#### **Call to Worship & Lighting of the Advent Candles**

The days are coming where people from around the world will stream to God's presence.

**People from every part of the earth will travel to learn God's ways.**

Wars between nations will end, disputes will be settled.

**Weapons of violence will be turned into farm and garden tools.**

Today we light the candle of hope, for we will not live in dark valleys, but on God's high mountain.

**In hope, we wait for the Light of the World.**

**\*Hymn No. 88**

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (*stanzas 1-4*)

VENI EMMANUEL

#### **\*Call to Confession**

The prophet Isaiah tells us that the days are coming when nations will learn God's ways, weapons will be transformed, and hope will rise on God's holy mountain.

But we confess we do not always walk in the light of the Lord. Trusting in God's promise, let us come before God with honesty and hope.

#### **\*Prayer of Confession**

**God of the mountain and God of our valleys, we confess that we often live as though darkness has the final word. We cling to fear more than to your promises. We choose the familiar paths rather than your higher way. We allow divisions to deepen and violence to persist, forgetting that you desire peace among all peoples. Forgive us. Lift our eyes to your coming light. Teach us to walk in your hope, so that our lives reflect your dawning day. Amen.**

#### **\*Declaration of Forgiveness**

Friends, the Light of the World is on the way, and the darkness cannot overcome it. The God who promises peace also promises mercy. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. **Thanks be to God!**

## **\*Passing the Peace of Christ**

The peace of Christ be with you.

### **And also with you.**

*As you are comfortable, we invite you to take a moment to share the Peace of Christ with those around you with a smile, wave, or other signs of connection.*

## **\*Responsive Hymn No. 137**

He Came Down

HE CAME DOWN

He came down that we may have hope; he came down that we may have hope; he came down that we may have hope; hal-le - lu - jah for-ev - er - more.

The musical score is written on two staves in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The melody features several triplet markings (indicated by a '3' over a bracket) and rests. The lyrics are written below the notes.

## **HEARING THE WORD**

### **Time with Children**

*There is no Sunday School because of the holiday.*

### **Prayer for Illumination**

### **Old Testament Reading**

Isaiah 2:1-5

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God!**

### **Anthem**

Sleepers Wake!

Felix Mendelssohn

### **Gospel Reading**

Matthew 24:36-44

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God!**

### **Sermon**

“Defiant Hope”

Rev. Dr. Annie Epling

## **RESPONDING TO THE WORD**

### **\*Affirmation of Faith**

It is not true that creation and the human family are doomed to destruction and loss—

**This is true: “For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life;”**

It is not true that we must accept inhumanity and discrimination, hunger and poverty, death and destruction—

**This is true: “I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”**

It is not true that violence and hatred should have the last word, and that war and destruction rule forever—

**This is true: “Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”**

It is not true that we are simply victims of the powers of evil who seek to rule the world—

**This is true: “To me is given authority in heaven and on earth, and lo I am with you, even until the end of the world.”**

It is not true that we have to wait for those who are specially gifted, who are the prophets of the Church before we can be peacemakers—

**This is true: “I will pour out my spirit on all flesh and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions and your old men shall have dreams.”**

It is not true that our hopes for liberation of humankind, of justice, of human dignity, of peace are not meant for this earth and for this history—

**This is true: “The hour comes, and it is now, that the true worshipers shall worship God in spirit and in truth.”**

**So let us enter Advent in hope, even hope against hope.**

**Let us see visions of love and peace and justice.**

**Let us affirm with humility, with joy, with faith, with courage:**

**Jesus Christ—the light of the world. Amen.**

**\*Hymn No. 65**

Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

CWM RHONDDA

**Announcements**

## 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.

## Invitation to the Offering

### Offertory

Jesus Meine Zuversicht BWV 728      Johann Sebastian Bach

### \*Responsive Hymn No. 606    Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise God, all creatures here be-low; praise  
God above, ye heavenly host; Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost. Amen.

### \*Prayer of Dedication

Ever-watchful God, you call us to live not in fear, but in faithful anticipation. As we offer these gifts, we do so as people preparing our hearts, our hands, and our world for your coming reign. Let these offerings be signs of readiness, trust, and joy as we wait, and work, for your future to break into our present. In the name of the one who comes, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## SENDING

### \*Hymn No. 349

"Sleepers, Wake!" A Voice Astounds Us

WACHET AUF

### \*Benediction

### \*Postlude

Fugue in C minor BWV 582

Johann Sebastian Bach

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## Assisting with Worship this Morning

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**Pastors:** Rev. Dr. Annie Epling (she/her), Rev. Carrie Winebrenner (she/her)

**Elders of the Month/Greeters:** Tony Borton, Besty Perry Patton

**Ushers of the Month:** Esther Coplin, Eric Evans, Carol Offerle, Penny Pulz, June Schwertfager, Beth White

**Director of Music Ministries:** Colin Andrews

**Assistant Organist:** Irene Ator

**Chancel Choir:** Richard Baughman, Edith Coplin, Quinton Davis, Susan Dorion, Andrew Graham, Liz Graham, DuWayne Hintz, Joan Kern, Jane McGeehan, Scott McMeen, Alli McQueen, Kemel Mitchell, Kip Ormerod, Ellis Pedersen, Carol Rhudy, Marj Sapp, Sandy Shearer, Jill Therrien, Mary Winters

**Live Stream Operator:** Dick Florea

**Sound Board Operator:** Jeff Slater

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## Prayer List

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|----------------|---------------------------|
| • Kathy Miller | • Jim & Sondra Mergenthal |
| • Kelly Leach  | • Cormac Wallace          |
| • Donna Jesse  |                           |

**If you are in need of prayer or an encouraging word, let us know.**

## Care & Support

FPC is a **Stephen Ministries** congregation and has a dedicated group of Stephen Ministers. Stephen Ministers are lay congregation members trained to provide one-to-one care to those experiencing a difficult time in life, such as grief, divorce, job loss, chronic or terminal illness, or relocation. The Stephen Ministry is completely confidential, and open to all FPC members. For more information, please email Carolyn Krebs at [recakrebs@aol.com](mailto:recakrebs@aol.com) or Marcie Weissner at [marcie5073@aol.com](mailto:marcie5073@aol.com).

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## NEWS AND EVENTS

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### **Advent by Candlelight**

Wednesday, December 3rd at 6:30pm in the Parlor. Music & Readings in the Chapel at 7:15pm. An evening of fellowship, music and reflection in the midst of the season of preparation. Members are welcome to bring a dessert to share if you would like, but you do not need to! Please sign-up in the church office or on Realm. We welcome you to invite friends and family to join us!

### **Christmas Church Tour 2025**

Stop by First Pres during the annual Fort Wayne City of Churches Tour on Friday, December 5, anytime between 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM! Enjoy festive music, refreshments, and all the beauty of the church decorated for Christmas! FPC docents will be on hand to guide visitors and share the history of our beautiful church. The tour is a delightful, festive activity for all ages!

### **Christmas Caroling – December 14!**

Warm up your vocal cords and dust off your jingle bells...it's time for Christmas Caroling! Join us after worship on Sunday, December 14, as we spread joy, laughter, and good cheer to members of our church family at the Towne House who could use a little extra sparkle this season.

Please bring a sack lunch to enjoy before we head out, and don't forget to sign up on the sheet in the office or scan the QR code so we can plan transportation. Whether you sing like an angel or simply make a 'joyful' noise, your presence will help make the season bright!



### **Christmas Eve Music and Flowers**

Made possible through donations in memory of loved ones, we adorn the Christmas Eve service with music from our friends at the Fort Wayne Philharmonic and flowers for the Chancel. If you would like to contribute to this beautiful service, please make the check out to First Presbyterian Church and include Christmas Eve music or flowers on the memo line. Additionally, please include a note with your name and the names of the loved ones you would like to memorialize. Please have your donation in by **Sunday, December 14** to be included in the Christmas Eve bulletin. Thank you in advance for your generosity!

## **Celebrating Rev. Ann Pitman!**

After decades of faithful ministry, loving presence, and gentle wisdom among us, our beloved Parish Associate, Rev. Ann Pitman, will be retiring (for the second time!) at the end of the year.

To honor Ann and bless her next chapter, we will hold a special reception following worship on Sunday, December 7th. Please join us as we share stories, laughter, and deep gratitude for the countless ways Ann has touched our lives and nurtured this community.

As part of our celebration, we are creating a keepsake memory book for Ann, something she can carry with her into her new adventure. You are invited to contribute a page with a note, prayer, favorite scripture, song lyric, or any meaningful memory or message. Pages are available in the church office.

Let's surround Ann with love as she journeys forward, knowing she goes with our prayers and our heartfelt thanks.

## **Women's Bible Study Update**

Beginning December 12, Women's Bible Study will be lead by Rev. Susan Keirn Kester. If you have any questions you may contact her at [keirnsusan@aol.com](mailto:keirnsusan@aol.com).

## **Board of Deacons Update**

For questions related to the Board of Deacons please contact staff liaison, Rev. An at [ysan@firstpresfortwayne.org](mailto:ysan@firstpresfortwayne.org) or Carole Slater at [caroleslater@gmail.com](mailto:caroleslater@gmail.com).

## **Five in Faith: Stewardship Update**

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who has already submitted your pledge for 2026! Your generosity and faithfulness help us plan for the year ahead with confidence and hope. Our pledges so far total \$430,062.00!

If you haven't yet turned in your pledge, there's still time! Pledge cards are available in the pews, the church office, and online at.... Every response, no matter the amount, makes a meaningful difference in our shared ministry.



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## GETTING CONNECTED

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### **MEMBERSHIP**

Whether you live in the Fort Wayne area or worship with us online, we welcome you to join our family of faith. Through Coffee with the Pastors, you'll learn more about First Presbyterian Church, its history, and its current ministry in a relaxed atmosphere. Whether you're sure membership is right for you, or you're just beginning to wonder if this might be your spiritual home, we'd love to have you join us for coffee. Keep an eye out for our next date of Coffee with the Pastors.

### **NURSERY**

Jesus loves the little children, and we do too! But should you decide that today would be a good time to explore the nursery, your child, ages 6 months through five years, is always invited. Our nursery meets in the first-floor day school wing, so please ask an usher or the front office volunteer for assistance and a key fob.

### **ADULT EDUCATION**

#### **Wired Word — Sunday Mornings, 10am**

Join us each week as we delve into a topic inspired by recent news and explore how the Bible speaks to the events shaping our world today. Each Sunday brings a fresh topic, making this group perfect for those with busy schedules who may not be able to attend every week. Topics are emailed each Friday, so please let Luci Gilpin at [lucifoltz@gmail.com](mailto:lucifoltz@gmail.com) know if you'd like to receive that email. All are welcome — come as you are and join the conversation.

#### **Women's Bible Study — Fridays, 1pm**

This group is now led by Susan Keirn Kester and meets on Zoom. For more information, email Susan at [keirnsusan@aol.com](mailto:keirnsusan@aol.com).

#### **Table Talk for Women — Wednesdays, 10am**

This group reads a book at their own pace and is led by members of the group on Zoom. ZOOM Meeting ID: 870 6712 2177. ZOOM Passcode: 260 426 7421. For more information, please contact Marj Sapp at 260-413-2639 or Marcie Weissner at 260-312-5733.

## **Men's Bible Study — Fridays, 10am**

This group is led by Rev. Youngsoo An and meets on Teams. For more information, email Rev. An at [ysan@firstpresfortwayne.org](mailto:ysan@firstpresfortwayne.org).

## **FELLOWSHIP GROUPS**

### **North and South Dinner Groups — 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month, 5:30pm**

Join a Dinner Group! Every 2nd Monday of the month at the same time, 5:30 PM. South Dinner Group meets at Hall's Coventry, no RSVP needed! North Dinner Group meets at Don Hall's Factory. Please RSVP to Marj Sapp at 260-413-2639 or by email at [marj.sapp@gmail.com](mailto:marj.sapp@gmail.com).

### **Faith, Fiber, and Fellowship — Mondays, 3pm**

This group meets weekly at 3pm on Mondays in Room 302 on the 3rd floor. Bring your latest fiber project for a time of fellowship and crafting.

### **Body, Brain, and Belief (3B) — Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:30PM in McKay Hall**

Maintaining balance is essential as we age. A decline in stability increases the risk of falls, impacting independence and quality of life. Good balance helps prevent falls, supports daily activities, and reduces the risk of serious injuries.

Join us for 3B, a lifetime fitness class designed to improve balance, flexibility, and strength using chairs and other provided equipment. These free classes are open to all adults aged 50 and older and are filled with fun, fellowship, and fitness. Our holistic approach combines proven physical therapy exercises, healthy brain activities, and opportunities for spiritual, emotional, and social growth. Classes meet twice a week in McKay Hall. We'd love to have you join us!

## **CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES**

### **Sunday School for Children and Youth**

Both Sunday School Age groups attend worship through the "Time with Children" and then head to class as a group. Neither class meets on Communion Sundays so that we may celebrate as a whole church.

### **Youth Group**

All 6th-12th graders are encouraged to join this amazing group of young people! Keep an eye on the Family Ministry bulletin board (by the elevator) for schedules and plans.

## **MISSIONS**

Through our **Missions Ministry**, many of our members and friends are engaged in volunteering and advocacy. Our programs include collecting, making, and serving meals for shelters, schools, food banks, and more. We also maintain mission partnerships with many local, national, and international partners.

The **Schools Team** wishes to remind everyone that a designated bin is available in the Small Dining Room to deposit gently-used clothing for the Fort Wayne Community Schools Clothing Bank. Through school referrals, the Clothing Bank has provided clothing for thousands of students and families in need. All types of gently-used clothing in all sizes are needed. (Socks and underwear must be new.) If you're paring down your wardrobe, please remember to bring in a bag of wearable items for the FWCS Clothing Bank bin. Thank you!

Our **Green Team** is active throughout the year. In the winter, you can find them distributing the "Bag of Bags," which are reusable grocery bags. In the spring, they have a booth at Eco Fest, sponsor a recycling drive at Hands ON Fort Wayne, and host our biennial Pet Blessing with a collection of items for local animal shelters. Throughout the year, they sell Fair Trade chocolate with proceeds supporting our food bank ministry.

## **FINE ARTS MINISTRY**

The **Fine Arts Ministry** consists of the Art Gallery, Music Series, and the Theater. Throughout the year, the three art forms together present exhibits, concerts, and shows which seek to enhance our faith through visual art, music, and drama, all while highlighting themes and challenges within our world. The mission of the Fine Arts Ministry is to *Enrich Our Faith Through the Arts*. This important ministry seeks to create artistic beauty and to help us grow in our faith with God, right along with the mission of the church. A full listing of these events can be found at <https://firstpresfortwayne.org/arts/>.

The Chancel Choir sings for all English Worship Services and they welcome anyone who enjoys singing God's praises. Chancel Choir rehearsal is on Thursdays 7pm-8:30pm, and Sundays at 10am. The Handbell Choir practices Thursdays 5:30pm-6:30pm and rings occasionally in Worship.

## CALENDAR

Today

- 10:00 am**      **Wired Word.**—2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Parlor.  
**Choir Rehearsal.**—Music Room.
- 11:00 am**      **English Worship.**—Sanctuary & Livestream.  
**Korean Language Worship Service.**—Chapel & Livestream.
- 12:00 pm**      **Fellowship Time.**—McKay Hall.  
**Blessings in a Backpack.**—McKay Hall.

This Week

**Mon Dec 1**

- 1:30 pm**      **Body, Brain, and Belief (3B).**—McKay Hall.  
**3:00 pm**      **Faith, Fibers, and Fellowship.**—Room 302.

**Wed Dec 3**

- 1:30 pm**      **Body, Brain, and Belief (3B).**—McKay Hall.  
**6:30 pm**      **Advent by Candlelight.**—Parlor.

**Fri Dec 5**

- 10:00 am**      **Men's Bible Study.**—Teams.  
**1:00 pm**      **Women's Bible Study.**—Zoom.  
**4:00 pm**      **Christmas Church Tours.**—Entire Campus.

*Coming Soon*

**Mon Dec 8**

- 5:30 pm**      **North and South Dinner Groups.**—Offsite.

**Sun Dec 7**

- 12:00 pm**      **Retirement Reception for Ann Pitman.**—McKay Hall after worship.

**Sun Dec 14**

- 12:00 pm**      **Christmas Caroling.**—Offsite after worship.

**Wed Dec 24**

- 5:00 pm**      **Christmas Eve Service.**—Sanctuary.