



WORDS
FOR THE BEGINNING
— YOU ARE A BLESSING —

New Castle Presbyterian Church
First Sunday of Advent

December 1, 2024

10:30 a.m.

GATHER IN GOD'S NAME

Prelude

O Worship the King

arr. Larry Shackley

Bethany Faiz - Piano

Welcome & Words about The Life and Work of the Church
Greeting of Peace

As Jesus greeted his disciples, so let us greet one another:

The peace of Christ be with you! **And also with you!**

Steeple Bell

Choral Introit

Call to Worship

Marshall Freund/Connie Reese/James Slagle

In a weary and worn world, how do we begin again? Where do we start? **Let us begin with the good news!**

Let us begin by trusting that we are loved by a gracious God.

Let us begin with music and singing! Let us begin with warmth and welcome. Let us begin with hope.

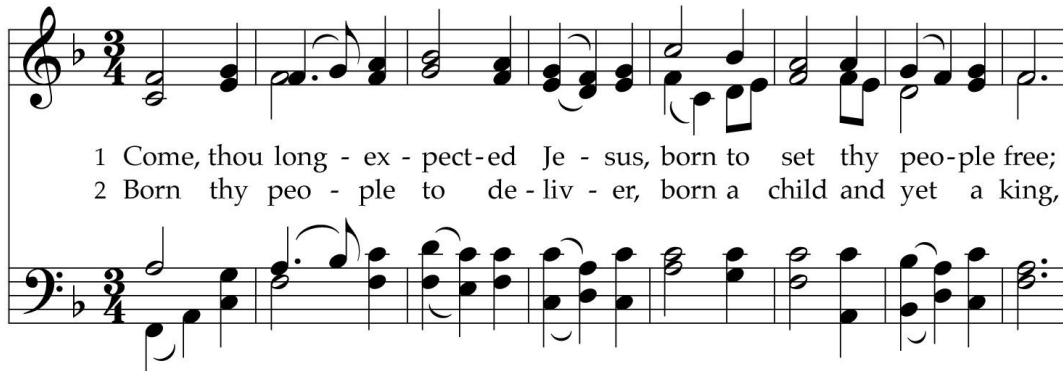
Yes, let us begin with hope. Today we light the candle of hope to shine a light in a worn and weary world. (*Candle is lit.*)

May this be our fresh start. May this be our new beginning.

May God's hope flow forth from here! Amen.

*Hymn #82

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus



1 Come, thou long - ex - pect-ed Je - sus, born to set thy peo-ple free;
2 Born thy peo - ple to de - liv - er, born a child and yet a king,



from our fears and sins re - lease us; let us find our rest in thee.
born to reign in us for - ev - er, now thy gra - cious king - dom bring.



Is - rael's strength and con - so - la - tion, hope of all the earth thou art;
By thine own e - ter - nal Spir - it rule in all our hearts a - lone;



dear de - sire of ev - ery na - tion, joy of ev - ery long - ing heart.
by thine all - suf - fi - cient mer - it raise us to thy glo - rious throne.

With its opening "Come," this hymn sounds the note of entreaty and invitation that characterizes the Advent season (from the Latin *adventus* = "coming"). Its blending of memory and hope helps us to give voice to our present faith as we stand between the past and the future.

Call to Confession

Prayer of Confession

Affirming God, your first words to creation were words of love. You looked at this earth and said, "It is good." Through the prophets and messengers, you have blessed your people with affirmations and words of belonging. Forgive us for forgetting that we are a blessing, made in your image, and held in your love. Forgive us for measuring our worth by society's measurements instead of yours. We believe. Help our unbelief. In Christ's name, we pray... (Time for silent prayer.)

Assurance of Pardon

Let us proclaim the Good News together:

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God.

*Response #582

**Glory to God, whose goodness shines on me,
and to the Son, whose grace has pardoned me,
and to the Spirit, whose love has set me free.**

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Amen.

World without end, without end. Amen. (sing 3x)

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Amen.

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PROCLAIM GOD'S WORD

Anthem

O Come, Emmanuel by Nancy Price/Don Besig

Amy Shimmin – Flute / Bethany Faiz - Piano

Wandering aimlessly on through the night, walking in darkness, seeking the light, we search for the truth, our doubts to dispel. O Come, O come, Emmanuel. Long we have waited for You to appear, bringing us hope and calming our fear. Descend now from heaven among us to dwell. O come, O come, Emmanuel.

Come now long expected Jesus; come, Redeemer, Lord and King. Precious Savior, come to lead us; fill us with the peace You bring. Soon we'll see a new day dawning; send a sign for all to see. End our darkness, doubt and longing; come and set our spirits free. Faithful believers, we watch and we pray. Soon You will come to show us the way. Then all of the world Your story will tell. O come, O come Emmanuel.

Scripture Conversation with Children

Prayer for Illumination

Holy God, open our hearts and create space in us to not only hear your words, but to believe the good news tucked between them. We are hungry for your wisdom, so speak to us now. With hope and curiosity, we listen. With hope and curiosity, we dare to begin again. Amen.

Scripture Lesson

Isaiah 43:1-7

Page: OT 672

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine. ² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

³ For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you. ⁴ Because you are precious in my sight and honored and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life. ⁵ Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; ⁶ I will say to the north, "Give them up," and to the south, "Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth— ⁷ everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." *This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.*

Scripture Lesson

Luke 1:26-38

Page: NT 56

²⁶ In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end." ³⁴ "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

³⁵ The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. ³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail.”

³⁸ “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her. *This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.*

Sermon

Words for the Beginning: You are a Blessing

GIVE THANKS TO GOD

*Hymn #850

In a Deep, Unbounded Darkness



1 In a deep, un-bound-ed dark - ness, long be - fore the first
 2 Though our world is ev - er - chang - ing, you are con-stant, firm,
 3 Joy trans-forms our lips to boast - ing on - ly in your match -
 4 God of Ha - gar, God of Sa - rah, God of no - mad A -



light shone, you, O God, be - yond all mer - it worked a
 and sure, faith - ful to your cov-enant prom - ise. Trust - ing
 less grace, send - ing Christ to dwell a - mong us, Word made
 bra - ham; God of Mir - yam, God of Mo - ses, Fi - ery



won - der faith makes known: in your mer - cy, in your
 you, we live, se - cure: sing - ing prais - es, sing - ing
 flesh in time and space: Friend and Sav - ior, Friend and
 Pil - lar, great I AM: lead us home - ward, lead us



mer - cy, you em-braced us as your own,
 prais - es, long as heart and breath en - dure,
 Sav - ior, in whose life we glimpse your face,
 home - ward, to the love - feast of the Lamb,



ev - er - more and ev - er - more.

Setting this translation of a Chinese hymn to Western plainsong enhances the universal context of the opening stanza. The familiar pattern of creation, covenant, and incarnation in the first three stanzas leads to a far-reaching final stanza that looks both backward and forward.

Offerings of Tithes and Gifts

Offertory **My Faith Has Found a Resting Place** arr. Tom Fettke

Bethany Faiz - Piano

***Response #607**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;

Praise Christ, all people here below;

Praise Holy Spirit evermore.

Praise triune God, whom we adore. Amen.

***Prayer of Dedication**

O God, in a weary and worn world, how do we begin again? Where do we start? Your promises help us to trust that one light of hope can shine brightly in a hopeless world. Bless these gifts that Christ's hope would offer new beginnings to all who need it. Amen.

Communion and Prayers of the People

Invitation

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Prayer of Great Thanksgiving

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.

Words of Institution

Partaking

Prayer

GO IN GOD'S NAME

*Hymn #104

O Lord, How Shall I Meet You

1 O Lord, how shall I meet you, how wel-come you a - right?
2 Love caused your in - car - na - tion; love brought you down to me;
3 You come, O Lord, with glad - ness, in mer - cy and good-will,

Your peo - ple long to greet you, my hope, my heart's de - light!
your thirst for my sal - va - tion pro-cured my lib - er - ty.
to bring an end to sad - ness and bid our fears be still.

O kin - dle, Lord most ho - ly, a lamp with - in my breast,
O love be - yond all tell - ing, that led you to em - brace
In pa - tient ex - pec - ta - tion we live for that great day

to do in spir - it low - ly all that may please you best.
in love, all loves ex - cel - ling, our lost and fal - len race.
when your re - newed cre - a - tion your glo - ry shall dis - play.

Though many Advent hymns address Christ with entreaty and invitation, this more contemplative text considers how an individual prepares for and responds to Christ's coming. It also brings together a recollection of the First Coming with an anticipation of the Second Coming.

ADVENT HAPPENINGS

Advent devotional materials are available in the CE Building. Join us in our “Words for Beginnings” journey. Our All-Ages Sunday School on December 15 will explore the quilt imagery of this series! Click this link <https://tinyurl.com/4r7p8e93> to access photo-a-day.

CHRISTMAS CAROLING – DECEMBER 22

Join us on Sunday, Dec. 22 at 6 p.m. for caroling around Old New Castle; we’ll begin to walk from the CE Building. We’ll provide sheet music, but please bring a flashlight. Christmas lights and festive attire is encouraged! We’ll end at the Mayhews home for refreshments around 7:00pm. You are welcome to come even if you don't go caroling!

CODE PURPLE

First & Central Presbyterian welcomes Wilmington’s unhoused neighbors into their social hall every Saturday during the winter months. From 6 to 10 to a.m., guests receive a warm welcome, light breakfast, and hospital services, including wifi, charging stations, and shower services. NCPC’s Mission and Outreach committee invites you to sign up to support this effort at <https://shorturl.at/X6Vyd> or contact Amy Selheimer.

GUATEMALAN ADVENT PROJECT

It’s time again to help with the Guatemalan Advent Project. This year you can buy chickens for women in Guatemala. These chickens are given to women to raise for their families as a source of nourishment. There will be information at Coffee Hour for the next few weeks on how you can give. This is a great gift for that friend or family member who is hard to buy for. Questions? See Scott or Amy Selheimer.

This Week's Schedule

SUNDAY	12/01		1st Sunday of Advent
		10:30am	In-Person & Live Stream Worship
		11:30am	Coffee Hour & Cookie Decorating
Tuesday	12/03	11:00am	Staff Meeting
		4:00pm	Presbytery Meeting
		5:30pm	3 Board Meeting
		7:00pm	Session Meeting
Wednesday	12/04	12:00pm	School Town Lunch – Fellowship Hall
		3:00pm	Bible Study
		7:30pm	Choir
Thursday	12/05	7:00pm	Celebration Ringers
Saturday	12/07	8:00am	Tai Chi
		9:00am	Church Yard Cleanup
SUNDAY	12/08		2nd Sunday of Advent
		10:30am	In-Person & Live Stream Worship & Baptism
		11:30am	Congregational Meeting
		11:45am	Coffee Hour

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Eileen Larkin, Dir. of Music

Dan Knox, Treasurer

Minerva Lermond, Dir. of Handbells

Shirley Knox, Recording Secretary

Bethany Faiz, Accompanist

SESSION

2025	2026	2027
Melissa Boris	Cynthia Beam	Julie Barry
Jennifer Dunham	Peter McCurdy	Sarah McCann
Connie Reese	OPEN	Amy Selheimer
Clerk of Session: Scott Selheimer		

Session meets the 1st Tuesday of the month

DEACONS

2025	2026	2027
Toni Marley	Lindy Ballance	Julia Spock
Janet Spring	Liz Toto	Beverly Stoudt

Deacons meet the 2nd Sunday of the month

TRUSTEES

2025	2026	2027
Marshall Freund	Mary Fontinha	Gary Graham
Mike Smith	Gail Seitz	Kelly McCurdy

Trustees meet the 3rd Monday every other month (Sept/Nov/Jan/Mar/May)

