



North Decatur Presbyterian Church is called by God to be a community of faith and worship, dedicated to Christian education and nurture so that we may go into the world to serve, work for peace and justice and share God's love with all people.

611 Medlock Road, Decatur, GA 30033  
www.ndpc.org

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## SERVICE FOR THE LORD'S DAY

December 10, 2023

11:00 AM

\* We rise in body or spirit

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### PREPARATION & ADORATION

As we gather for worship, we do so as a whole community in song. Music brings us together—makes us “one body”—breathing and moving and vibrating together. Feel free to stand up or sit down, listen with your eyes closed or sing at the top of your lungs.

GATHERING MUSIC

*O Little Town of Bethlehem*  
*O Lord, How Shall I Meet You*

arr. Larry Shackley  
arr. Michael Costello

RECEIVING THE LIGHT

\*ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING LITANY

-Lee and Mike Nichols, liturgists

Knock, knock!

**Who's there?**

Luke!

**Luke who?**

Luke, the writer of the third gospel. I want to tell you the Good News of Jesus Christ. When I tell it, I'm can't help but break into song!

**Christmas is all about the music!**

I know—that was *my idea*. In my story, Mary's soul magnifies the Lord and her spirit rejoices as the powerful are pulled off their thrones and the lowly are lifted up. Zechariah sings of God's tender mercy as it causes the dawn to break upon us, shining on those who sit in darkness, guiding our feet in the way of peace. Angels sing “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom God favors.” Old Simeon in the Temple will sing, after meeting the infant Jesus, “God, my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared for all people.”

**You can't have Christmas without singing!**

Yes, you're getting it!

Women step to the front; kings' days are numbered; farm workers are the first to receive God's news. In the birth of Jesus, the world is turned upside down!

**Isn't that a song from the musical *Hamilton*?**

No! It's the Christmas story according to Luke!

\* OPENING SONG

*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

Glory to God #88

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

### RECONCILIATION

## MEDITATION

A little heat caught  
in gleaming rags,  
in shrouds of veil,  
torn and sun-shot swaddlings:  
over the Methodist roof,  
two clouds propose a Zion  
of their own, blazing  
(colors of tarnish on copper)  
against the steely close  
of a coastal afternoon, December,  
while under the steeple  
the Choral Society  
prepares to perform  
*Messiah*, pouring, in their best  
blacks and whites, onto the raked stage.  
Not steep, really,  
but from here,  
the first pew, they're a looming  
cloudbank of familiar angels:  
that neighbor who  
fights operatically  
with her girlfriend, for one,  
and the friendly bearded clerk  
from the post office  
—tenor trapped  
in the body of a baritone? Altos  
from the A&P, soprano  
from the T-shirt shop:  
today they're all poise,  
costume and purpose  
conveying the right note  
of distance and formality.  
Silence in the hall,  
anticipatory, as if we're all  
about to open a gift we're not sure  
we'll like;  
how could they  
compete with sunset's burnished  
oratorio? Thoughts which vanish,  
when the violins begin.  
Who'd have thought  
they'd be so good? *Every valley*,  
proclaims the solo tenor,  
(a sleek blonde  
I've seen somewhere before  
—the liquor store?) *shall be exalted*,

Tim Merritt, liturgist

and in his handsome mouth the word  
is lifted and opened  
into more syllables  
than we could count, central *ah*  
dilated in a baroque melisma,  
liquefied; the pour  
of voice seems  
to *make* the unplanned landscape  
the text predicts the Lord  
will heighten and tame.  
This music  
demonstrates what it claims:  
glory shall be revealed. If art's  
acceptable evidence,  
mustn't what lies  
behind the world be at least  
as beautiful as the human voice?  
The tenors lack confidence,  
and the soloists,  
half of them anyway, don't  
have the strength to found  
the mighty kingdoms  
these passages propose  
—but the chorus, all together,  
equals my burning clouds,  
and seems itself to burn,  
commingled powers  
deeded to a larger, centering claim.  
These aren't anyone we know;  
choiring dissolves  
familiarity in an up-  
pouring rush which will not  
rest, will not, for a moment,  
be still.  
Aren't we enlarged  
by the scale of what we're able  
to desire? Everything,  
the choir insists,  
might flame;  
inside these wrappings  
burns another, brighter life,  
quicken, now,  
by song: hear how  
it cascades, in overlapping,  
lapidary waves of praise? Still time.  
Still time to change.

- Mark Doty, "Messiah (Christmas Portions),"  
from *Sweet Machine: Poems*. Copyright © 1998

## SILENCE

*"Inside these wrappings burns another, brighter life, quickened, now, by song." Is this other, brighter life inside you? What is it doing? What is changing within you?*

\*ASSURANCE OF GRACE

In this place and among your people  
gathered  
**O Come, O Come Emmanuel**  
Into this broken world we call planet  
earth  
**O Come, O Come Emmanuel**  
Into the busy place that we call home  
**O Come, O Come Emmanuel**  
Into this fragile group of your people  
**O Come, O Come Emmanuel**

Into cold hearts and dulled minds  
**O Come, O Come Emmanuel**  
Where there is no peace  
**O Come, O Come Emmanuel**  
Where people shout in the wilderness  
**O Come, O Come Emmanuel**  
Where people walk in darkness  
**O Come, O Come Emmanuel**  
**O Come Lord Jesus and help us find  
room for you. Amen.**

\*GRATEFUL RESPONSE

*While We Are Waiting, Come*

Glory to God #92

\*PASSING THE PEACE

*Share a sign of peace by learning "Peace be with you" in American Sign Language.  
Children are invited to come forward and find a rug or pillow and sit by the baptismal font.*

**PROCLAMATION**

WORD IN WORSHIP FOR CHILDREN

*Children (Pre-K – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade) are invited to go to Worship & Wonder in the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Education Hall.  
Parents/guardians can meet kids there right after worship.*

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE

Luke 1 & 2

SERMON

*Christmas According to Luke*

David Lewicki

**DEDICATION**

ANTHEM

*Let All Mortal Flesh*  
NDPC Community Choir

Gustav Holst

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Didier Monga

**Our [Divine Parent] in heaven,  
holy is your name,  
your kin-dom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For yours is the kin-dom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

INVITATION TO DISCIPLESHIP AND CALL FOR OFFERING

*All gifts made to Change for Change in the month of December will support the Pastors' Discretionary Fund, which supports church and community members with immediate financial needs. Text 'NDPC C4C' \$20 (or any amount) to 73526 (or leave an offering in the plate on your way out today).*

\* CLOSING SONG                      *Who Would Think that What Was Needed*                      Glory to God #138

\* CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE    *Gloria*    arr. Jason Payne  
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### NOTES ON WORSHIP TODAY:

**Image of the Day:** *Scott Erickson (American, 1977–), With Us, Face to Face, 2016. Digital art*  
**Today's flowers** are given by the Worship Committee.

**Music & Lyrics** are printed/streamed under ONE LICENSE #A-719269 and CCLI #21115205 & 21115212; CCS PERFORMmusic & WORSHIPcast License #14957

**Livestream and video** are produced by NDPC volunteers. If you would like to help with our weekly audio and video production, come up to the balcony and introduce yourself to the team.

### WELCOME, VISITORS!

We're happy that you've joined us! Please introduce yourself to those around you as you are comfortable. You may share your email address with us by using the QR code on this bulletin—we will send you our weekly e-newsletter. You can learn more about NDPC's ministries and social justice work at **www.ndpc.org**. We come from different backgrounds, traditions, and cultures to worship. Please use language and pronouns for God and for yourself that are authentic to you. After worship, the pastors would love to meet you.



**Welcome, Visitors!**

### FOR YOUR INFORMATION:

**Children are always welcome in worship at NDPC.** There are a variety of quiet activities for children in the Children's Corner in the narthex that kids can take to their seats during worship. We offer nursery care for babies on Sundays from 9:45 – 11:15AM.

**Magnifying glasses and large print hymnals** are available in the lobby. **Hearing assist devices** are also available. Ask an usher and they will gladly help.

**If you would like to** donate flowers, volunteer to serve as an usher or liturgist, or share comments about worship, email [worship@ndpc.org](mailto:worship@ndpc.org).

**Videos of worship services** are available at [ndpc.org](http://ndpc.org). Subscribe to our **sermon podcast** through any major podcasting service.

**CONTACT NDPC:** Office Phone: 404-636-1429; Office Email: [office@ndpc.org](mailto:office@ndpc.org)

**Revs. David Lewicki, Mary Anona Stoops, and Erin Reed Cooper** are available to meet to support your spiritual, mental, and physical health. Pastoral care is confidential and can be held in-person or virtually. Email [david@ndpc.org](mailto:david@ndpc.org), [maryanona@ndpc.org](mailto:maryanona@ndpc.org), and [erin@ndpc.org](mailto:erin@ndpc.org).

### NDPC STAFF

Rev. David Lewicki, *Pastor*  
Rev. Mary Anona Stoops, *Pastor*  
Rev. Dr. Erin Reed Cooper, *Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries*  
Huu Mai, *Music Director*  
Mahsheed Khawary, *Office Administrator*  
Javier Sanchez, *Custodian*  
Victoria Robinson, *Ministry Fellow*  
Emily Halbert, *Graduate Music Assistant*  
Didier Monga wa Shakapanga, *Ministry Fellow*