

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF BELMONT



SERVICE OF WORSHIP

December 15, 2024 – 11:00 a.m.

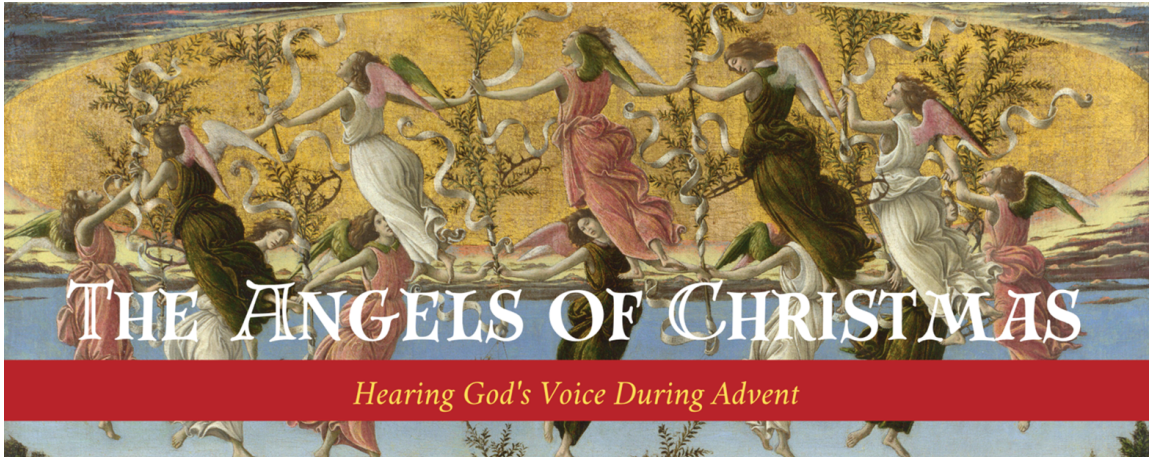
The Third Sunday of Advent



The Courageous Choice by Lisle Gwynn Garrity, 2022

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***United in the Spirit, First United Methodist Church of Belmont exists
to be more like Jesus Christ for our community and beyond***
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THE REVEREND GEORGE RAGSDALE, SENIOR PASTOR
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Good morning and welcome to First United Methodist Church of Belmont! This morning, we're continuing our Advent exploration of the special role angels play in the story of Christmas. Today we turn to Matthew's Gospel, which records the special role Joseph plays in the birth of Jesus. It all begins with an angel's message compelling him to defy societal norms and expectations and show the mercy and compassion of God. What voices challenge us to bring justice at this time of year? How can we practice and proclaim mercy and compassion in this holy season?

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAISE AND PRAYER

PRELUDE

"The First Nowell"

arr. Lani Smith

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

The Latchana Family

We now light the third candle on our Advent wreath as we celebrate the message of justice for all those who are oppressed. "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit." In a world that often overlooks the marginalized, Joseph chose to act with justice and compassion.

We commit ourselves to seek justice and stand with those who are oppressed.

This candle reminds us that true justice is found in loving and serving one another.

God of justice, open our hearts to the needs of others. Help us to be agents of Your love in the world. Empower us to work for justice in our communities and to stand alongside those who are suffering. Amen.

*PROCESSIONAL HYMN NO. 203

"Hail to the Lord's Anointed"

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Margie Ligon

Merciful God, we confess that we often struggle to balance justice and mercy in our lives, allowing fear or self-interest to guide our decisions. Forgive us for the times we have failed to act with compassion, turning away from the vulnerable and neglecting the call to love as you love. In your infinite mercy, remind us of the grace revealed through Jesus, born to save and reconcile a broken world. Help us to embody your justice, extend your mercy, and reflect your compassion as we await the fullness of Christ's kingdom. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

*WORDS OF ASSURANCE

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven! Glory to God. Amen.

*GLORIA PATRI No. 70

MOMENTS WITH CHILDREN

Jennifer Martin

PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S WORD

*GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 1:18-25

John Tria

This is the Word of God for the People of God. ***Thanks be to God.***

SERMON

The Rev. George Ragsdale

SILENT REFLECTION

RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH No. 881

The Apostles' Creed

INVITATION TO PRAYER

"Sing Hallelujah"

***Sing hallelujah Sing hallelujah
Sing hallelujah for the things He has done
Come and adore Him
Bow down before Him
Sing hallelujah to the Light of the World***

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

After each petition we enter into the prayer together with these words: Lord, in your mercy.
hear our prayer.

GIVING OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

Offertory

"The Hands That First Held Mary's Child"

Dan Forrest

The hands that first held Mary's Child
were hard from working wood,
from boards they sawed and planed and filed
and splinters they withstood.

This day they gripped no tool of steel,
they drove no iron nail,
but cradled from the head to heel
our Lord, newborn and frail.

When Joseph marveled at the size
of that small breathing frame,
and gazed upon those bright new eyes
and spoke the Infant's name,
the angel's words he once had dreamed
poured down from heaven's height,
and, like the host of stars that beamed,
blest earth with welcome light.

'This Child shall be Emmanuel,
not God upon the throne
but God with us, Emmanuel,
as close as blood and bone.'
The tiny form in Joseph's palms
confirmed what he had heard,
and from his heart rose hymns and psalms
for heaven's human word.

The tools which Joseph laid aside
a mob would later lift
and use with anger, fear and pride
to crucify God's gift.

Let us, O Lord, not only hold
the Child who's born today,
but, charged with faith, may we be bold
to follow in his way.

Chancel Choir Women

THANKSGIVING

*ACT OF PRAISE

"Doxology"

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise God, all creatures here below: Alleluia! Alleluia!
Praise God above ye heavenly hosts!
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!***

*THE LORD'S PRAYER (Hymnal No. 895)

*RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS

Mario, Katie and Micah Quispe

*BENEDICTION

*RECESSIONAL HYMN No. 211 Verses 1-2, 5-7

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

*POSTLUDE

"VENI EMMANUEL"

John Bertalot

**Those who are able please stand.*

Welcome to First United Methodist Church of Belmont! We're glad that you've chosen to worship with us this morning. We invite you to explore all the opportunities we have for children, youth and adults of all ages and stages of life. We seek to be a community of faith that welcomes all as we grow to be more like Jesus Christ for our community, loving and serving God and one another in all that we do.

If you are a guest, we are honored to have you with us. Please stop by the information center as you leave this morning to receive a small gift and more information about our church. We look forward to getting to know you in the days to come! Welcome!

Today's Bulletin Cover features the work of Black Mountain, NC artist and Presbyterian pastor Lisle Gwynn Garrity. Of her depiction of today's Gospel Lesson she writes, "In this image, I've captured Joseph in the liminal space where his dreams will soon shape his reality. He rests his head on a folded blanket, which represents the woven tapestry of his ancestors who also made difficult choices for good. Gold interconnecting lines, like the roots and branches of a family tree, envelop him, symbolizing the beautiful web of regeneration that will come from his courage."

Welcome, New Members This morning we are blessed to welcome new members into our church family. Joining today at our 11:00 service are Mario and Katie Quispe, by Transfer of Church Membership from Aldersgate United Methodist Church in Shelby. We also welcome their son, Micah. If you would like more information about joining our church family, please call or email Pastor George (704-249-0645 or george@fumcbelmont.org) or speak with him after the service today.

Prayer after each worship service is available in the prayer room off of the Narthex. Our Congregational Care Ministers and retired clergy are available to pray with you.

CHURCH GATHERINGS

Our Annual Christmas Concert on December 15 at 4:00 p.m. will feature all of the musical ensembles at FUMC with guest musicians. The concert, in the Sanctuary, is free and all are invited. Our annual Christmas dinner follows in Carpenter Hall.

Young Adults will gather for lunch on December 20 at 11:30 at the Spruced Goose Station. Contact Quanna at quanna@fumcbelmont.org with questions.

First Kids are invited to dress in provided costumes and participate in our nativity retelling at the 4:00 Christmas Eve service. Please email jennifer@fumcbelmont.org to sign up.

All Youth are invited to the New Year's Hike on January 5 from 1:00 to 2:30 at Rocky Branch Trail. Contact Quanna to sign up today!

Connect begins again on January 12 from 5:30 to 7:30 in Carpenter Hall. Join us for a few rounds of Grog and other fun games!

OPPORTUNITIES TO GIVE AND SERVE

Support Dahlia Grove Community Café on Thursdays from 11:45 to 1:15 p.m. in Carpenter Hall. Dining at the café provides financial support and training for women recovering from human trafficking, domestic violence and drug addiction. Learn more at dahliagrove.org.

Room in the Inn began this month as we again partner with Christ UMC in Charlotte to provide emergency housing for our neighbors without a home on December 28. Learn more and sign up to help at fumcbelmont.org/roomintheinn, where you can also find our Amazon Wishlist with items to donate for our guests, including rain gear, flashlights and toiletry items.

Through your generosity we are able to help support the functioning of a **Warming Center at the Gastonia Farmers Market** on nights when the temperature drops below 32 degrees for neighbors without shelter. You can also assist by working a shift greeting the neighbors and providing them with what is available to help bring comfort for the night. To sign up go to www.fumcbelmont.org/warmingcenter.

Share the Warmth this Advent season by donating gloves, hats and socks. You can place your items on the tree in the narthex. All items will be donated to the S.O.C.K.S. Crisis ministry in the Springwood community.

Help us Feed the Children! Visit fumcbelmont.org/feedthechildren to sign up to pre-pack, cook and assemble or deliver lunches and bags of shelf-stable food to children during their Winter break.

Give Gifts That Matter this Christmas by supporting the children and families of our ZOE Empowerment community in Rwanda. For as little as \$10 you can purchase a gift that will transform the life of a child and honor a loved one at the same time. Visit the ZOE table in the narthex after worship throughout Advent.

Feed the House. Help care for mothers and children at Catherines House by dropping off a simple meal to them once a year. Help us fill up our calendar by signing up at www.fumcbelmont.org/catherineshouse

Christmas Poinsettias 2024

*The poinsettias decorating our worship space have been given
to honor and remember loved ones.*

Cici, Nana and Grandma Linda
Given by Ellie and Jackson Delany

Joe and Meriwether Maynard
Given by Boyce O'Tuel and Elizabeth Maynard

Carole Moore
Given by Jack O'Tuel

Amelia McKnight
Given by John and Janet Rhodes

William Ragsdale
Given by Annie Joe Ragsdale

Sam Pennington Sr.
Given by Betty Pennington

My parents Cecil and Virginia Freeman
Spiritual friend, Gail Hanigan
Given by Charles Freeman

Carolyn Mundy
Elaine Magennis
Given by Laura and Jim Magennis and Family

Elizabeth Bunce
Jan Giang
Given by Mike and Lori Giang

Uncle Neil Zanetti; Peter Lewis
Given by The Dominov Family

Larry "Grandad" Morton
Given by Debbie and Colby Morton

Joplin
Given by Primm and Etta

Michael Swanson
Carol Swanson
Given by The Corripio Family

Charles and Margaret Burnette
Milton and Sara Allen
Given by Bob and Susan Burnette

Les Moore
Given by Maggie Moore

Our Parents
Jim and Cindy Griffin

Martha A. Taylor
Teri and Claude Wilson
Children and Teachers of Godly Play
Given by Preston Taylor

Evelyn and Price Hand
Lorene Mellon
Given by Ginger Feimster and Family

Rebecca and Ed Nance
Red and Suzanne Lawing
Given by Mary Nance and Craig Nance

WEEKLY CALENDAR

Sunday, December 15

- 8:30 a.m. Worship
- 9:15 a.m. Fellowship Breakfast
- 10:00 a.m. Sunday School
- 11:00 a.m. Worship
- 4:00 p.m. Christmas Concert and Dinner

Monday, December 16

- 10:00 a.m. Staff Meeting

Tuesday, December 17

- 1:30 p.m. Advent Small Group

Wednesday, December 18

Thursday, December 19

- 11:45 a.m. Community Cafe'
- 12:00 p.m. Jan. Newsletter Deadline

Friday, December 20

Feeding the Children

Saturday, December 21

Sunday, December 22

- 8:30 a.m. Worship
- 9:15 a.m. Fellowship Breakfast
- 10:00 a.m. Sunday School
- 11:00 a.m. Worship

REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Trevis Lunsford's sister, Shirley Hunt

Ronnie and Susan Clements (Barbara Byrum)

Chris, friend of Teri Wilson

Greg Stanforth

Barb Lange and family upon the passing of her brother, Bob Shaffer

Friends, Richard & Judy Treneer (Nicole Stanforth)

Jaxon Forbes

Richard Rumfelt and his family (Becky and Tom Fortenberry)

Sister-in-law, Jill Atkins (Chris and Connie Atkins)

Lynda Jenkins, Nancy, Clyde, Adam & Alex Underhill, Patsy Deese, Bill Griffin, Linda & Gerald, along with other family members who are all facing health issues (Cindy and Jim Griffin)

Alice Goins Ratterree (Cindy Goins' aunt)

Nicole Stanforth's grandfather

Paul Wallace, Judy Harris' brother and also her friend Herb Carnes

Erin Carver, Renee and Tim Painter's daughter

Murphy Clark and family

*You can submit prayer requests to
prayers@fumcbelmont.org*

COME CELEBRATE WITH US

Christmas Eve Worship

December 24 | 4 & 6 p.m.



feed the hungry

www.fumbelmont.org/missions/activities

OUR MISSION IS TO BE MORE LIKE JESUS FOR OUR COMMUNITY

*Current Opportunities:

- Cook a meal for Catherine's House
- Help cook a meal for Room in the Inn
- Sign up to help with Soup for the Soul
- Volunteer with Feeding the Children
- Donate food for the BCO

A Light to the Nations

Experiencing and Sharing the Light of Christ

Begins January 5



OUR STAFF

Carole Bertino | Administrative Assistant | carole@fumcbelmont.org
Doreen Collins | Director of Adult Discipleship | doreen@fumcbelmont.org
Heather Gaskins | Director of the Child Development Center | heather@fumcbelmont.org
Margie Ligon | Director of Missions | margie@fumcbelmont.org
Jennifer Martin | Director of Children's Ministry | jennifer@fumcbelmont.org
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George Ragsdale | Senior Pastor | george@fumcbelmont.org
Ellen Robison | Minister of Worship and the Arts | ellen@fumcbelmont.org
Mark Sutton | Business Administrator | mark@fumcbelmont.org