



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 31st, 2023

Epiphany

11:00 AM

** We stand in body or spirit*

GATHERING SONGS

Love Has Come
Jesus, the Light of the World

Glory to God #110
Glory to God #127

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Visitors are invited to leave your name and contact information by signing the Welcome Pad or by using the QR code on back of the bulletin.

*CALL TO WORSHIP: FIRST EPIPHANY

Cyndi Smith, reader
by Thom Shuman

We have heard
of your grace,
Shaper of stars:
from those set free
from injustice;
from our children
who whisper of your joy;
from greeters
of dawn's fresh start;
from late risers
who have listened long into the night
to the stories of those who needed to be heard.
We have heard
of your Light,
Bright Star of the morning:
which can illumine
the shadows of our lives;
which can show
the path to God's heart;

which can point the way
to where we become
servants of the gospel.
We have heard
of your promised peace,
Wisdom's Radiance:
that peace
which can end war,
as well as heal our hearts;
that peace
which can conquer our fears,
and flood us with faith;
that peace which can enter our lives
and overwhelm us with hope.
We have heard of you,
God in Community, Holy in One,
and will proclaim your glory to all,
To all with eyes to see
And ears to hear.

*SONG

Joy to the World

Glory to God #134

SECOND EPIPHANY

Tim Merritt, reader

After Jamaal May
For New Orleans
There is a lake here.
A lake the size of
outstretched arms. And no,

not the type of arms raised
in surrender. I mean the sort
of arms beckoning to be held.
To wrap themselves around another
and to never let go. And no, the lake

is not a place where people are
drowning. And no, this water is not
that which comes from a storm
or that which turns a city
into a tessellation of broken
windows and spray paint.
There are children swimming here,
splashing one another while

the droplets ricochet between them.
The droplets do not hurt,
they simply roll down the side
of the boy's cheek. No, the boy is not
using the water to hide his tears.
He is laughing. Eyes cast out across
the water, in awe of how vast it is.

"There Is a Lake Here," by Clint Smith, *Split this Rock*, December 2016.

Image: Lake Ponchartrain, New Orleans; Photo: Mario Tama/Getty Images.

MUSICAL REFLECTION

THIRD EPIPHANY

Jan Cribbs, reader

We burrow.
We hunch.
We beg and beg.

The thesis is still a river.

At the top of the mountain
is a murderous light, so strong

it's like staring into an original
joy, foundational,

that brief kinship of hold
and hand, the space between

teeth right before they break
into an expansion, a heat.

We hurry.
We hanker.
We beg and beg.

When should we mourn?

We think time is always time.
And place is always place.

Bottlebrush trees attract
the nectar lovers, and we
capture, capture, capture.

The thesis is still the wind.

The thesis has never been exile.
We have never been exiled.
We have been in the sun,

strong and between sleep,
no hot gates, no house decayed,

just the bottlebrush alive
on all sides with want.

"Where the Circles Overlap," by Ada Limón, *The Hurting Kind* (Milkweed Editions, 2022)

Image: *Bottlebrush and a bee*, by Ashok Boghani, photo; flickr (Creative Commons).

MUSICAL REFLECTION

FOURTH EPIPHANY

Beth Waltemath, reader

What if you knew you'd be the last
to touch someone?
If you were taking tickets, for example,
at the theater, tearing them,
giving back the ragged stubs,
you might take care to touch that palm,
brush your fingertips
along the life line's crease.
When a man pulls his wheeled suitcase
too slowly through the airport, when
the car in front of me doesn't signal,
when the clerk at the pharmacy
won't say *Thank you*, I don't remember
they're going to die.

A friend told me she'd been with her aunt.
They'd just had lunch and the waiter,
a young gay man with plum black eyes,
joked as he served the coffee, kissed
her aunt's powdered cheek when they left.
Then they walked half a block and her aunt
dropped dead on the sidewalk.
How close does the dragon's spume
have to come? How wide does the crack
in heaven have to split?
What would people look like
if we could see them as they are,
soaked in honey, stung and swollen,
reckless, pinned against time?

"If You Knew," by Ellen Bass, *The Human Line* (Copper Canyon Press, 2007).

Image: *Touch*, by Harsha KR; photo: flickr (Creative Commons)

MUSICAL REFLECTION

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Rev. David Lewicki

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

*Please make a generous gift today. All gifts made to Change for Change in the month of December will support the Pastors' Discretionary Fund to provide for emergency needs within our congregation and among our neighbors. Text **'NDPC C4C \$20 (or any amount)' to 73256** to give to give to Change for Change. You may also leave a cash offering in the plates held by ushers as you leave tonight.*

*To make a **pledge or gift to NDPC for 2024**, go to the "Give" page on ndpc.org.*

FIFTH EPIPHANY

Katie Archibald Woodward, reader

If you could see the journey whole you might
never undertake it; might never dare the first
step that propels you
from the place you have known toward the
place you know not.
Call it one of the mercies of the road: that we
see it only by stages
as it opens before us,
as it comes into our keeping
step by single step.
There is nothing for it but to go and by our
going take the vows the pilgrim takes:
to be faithful to the next step;
to rely on more than the map;
to heed the signposts of intuition and dream; to
follow the star that only you will recognize; to
keep an open eye for the wonders that attend

the path;
to press on beyond distractions
beyond fatigue
beyond what would tempt you from the way.
There are vows that only you will know;
the secret promises for your particular path
and the new ones you will need to make when
the road is revealed by turns
you could not have foreseen.
Keep them, break them, make them again:
each promise becomes part of the path; each
choice creates the road
that will take you to the place
where at last you will kneel to offer the gift
most needed— the gift that only you can give—
before turning to go home by another way.

Jan Richardson

Image: *Follow the yellow-flowered road* (Legacy Park, Decatur, GA); Photo: Thomas Cizauskas, flickr (Creative Commons)

* CLOSING SONG

Go Tell it on the Mountain

Glory to God #136

* CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

And did you get what
you wanted from this life, even so?
I did.
And what did you want?
To call myself beloved, to feel myself
beloved on the earth.

"Late Fragment," by Raymond Carver, *A New Path to the Waterfall* (Atlantic Monthly Press, 1989).

POSTLUDE

God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen

arr. Bill Wolaver

NOTES ON WORSHIP TODAY:

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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. The nursery, located off the hallway just outside the sanctuary door, is open this morning during worship for kids 0-3. Kids can move around a bit in the narthex, where you can still listen to worship with your child.

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, *Ministry Fellow*