



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

SERVICE FOR THE LORD'S DAY

December 17, 2023

11:00 AM

** We rise in body or spirit*

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

arr. Larry Shackley

RECEIVING THE LIGHT

*ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING LITANY

-Lynne, Ken, Jenna, and Sam Repasky, liturgists

Knock, knock!

Who's there?

Mark!

Mark who?

Cut the small talk. There's no time for pleasantries. I've come to tell you the most important, most urgent story you will ever hear. I'll get to the point: Jesus Christ is the Good News of God! Prepare the way of the Lord!

Prepare the way? Like, hang up garlands and decorate the tree?

Ugh! You don't get it. Jesus is the Messiah. In order to understand this, you must lose things that you think are important. Following Jesus is heavy: like a cross. But it's life!

This doesn't sound easy. How do we begin?

Someone will show you the way. A voice cries out in the wilderness. A prophet yells at you: “Turn around and be washed clean!”

What does that even mean?

Like all the disciples, you don't get it. Just hear this: prepare the way of the Lord!

* OPENING SONG

Come and Behold Him
NDPC Community and Children's Choirs
Derrick Ng, guest conductor

Nathan Howe

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

RECONCILIATION

MEDITATION

Carol Tveit, liturgist

Your Luck is About to Change

(A fortune cookie)

Ominous inscrutable Chinese news
to get just before Christmas,
considering my reasonable health,
marriage spicy as moo-goo-gai-pan,
career running like a not-too-old Chevrolet.
Not bad, considering what can go wrong:
the bony finger of Uncle Sam
might point out my husband,
my own national guard,
and set him in Afghanistan;
my boss could take a personal interest;
the pain in my left knee could spread to my right.
Still, as the old year tips into the new,
I insist on the infant hope, gooing and kicking
his legs in the air. I won't give in
to the dark, the sub-zero weather, the fog,
or even the neighbors' Nativity.
Their four-year-old has arranged
his whole legion of dinosaurs
so they, too, worship the child,
joining the cow and sheep. Or else,
ultimate mortals, they've come to eat
ox and camel, Mary and Joseph,
then savor the newborn babe.

- Susan Elizabeth Howe, "Your Luck is About to Change"
from *Poetry Magazine*

SILENCE

What is making this season of life hard—or good, or good enough—for you? What could it mean to you to “insist on the infant hope?”

*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

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE & SERMON

Christmas According to Mark
An original story told by NDPC Children
Written by Rev. Dr. Erin Reed Cooper

DEDICATION

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Rev. Mary Anona Stoops

**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

Prepare the Way, O Zion

Glory to God #106

* CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers

Michael D. Costello

NOTES ON WORSHIP TODAY:

Image of the Day: Painted staircase by Xomatok (b. 1985), Lima, Peru, 2021. Photo by Jeremy Flores.
Today's flowers are given *by the Worship Committee*.

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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.

Videos of worship services are available at ndpc.org. Subscribe to our **sermon podcast** through any major podcasting service.

CONTACT NDPC: Office Phone: 404-636-1429; Office Email: 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, maryanona@ndpc.org, and 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*