

THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GREENLAWN



**Christmas Eve Celebration of Worship
December 24, 2022 – 7:00 p.m.
Christmas Eve**

**Meeting ID: 890 3017 6533
Passcode: 380295**

Dial in: 1 (646) 558-8656

**497 Pulaski Road
Greenlawn, NY 11740
Phone: 631-261-2150**

<http://greenlawnpresbyterian.com/>

[Facebook.com/First-Presbyterian-Church-of-Greenlawn](https://www.facebook.com/First-Presbyterian-Church-of-Greenlawn)

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CHRISTMAS MUSIC

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE RINGING OF THE BELL

Dan Charnews

THE LIGHTING OF
THE CHRIST CANDLE

Leonora Knight

HYMN # 31

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

MENDELSSOHN

*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 angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King."

Christ, by highest Heaven adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord.

Late in time behold Him come, offspring of the Virgin's womb.

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see. Hail the incarnate Deity.

Pleased in flesh with us to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel.

Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King."

Hail the Heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the sun of righteousness!

Light and life to all He brings, risen with healing in His wings.

Mild He lays His glory by, born that we no more may die.

Born to raise us from the Earth, born to give us second birth.

Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King."

CALL TO WORSHIP

Tonight, old dreams die and new dreams come to life.
The promise is fulfilled.

Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth, peace.

Hope gives way to joy, and prayer to proclamation.

Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth, peace.

The candles tell the story. Dawn invades midnight.
The Light of the world has come.

Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth, peace.

This light is a light for all, warming us from within, radiating love,
Lighting our lives with the presence of God in human flesh,
Within and among us, now and always.

Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth, peace.

HYMN # 56

The First Nowell

THE FIRST NOWELL

*The First Nowell the angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay,
In fields as they lay keeping their sheep
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell. Born is the King of Israel.*

*They looked up and saw a star
Shining in the east beyond them far.
And to the Earth it gave great light,
And so it continued both day and night.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell. Born is the King of Israel.*

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

O God, teach us what salvation is all about. Heal the emptiness that gives rise to our misplaced loyalties and distorted dreams. We want to be whole people, experiencing healthy relationships, giving ourselves to worthy causes. Forgive us, and help us to sing a new song. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE # 44

*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.*

PRAYER CONCERNS

Elder Betty Chatfield

PASTORAL PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE # 38

*For lo, the days are hastening on, by prophet bards foretold,
When with the ever-circling years, comes round the age of gold.
When peace shall over all the Earth its ancient splendors fling,
And the whole world give back the song which now the angels sing.*

INVITATION TO OFFERING

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE # 53

*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.*

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

God of Light, we want to invest in Your promise of endless peace when the authority of Your Holy Child is established. Let Your peace come here and now as we dedicate ourselves and our offerings for the purpose of upholding justice and extending the gift of salvation to all people. May our offerings and our lives be a blessing to others, proclaiming Good News of great joy in ways that all of us can understand. Amen.

A GIFT OF MUSIC

Catarina Rasizzi and Leonora Knight

Oh Holy Night

THE READING OF SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 9:2-7

Luke 2:1-14

HYMN # 25

Away In a Manger

MUELLER

*Away in a manger, no crib for His bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep in the hay.*

*The cattle are lowing, the poor Baby wakes,
But Little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes.
I love Thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky,
And stay by my side until morning is nigh.*

*Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask Thee to stay
Close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,
And fit us for Heaven to live with Thee there.*

HOLY SPIRIT PRAYER

REFLECTIONS ON CHRISTMAS

HYMN # 23

Angels We Have Heard on High

GLORIA

*Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains.
And the mountains in reply echoing their joyous strains.*

REFRAIN: *Glo – ria in excelsis Deo. Glo – ria in excelsis Deo.*

*Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be which inspire your Heavenly song? REFRAIN*

*Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing.
Come adore on bended knee Christ, the Lord, the newborn King. REFRAIN*

THE EXTINGUISHING OF THE LIGHTS

CLOSING WORDS

CANDLE LIGHTING

HYMN # 60

Silent Night, Holy Night

STILLE NACHT

*Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright,
Round yon Virgin Mother and Child! Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in Heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.*

*Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from Heaven afar. Heavenly hosts sing, "Alleluia!
Christ the Savior is born! Christ the Savior is born!"*

*Silent night, holy night! Son of God, love's pure light.
Radiant beams from Thy holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace.
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.*

*Silent night, holy night! Wondrous star, lend thy light.
With the angels let us sing, "Alleluia to our King!
Christ the Savior is born! Christ the Savior is born!"*

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Worship on Christmas Day

We will have a short Zoom-only Prayer Service on Christmas Day at 10:30 a.m. Log-in information is the same as the rest of December:

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New Year's Day Celebration

They say that for those of us “of a certain age,” 9 p.m. is the new midnight. Most of us will not be staying up to watch the festivities in Times Square.

But the New Year must be celebrated! So, please join us after our New Year's Day Service for a special celebration of 2023. We'll have hors d'oeuvres, some non-alcoholic “bubbly,” and a few surprises. We will also have our annual Holiday Sweater Contest, with a prize for the prettiest and the ugliest.

Don't miss the fun!

Food Pantry

Do you know of people who might be hungry this season? We have a free food pantry in front of the church that is available 24/7. Please help us spread the word.

Join Us!

Great things are happening here at The First Presbyterian Church of Greenlawn. If you are seeking a church home, we invite you to join us for worship, Sundays at 10:30 a.m. No matter who you are or where you are on your journey of faith, you are welcome here.

THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GREENLAWN
December 25, 2022 – 10:30 a.m.
Christmas Day

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Reflections on Matthew 1:18-25

Pastor:

Today you will hear the familiar story of Matthew's telling of Jesus' birth through paraphrase, poetry, and prayer. The full passage from Matthew 1:18-25 will be read in five sections. You are invited to listen and reflect, to notice, pray, and act upon what you experience through the Spirit. We begin with a reading from Matthew 1:18-19. This passage contrasts Leviticus 20:10 with Isaiah 43:2. Levitical law called for Mary to be stoned. Isaiah 42:3 presents a new version of what constitutes righteousness. Spoken to a nation still in Babylonian exile, it is said of the servant of the Lord,

A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.
In faithfulness he will bring forth justice.

Commentators note that Isaiah puts forward a new version of righteousness that competes with, and some argue supersedes, the Levitical law's rigid calculations. A reading from Matthew 1:18-19.

Do you want to know how it happened – this birth of Jesus? Jesus' mother was a promised woman, promised to Joseph. Exclusive. While chaste, Mary was found to be with child. Exclusive? The child was allegedly caused by Holy Spirit. Who can tell when it comes to the mysteries of God? Joseph, Mary's husband, was a righteous man, but not in the conventional sense; he did not want Mary stoned, nor humiliated, nor ostracized. Still, he was done. No more "exclusive" for Joseph. He was writing the certificate of divorce over and over and over in his mind. Sleep eluded him. What was he waiting for?

Reader 1:

Appearances can be deceiving.

The choice appears obvious: Death or life? Shame or despair? Mary's good name or his own?

In truth none of these were choices for Joseph, for he lived by a Reformed law, according to a Reforming Spirit:

Leviticus? So cold, so hard, so clear. Flint striking granite.

Isaiah? Gentle righteousness borne of a nation's brokenness. The ambiguity of a breeze.

Joseph chose new righteousness, becoming Protector of Bruised Reeds, patron saint of Smoldering Wicks, model for manliness for those who have ears to hear.

Fresh mercy every morning not only for me and mine, but for every tribe, every clan, every tongue, even those from countries not our own.

I suspect it cost Joseph dearly, living into this new righteousness, so misunderstood among those for whom cold, hard, and clear appears to be God's choice.

Appearances can be deceiving.

Reader 2:

Let us pray in unison.

Lord, make us protectors of bruised reeds: Where there is cold calculation, let us bring warm embrace; where there is hardness of heart, let us bring gentleness of spirit; where flint strikes granite, let us point toward mercy's dew; where others cast out, let us draw in; where others shame and blame, let us name with a divine claim; where there is a too easy clarity, let us bring questions, oh, so many, many questions.

O Divine Master, may we not so much seek to snuff out the smoldering wick as to reignite the flames of justice; to fear brokenness as to be transformed by it; to shout, "Crucify!" as to pray at the foot of the Cross.

For it is in being embraced by your mercy that we share it with others; it is in welcoming Mary into our home that God-possibilities flourish; it is in singing a new song that the birth of Messiah Jesus comes about. Amen.

Reader 3:

A reading from Matthew 1:20.

Finally sleep came and with it a dream. And an angel, who said, “Joseph, Son of God’s Promise, be not afraid. God’s love has overshadowed Mary, even as it will overshadow your fear, your anger and all your doubting.”

Reader 4:

People say fear limits the heart; much more does it enslave the mind. Hearts break and, sooner or later, later or sooner, heal. But a mind? Broken minds last and last and last... flowing water becomes ice, becoming PTSD of the soul.

Joseph, tempted to fear, expected to fear, is saved by dreaming – not thinking or scheming or even believing: dreaming.

Imagination the double-helix for the spiritual realm. The spiral, spiral, spiral of growing, developing, multiplying – Faith. Hope. Love.

Hamlet asked, “To sleep, perchance to dream.” Joseph responds, “To dream, perchance to live.” Hidden awake, revealed asleep – God’s Promise, God’s Peace.

Have we forgotten this ancient dance? Neglected the God-dreams given to us as children? Deserted all God-possibilities of our youth? Allowed them to be choked out of us like the Sower’s third?

Might, can, will, should – God-dreams live again? And with them Holy Spirit? Oh, God, pray for us sinners in the hours of our life!

Reader 5:

Let us pray in unison.

O Lord, make vessels full of dreams: Where there are limits, let us see possibilities; where there are roadblocks, let us travel o’er mountains; where there are only naysayers, let us be deaf; where there is scarcity, let us see your abundance; where there is the unknown and uncertain, let us be known, for certain; where there is fear, let us dream.

O Divine dream-giver, may we not so much seek to live out our own life-script as to embrace your divine narrative; to avoid great challenge as to dream bigger

dreams; to hear the Siren's call of our fears as to listen to the whispers of Holy Spirit.

For it is in heeding Holy Spirit that sons and daughters prophesy; it is in sacred whisper the young see visions and the old dream dreams; it is in Joseph's sleep, and our own, that God brings life among us. Amen.

Reader 6:

We call him Jesus. This name, in Hebrew, is *Yeshua*, which means, "He Who Saves." A reading from Matthew 1:21.

Gabriel, the messenger of the Lord, told Joseph, "Name the boy *Yeshua* – He Who Saves – for from their own brokenness will God heal his people; their darkened souls will become prisms of light."

Reader 7:

No one imagines the mirror as a spiritual tool.

Comfort comes from the peek out the window: the folly of neighbors my sacred scorn.

More intense still is the window of oppression: the cruelty of enemies my holy lament. "How long, O Lord, 'til you smite my enemies?"

Comes the angel with disturbing news: "The mirror is the only way."

Not Rome, nor Caesar. Not Herod, nor the Pharisees. Neither Trump nor Biden. Not your mom or your dad or your ex or your boss.

You. You are the One who needs healing and wholeness, cleansing and renewal, forgiveness.

Don't look out the window at other's sins. *Yeshua* comes to save you from your own.

Reader 8:

Let us pray in unison.

Lord, make us mirror-looking saints: When tempted to peek out the window, place the mirror before us; when tempted to cast about for other's sins, let us confront our own; when tempted to name other's problems, let us confess our

own; when confronted with the mirror, let our eyes remain open; when the mirror is friend or family, let us receive rebuke as a gift; when the mirror is enemy or “other,” let us see your Hand of Grace.

O Divine Master, let us not so much seek to look outward as to look inward; to blame sin on others as to claim grace for all; to fret about our enemies as to affirm, “I have met the enemy...and the enemy is me.”

For it is in honest humility that we are freed through forgiveness; it is in humble accountability that we are freed for forgiveness; it is in, with and by grace, your grace, the one and only grace that saves, that forgiveness flows through us to others, making enemy and stranger, friend and neighbor.

Reader 9:

An ancient theological debate centered around how to describe Mary. Was she the *christotokos*, which means “Christ-bearer,” or *theotokos*, which means “God-bearer.” The ancient church took a definitive stand at the Councils of Chalcedon and Nicea. A reading from Matthew 1:22-23.

Mary will be the *theotokos*, the God-bearer, and you will name this child *Immanuel* – God Is with Us – just as God’s truth-teller, Isaiah, spoke from ages-to-ages past.

Reader 10:

With.

No mere existence together: side by side, couch potato-ing through life. Not parallel travels: kicks on Route 66 then going separate ways. Not the quiet desperation of so many a marriage. Not the slow death of too many churches that pretend they are mimes.

With.

God-life in-breaking, destroying assumptions. God-hope shattering despair, planting seeds. God-love breaking down walls of hostility between self and “Other.” God-whimsy in Ricky Bobby’s favorite Jesus:

With.

Who would – who could – have guessed such sacred silliness? Immanuel. God with us. Jesus.

Reader 11:

Let us pray in unison.

Immanuel, make us instruments of with-ness: When others keep their distance, let us connect; when relationships rupture, let us repair; when the Church rejects, let us embrace; where God-void is encountered, let us give birth; where God-cloudiness envelops, let us serve as midwife; where God-cry laments, let us bear theotokos into the world.

O Divine Master, may we not so much seek to be known as one who claims you as to be one who is with you; to claim your allegiance as to welcome your presence; to boast of our closeness to you as to rejoice in your presence with us.

For it is in being God-bearers that, like Mary, we bring grace; it is in having her courage and faith that God-Life is birthed; it is in Immanuel we learn you are not against us and we are not alone. Amen.

Reader 12:

According to first-century Jewish culture, Joseph adopted Jesus as his own by asserting his right to name Jesus and in so doing asserted a union and intimacy forged in the bonds both of law and love. A reading from Matthew 1:24-25.

Joseph awoke from his dream – was it only a dream? Yes, but dreams have power, and so this dream’s power transformed Joseph. He embraced Mary in the covenant of love, as his wife, yet remained chaste until the boy was born. Joseph adopted the boy as his own son by asserting his right to name the child: Jesus.

Reader 13:

There is power in a choice. “I choose family,” said the dad who could never be father. Nothing forced, coerced, required, or obligated. Chosen. Like saying yes to a cool breeze on a summer’s day. Joy for the low, low price of naming a boy not technically his own. Yet in the naming the boy became something new: shared, deeper union, consummation of love’s covenant. For in the naming the boy became a son.

Reader 14:

Let us pray in unison.

Lord, make us instruments of naming: Where anonymity cripples, let us seek to know another; where namelessness means forsaken, let us see, hear, and call to them; where society forgets, let us remember; where society ignores, let us notice; where encountered by those who are faceless, let us speak them into dignity.

O God of Joseph, may we not so much seek to claim parental rights as to embrace all children in love; to do what is expedient as to live according to what is just; to tolerate the kid as to embrace the child.

For it is in union and communion that community is formed; it is in loving the single mom that boys become men; it is in naming Jesus as one's own that Jesus finds a home.

Pastor:

Now go into the world. Notice the stranger. Notice the alone. Speak to them. Encounter them. What is their name? What is their story? Open yourself to the common themes in each other's narratives. Be a place of welcome. Notice. Pray. Act.

And may the richest blessings of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the ever-sustaining Holy Spirit be with all of us, this Christmas Day and forever more. And all of God's people said, *Amen.*