

Fourth Sunday of Advent



First Presbyterian Church

Founded 1835

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Marianna, Florida

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**A CELEBRATION OF OUR FAITHFUL GOD'S GIFT OF STRENGTH
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2008 11:00 A.M.**

THE CHURCH GATHERS . . .

THEME VERSE FOR REFLECTION DURING THE ADVENT SEASON

God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. I Corinthians 1:1:9

MUSIC OF CHRISTMAS

played by Members of the JuBELLees

CHIMING THE HOUR

WELCOME AND SHARING OF COMMUNITY LIFE

INTROIT

“Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light”

Words by Johann Rist and Norman E. Johnson

Music by Johann Schop, harmonized by Johann S. Bach

*** LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN
ADVENT**

Leaders: John, Vikki, Deck and Natalee Milton

Leader: When we gather for worship we light a candle to remind us that at creation God said,

People: “Let there be light,” and there was light.

Leader: When we gather for worship we light a candle to remind us that Jesus said,

People: “I am the Light of the World.

Leader: Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness,

People: but will have the light of life.”

Leader: During Advent we light special candles to remind us of the gifts of our faithful God,

People: through the gift of Jesus, the Light of the World.

Leader: Today we light again our first candle.

People: This is the candle of forgiveness.

Leader: This candle invites us to know and to accept the good news of God's mercy and grace offered to us in Jesus Christ.

People: When we accept this invitation we can know that our sins are forgiven.

Leader: Today we light again our second candle.

People: This is the candle of comfort.

Leader: This candle invites us to know and to accept the tidings of comfort and joy that God offers to us in Jesus Christ.

People: When we accept this invitation we can know the comfort that God alone can give us in life and in death.

Leader: Today we light again our third candle.

People: This is the candle of freedom.

Leader: This candle invites us to know and to accept the gift of freedom that God offers to us in Jesus Christ.

People: When we accept this invitation we can know a freedom from all that would hold us captive.

Leader: Today we come to light our fourth candle.

People: This is the candle of strength.

Leader: This candle invites us to know and to accept the gift of strength that God offers to us in Jesus Christ.

People: When we accept this invitation we can know a strength through which to live as God's forgiven, comforted and free people.

* ADVENT HYMN ASSURING US OF GOD'S GIFT OF STRENGTH IN JESUS CHRIST No. 1 *Stuttgart*

"Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"

CALL TO CONFESSION

UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Faithful God you have fulfilled your promise, as you have given us the gift of the long-expected Jesus, to set us free, and to give us the strength to be released from our fears and from our sins. Forgive us, O God of Strength, for disregarding you, the Source of our strength, and for refusing the gift that you so graciously want to give us. Our own illusions of power have let us down so often. Instead of your rest and peace, our lives have been filled with disappointment and frustration. As we prepare to celebrate his birth once again, help us to be open to receive all that you have to offer to us in the long-expected Jesus.

PERSONAL PRAYERS OF CONFESSION IN SILENCE

SUNG RESPONSE SEEKING GOD'S FORGIVENESS No. 44 (*stanza 3*) *St. Louis*

How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him, still the dear Christ enters in.

THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

* SUNG RESPONSE OF ASSURANCE FOR ADVENT No. 44 (*stanza 4*) *St. Louis*

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!

TO HEAR AND REFLECT ON GOD'S WORD . . .

A TIME FOR OUR CHILDREN *Suzanne Owens*
(Children age 5 and under may go downstairs to the nursery after Children's Time)

THE ANGEL GABRIEL VISITS MARY IN NAZARETH *Luke 1:26-38*
The Response: Leader: This is the Word of the Lord
People: Thanks be to God!

ANTHEM "Westminster Carol"
Arranged by Roger C. Wilson based on an old French Noel

PAUL REMINDS US OF THE STRENGTH OF THE GOSPEL *Romans 16:25-27*
The Response: Leader: This is the Word of the Lord
People: Thanks be to God!

SERMON "OUR FAITHFUL GOD OFFERS US THE GIFT OF STRENGTH"
Dr. Christopher

TO RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD . . .

* AFFIRMATION OF FAITH *based on Romans 16:25-27*

We believe in, and claim the strength of, the gospel of Jesus Christ. We believe in, and claim the sustaining power of, the mystery of the ages and the prophecy of God's holy word which has now been revealed to us, and to the whole world, in God's gift of Jesus Christ. With the angels who sang at the birth of Jesus we give glory to the only wise God, now and forever, through the same Jesus Christ. Amen.

* CAROL AFFIRMING OUR FAITH IN GOD'S GIFT OF STRENGTH IN THE GIFT OF JESUS No. 38 *Carol*

"It Came Upon a Midnight Clear"

THE FELLOWSHIP OF SILENT PRAYER

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION AND SUPPLICATION

THE OFFERTORY

*** THE OFFERTORY RESPONSE FOR THE ADVENT SEASON**

sung to the tune Veni Emmanuel, found at No. 9

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow, Praise Him all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host, Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come in love, our darkness to dispel.**

*** THE PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

*** THE LORD'S PRAYER**

(Presbyterian Hymnal, page 16 traditional, using 'debts' and 'debtors')

TO GO OUT AND SERVE . . .

*** CAROL AFFIRMING OUR FAITH IN GOD'S GIFT TO US OF JESUS No. 53**

"What Child Is This?" *Greensleeves*

*** THE CHARGE AND BENEDICTION**

*** THE CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE FOR THE ADVENT SEASON BASED
ON THE SONG OF ZECHARIAH AT THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST**

No. 601 *(Stanzas 1 and 2 only)* *Kingsfold*
"Song of Zechariah"

*** POSTLUDE**

***All who can do so comfortably will stand**

Pastor: Huw Christopher

Director of Music: Lawrence R. Nelson

Elder of the month: Frankie Stewart

Organist: Stanley Littleton

Church Secretary: Betty Blighton

Custodian: Ron Goold

Nursery Assistants: Mary Skipper and Branham Skipper

Nursery care is available for children Kindergarten and below during our Worship Service each Sunday morning. Children may be taken to the nursery before the service begins or after the Time with Our Children.

Appreciation is extended to **Lou Wilkinson** for playing our organ this morning while Stanley Littleton is recovering from surgery.

To Our Guests – Welcome to First Presbyterian Church of Marianna. We are glad to have you worship with us today and invite you to join us each Sunday as we worship and study God's word. If you would like more information concerning our church you may fill out one of the Welcome cards in the pews, talk to the ushers or the pastor, or call the office.

The **poinsettias** gracing the sanctuary today are given to the glory of God. They have been given by:

Larry and Jackie Spivey in honor of Kendall Abney and Austin Spivey

Joanne Wynn in memory of Milton Wynn

Mary B. Schmidt in memory of Reginald V. Schmidt

Rex and Toni Nowell for the Greater Glory of God

Evelyn Coskey

Jennifer Castree Collins in memory of her husband, Roy Charles Collins

Louise Daffin in memory of Mr. and Mrs. John McFarlin

Louise Daffin in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Sidney A. Daffin

Louise Daffin in memory of Ralph H. Daffin

Joe and Ginny Busby in honor of our parents

Jim and Mary Ann Gibbs to the Glory of God

Ron and Willie Mae Goold in memory of Mr. and Mrs. G. D. Maloy

Ron and Willie Mae Goold in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Wilbur Goold

Edith Griffith

John and Vikki Milton in memory of Holly and Nat Lee

Frankie Stewart and the Owens Family in memory of Wayne Stewart

Frankie Stewart and the Owens Family in memory of Robert Linton

Jackie Parramore in honor of Charlotte Hunter

Don and Charlotte Hunter in loving memory of our parents

Don and Charlotte Hunter in honor of our children

Lou and Kathy Roberts and Family in memory of Jake Peacock, Mildred Roberts and

Emma Rossman, and in honor of Bonnie Peacock and Louis Roberts

Daun and Christine Crews

Gayle DiBenedetto in memory of Guy DiBenedetto and Carl and Gwendolyn Johnson

Our Prayer Calendar: Stanley Littleton, Edith Hussey (requested by Joe and Ginny Busby), Bonnie Peacock (mother of Kathy Roberts), Nell Martin (requested by Jackie Spivey), and Rachel Belt (requested by Larry and Jackie Spivey).

The **Christmas Joy Offering** of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will be received this morning. The insert in the bulletin outlines how part of this offering will be used. Please use the envelopes in the bulletin for this special offering.

Everyone is invited to share in **Carol Singing** to some of our shut-in members this afternoon. The group will meet at the church at 2:30 p.m. to car pool to various homes and nursing homes. The time will conclude at the Christmas Open House at the Manse. For more information please contact Jack or Carol Homoney at 526-2041.

Huw and Rachel Christopher invite everyone to an **Informal Christmas Open House** for the whole family at the Manse, 4380 River Forest Road, (opposite the Chipola College Baseball fields) this afternoon, between 3 and 5 p.m.

All of our **College students and Youth Group** are invited to supper at the Manse at 6 p.m. on Monday. Please bring a gift valued \$5.00 or less to share in a fun gift exchange.

On **Wednesday of this week, Christmas Eve**, we will hold two worship services.

At 5 p.m. the informal service will be designed for children and their families, with children of all ages having an opportunity to participate in the telling of the Christmas Story.

At 6:30 p.m. our traditional service will include the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper and Candlelighting, as well as Christmas music for choir and congregation.

Childcare will not be provided for each of our services on Christmas Eve. Please make these two services known to your friends in the community.

Please join us for **Sunday School** every Sunday morning. There are classes for all age groups, including three classes for Adults. Next Sunday the adult class in the parlor will be studying the "John the Baptist Proclaims God's Message" based on Luke 3:7-18. Upstairs in Room 4 the Adult class and in Room 2 the Young Adult Class will be studying the texts to be used in our Worship Service: Luke 2:22-40 and Galatians 4:4-7.

At our worship service next Sunday, as we continue our celebration of Christmas, we look forward to having **Adam Moxley**, the son of Travis and Debbie Moxley, singing a solo as well as singing with our choir.

Everyone is invited to continue to think about our **Faithful God's Gift of Strength** this week by reflecting on: *Where have I experienced God's gift of strength in my life? For what is our faithful God seeking to give me strength this Christmas?*

The sympathy of the church is extended to **Larry and Hazel Nelson** in the death of his cousin, Sylvia Nelson Bauer, in Daphne, Alabama on December 11, 2008, and to **Ilene Culpepper** in the death of her sister-in-law, Mary Jim Washington, in LaGrange, Georgia on December 11, 2008.

Congratulations are extended to **Jack and Peggy Peacock** on the birth of a grandson. Thomas Tanner Milton was born Sunday, December 14, 2008 to Julie Anna and Michael Milton. Jackson and Emma Grace are thrilled to have a little brother. Congratulations also are extended to **Fay Connor** in the birth of a great-grandchild. William Govan Shockley was born December 15 to Kay and Farris Shockley in Macon, Georgia.

Our 175th Anniversary Committee encourages everyone to return the tan sheets for the commemorative anniversary bricks as well the recipes for our Anniversary Cookbook as soon as possible. Additional copies of these items of information are on the table in the narthex, or on the table in the hallway outside the fellowship hall.

Brochures for Disciplefest 2009 are on the table in the hallway outside the fellowship hall. It will be held at Blue Springs Baptist Conference Center in Marianna on Friday, January 30 and Saturday, January 31. There are workshops for all ages including a Youth Track and a Children's Track, and childcare for younger children. The Christian Education Committee has scholarship funds available for any who may need financial assistance in order to attend.

This week in the life of the church . .

Today	Christmas Caroling Group meets at the church at 2:30 p.m. Christmas Open House at the Manse from 3 until 5 p.m.
Monday	Ladies Exercise Class at 9:00 a.m. College Students and Youth Group meet for supper at the Manse at 6 p.m.
Wednesday	Food Pantry open 9 - 11. Volunteers are Hazel Nelson and Marsha Rodgers Church Office Closes at noon for Christmas Eve Christmas Eve Service for Children and their Families at 5 p.m. Choir Practice at 6 p.m. Christmas Eve Service with Communion and Candlelighting at 6:30 p.m.
Thursday	Church Office Closed for Christmas Day
Friday	Ladies Exercise Class 9 a.m.
Sunday (28 th)	Coffee and juice in the fellowship hall from 9:30 a.m. until 9:45 a.m. Sunday School for all ages at 9:45 a.m. A Celebration of our Faithful God's Gift of Jesus at 11 a.m.

Have you remembered the First Presbyterian Church in Your Will?