

## GATHERING AROUND THE WORD

### THE WESTMINSTER CHIMES

#### PRELUDE

*Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme, BWV 645*

Dillon J. Swanson, organ

J. S. Bach

#### LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

*Christ, Be Our Light* (1<sup>st</sup> time soloist, 2<sup>nd</sup> time all)

CHRIST, BE OUR LIGHT

**Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the darkness. Christ, be our light! Shine in your church gathered today.**

John and Cindy Phelps

"Christ Climbed Down" by the Rev. Dr. K.C. Ptomey

**Christ climbed down from his bare tree this year**

and ran away to where there were no rootless Christmas tress hung with candy canes and breakable stars.

**Christ climbed down from his bare tree this year**

and ran away to where there were no gilded Christmas Trees

and no tinsel Christmas trees

and no tinfoil Christmas trees

and no pink plastic Christmas trees

and no gold Christmas trees

and no black Christmas trees

and no powder blue Christmas trees hung with electric candles and encircled by tin electric trains and clever cornball relatives.

**Christ climbed down from his bare tree this year**

and ran away to where no intrepid Bible salesmen covered the territory and where no Sears Roebuck creches arrived by parcel post.

**Christ climbed down from his bare tree this year**

and ran away to where no fat handshaking stranger in a red flannel suit and a fake white beard went around passing himself off as some sort of North Pole saint crossing the desert to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania in a Volkswagen sled drawn by rollicking Adirondack reindeer with German names and bear sacks of Humble Gifts from Saks Fifth Avenue for everybody's imagined Christ child.

**Christ climbed down from his bare tree this year**

And ran away to where no Bing Crosby carolers groaned of a White Christmas and where no Radio City angels ice-skated wingless through a winter wonderland into a jingle-bell heaven daily at 8:30 with Midnight Mass matinees.

**Christ climbed down**

**From His bare Tree**

**This year**

**And softly stole away into**

**Some anonymous Mary's womb again**

**Where in the darkest night**

**Of everybody's anonymous soul**

**He awaits again**

**An unimaginable**

**And impossibly**

**Immaculate Reconception**

**The very craziest**

**Of Second Comings**

#### \*PROCESSIONAL HYMN 88

*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* (stanzas 1, 2, 6, 7)

VENI EMMANUEL

#### \*CALL TO CONFESSION AND PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Coming Christ,**

**you may not find us as you hoped.**

**We've looked away from signs we do not wish to see.**

**We've stopped listening to distress we do not wish to hear.**

**We are numb to inconvenient truths.**

**Keep us alert, O God, to the needs of our neighbors.**

**Revive our hearts laden with compassion fatigue.**

**Sharpen our minds clouded by worries.**

**Sober our lives addicted to privilege.**

**Show us the signs of your coming, that we may stand before you,**

**the Son of Man, in whose name we pray.**

*(Let us silently offer confessions that are individually ours to make.)*

#### \*ASSURANCE OF PARDON

##### \*PARDON RESPONSE 850

DIVINUM MYSTERIUM

*In a Deep, Unbounded Darkness* (stanza 3)

**Joy transforms our lips to boasting only in your matchless grace, sending Christ to dwell among us, Word made flesh in time and space: Friend and Savior, Friend and Savior, in whose life we glimpse your face, evermore and evermore.**

#### \*PASSING OF THE PEACE

May the peace of Jesus Christ be with you all.

**And also with you.**

#### WELCOME AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISCIPLESHIP

Leigh Sackett

*Please take a moment to find the Friendship Folder in your pew rack and sign so we know who was worshiping with us today. If you are new, please leave an address, email address, or phone number if you'd like to learn more about the life of our congregation.*

## PROCLAIMING THE WORD

#### CHILDREN'S TIME

*Children's Worship follows immediately after the children's sermon. Children ages 4 through 1<sup>st</sup> Grade may leave for Children's Worship, an age-appropriate service.*

#### PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

##### SCRIPTURE LESSON

John 1:1-4

(p. 966 in the pew Bible)

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

#### SERMON

Light Always

The Rev. Andrew C. Whaley

## RESPONDING TO THE WORD

#### \*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

The Rev. Isabella Fagiani

from Karl Barth, sermon preached on December 22, 1918

**The message of Advent about the coming light requires that we become people of Advent, people who persistently await the victorious light. What is needed are persons who willingly and personally take on this serious need, cry out for change, and work for it. There can be no standstill in the relationship of light and darkness. Christ waits for people who will not compromise the light with darkness, neither in themselves nor in anything else, but who are moved by the serious need for the light of Christ and who are aware of whence the help comes. Where there are such people, Christmas can happen.**

#### CALL FOR THE OFFERING

*Gifts for the offering can be made by placing your offering in the plate as it is passed or by scanning the QR Code on the back of your bulletin with your smartphone. Visit [rcpres.org](http://rcpres.org) and click "Give Now" to learn more.*

#### OFFERTORY

*E'en So, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come*

Sanctuary Choir

Paul Manz

Peace be to you and grace from him who freed us from our sins, Who loved us all and shed his blood that we might saved be. Sing holy, holy to our Lord, the Lord, Almighty God, Who was and is and is to come; Sing holy, holy, Lord! Rejoice in heaven, all ye that dwell therein, Rejoice on earth, ye saints below, For Christ is coming, is coming soon, For Christ is coming soon! E'en so, Lord Jesus, quickly come, and night shall be no more; They need no light nor lamp nor sun, for Christ will be their All.

#### \*DOXOLOGY 850

DIVINUM MYSTERIUM

*In a Deep, Unbounded Darkness* (stanza 2)

**Though our world is everchanging, you are constant, firm, and sure, faithful to your covenant promise. Trusting you, we live, secure: singing praises, singing praises, long as heart and breath endure, evermore and evermore.**

#### \*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

##### \*SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

**Invitation to the Table**

**Great Thanksgiving**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

**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 sins as we forgive those who sin 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.**

**Words of Institution**

**Communion of the People**

*On each bread tray there are wafers that are gluten, egg, dairy, and nut free for those who need it. (Ingredients: garbanzo bean flour, potato starch, tapioca flour, whole grain sweet white sorghum flour, fava bean flour, palm oil)*

**Music During Communion**

**Prayer After Communion**

## FOLLOWING THE WORD INTO THE WORLD

#### \*CLOSING HYMN 347

*Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence*

Stanza 1 – All      Stanza 2 – Choir Only      Stanzas 3 & 4 - All

PICARDY

#### \*CHARGE AND BLESSING

##### \*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE 850

DIVINUM MYSTERIUM

*In a Deep, Unbounded Darkness* (stanza 1)

**In a deep, unbounded darkness, long before the first light shone, you, O God, beyond all merit worked a wonder faith makes known: in your mercy, in your mercy, you embraced us as your own, evermore and evermore.**

#### \*POSTLUDE

*Toccata on "Veni Emmanuel"*

Andrew Carter

#### TODAY'S WORSHIP LEADERS:

Crucifer: Anna Favor

Children's Worship: Rebecca Whaley, Lizzie Kessler, and Brittany Mallory

## MINISTRY MESSAGES

**PRAYER REQUESTS:** Marvin & Roena Barbre, Dawn Blakeman, Jackie Blakeman, Mayuen Chice, Beverly Day and family (friend of Camilla and Johnsey Cabaniss), Susan Lindstrom, Megan Mallare (friend of Kathy Grove), Melissa Martin (friend of Lisa Boylan), Rusty McCown, Jon Nance (Bill and Betty Nance's son/stepson), Steve Pottinger (Bob & India Atkinson's son-in-law), and all caregivers.

Our sincere thoughts and prayers are with Andy Corbin and his family following the passing of his brother on Tuesday, November 26.

**ONLINE GIVING** If you prefer to give online you can either visit [rcpres.org](http://rcpres.org) and press the "Give Now" button on the homepage or scan the QR code with your smartphone to go directly to the donation page. This can be done as a one-time or an ongoing way to support our mission and ministry.



**MISSION PARTNER SUPPORT** Each month, we are designating all cash and coin to one of our local mission partners. For the month of December, we are supporting the Haiti Mission Group. You can place your money in the offering plate or make an online gift using the QR code, noting that it is for Mission and making a note for the Haiti Mission Group in the text box.

### FELLOWSHIP DINNERS - WEDNESDAYS AT 6:15 PM – December 4

Layers of deliciousness will be found in next week's dinner entrée – either with meat or without. Your lasagna will be accompanied by green beans and garlic bread; be sure to leave room for chocolate cake! Sign up online at [rcpres.org/dinner](http://rcpres.org/dinner) or in the Gathering Area: suggested donation of \$25 for the whole family or \$8/person. If you need a take-home container, please bring your own.

**POINSETTIAS FOR ADVENT** If you would like to dedicate a poinsettia in honor or memory of someone special, please complete the form in the This Week at RCPC with name(s) for dedication or complete the envelope in the pews and place the envelope in the offering plate. The deadline to order is Sunday, December 15. A list will be included in the bulletin on Sunday, December 22. Dedications are \$12 each and can be paid by cash, check (made payable to "RCPC" with "Poinsettia" in the memo line) or online at [tinyurl.com/RCPCPoinsettias2024](http://tinyurl.com/RCPCPoinsettias2024) (select Dedications/Memorials and add "Poinsettia" in the notes box).

### CONTEMPLATIVE ADVENT SERVICE: WHAT ARE YOU CARRYING?

Thursday, December 5 at 7:00 PM – RCPC Chapel

December is almost here! And with it there are many things we are carrying. Some are carrying lists of presents to buy and parties to plan, Nutcracker costumes to sew, and tickets to purchase. The exhaustion of making Christmas "perfect" weighs us down. Others carry sorrow and loneliness in this season as grief grips hearts. We mourn for those who have died, those from whom we are estranged, and for those who are struggling. Some of us carry large weights of worry about the world, the planet, our community. Whatever you carry this Advent, this worship service is an opportunity to lay it down before Christ, to trust that Christ actually comes in our waiting. Come and find a center, a peace, a hope to guide us through this season of darkness and light.

**RCPC CHRISTMAS ORNAMENT** To continue with our celebration of 100 years of Raleigh Court Presbyterian Church, we have created a pewter ornament that is a replica of the Celtic cross that hangs in our Sanctuary! The ornaments will be for sale on Sundays starting November 24 in the Gathering Area. They are \$20 each. Hang one on your tree or buy one for someone you know who loves RCPC! Any questions, reach out to Emily Jarrett 662-610-2705.

### CHRISTMAS CONCERT ...And Glory Shone Around

Sunday, December 15 at 7:00 PM. Join us for our annual Christmas Concert at RCPC presented by the Sanctuary Choir and orchestra and organ. This year's theme titled "... And Glory Shone Around" features images of light and angel song throughout moments of the Nativity story. Selections include music by Egil Hovland, Craig Courtney, René Clausen, Felix Mendelssohn, and more! You won't want to miss this special annual RCPC tradition.

## ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

**Advent Creation: An Intergenerational Adventure**, Led by Leigh Sackett, Fellowship Hall. Parents and children come, join us for a hands-on exploration of creating some memorable Advent traditions that you can continue year to year. We will create an Advent wreath, we will make ornaments to give as presents to grandparents or other family members, we will frost cookies for our neighbors, and we will create a Tree of Hope for friends in need.

**Heaven and Earth, by Will Willimon**, The Seekers, Room 201

It's not within our own power to make a fresh start. If we're to have a future different from the past, it must come as a gift, something not of our devising. What we need is a God who refuses to be trapped in eternity, a God who not only cares about us but is willing to show up among us and do something with us, here, now. In *Heaven and Earth: Advent and the Incarnation*, Will Willimon introduces you to the God who does just that, bringing heaven to earth and changing everything. In Advent we celebrate and anticipate the earth-shaking, life-transforming good news that God is coming to us. Watch out. Get ready. God is on the way.

**History of Christian Theology**, Led by Mike Lockaby - Room 101

Ever wanted to learn about how Christians think by thinking along with them as they grappled with what it means to acknowledge Jesus as Lord and teach it to others? This course is designed to think along with the people before us in the Christian tradition, rather than remember dates, places, and names. The class will follow along with a series of half-hour lectures on the History of Christian Theology by Dr. Phillip Cary, a professor of philosophy at Eastern University and a widely published scholar of Augustine of Hippo, Martin Luther, and Protestantism. Following each lecture will be a 20 to 30 minute discussion of the subject matter led by Mike Lockaby, who will also provide copies of additional related materials to people who are interested

**THE ROANOKE VALLEY CHORAL SOCIETY** will present their Christmas concert "*Merry and Bright – Holiday Memories*" on Monday, December 2 at 7:00 PM in the RCPC Sanctuary.

# RALEIGH COURT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

THE CHURCH OF THE OPEN DOOR



December 1, 2024  
11:00 AM - Sanctuary

# Christmas Can Happen

The Mission of RCPC is:  
To Seek Christ  
To Serve Christ  
To Show Christ  
To Know God through Christ

Ministers	All the People of Raleigh Court Church
Pastor & Head of Staff	The Rev. Andrew C. Whaley
Associate Pastor	The Rev. Isabella Fagiani
Director of Christian Education	Leigh Sackett
Minister of Care	The Rev. David Dixon, MD
Director of Music Ministries	Dillon J. Swanson
Preschool Director	Betsy Prillaman

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