



NORTH
DECATUR
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

We welcome all.

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

CHRISTMAS EVE

December 24, 2024

7:00 PM

*An * means we rise together in body or spirit; **bold text** words are spoken in unison.*

PREPARATION & ADORATION

Through the four Sundays of Advent, we have built a manger. This container, intended to feed animals and made from found objects, becomes a container for precious things: the dreams of ancient prophets, the longing of the human heart, “the hopes and fears of all the years,” and on this night, God.

CHIMES

SILENCE

We enter God's presence in silence.

OPENING SONG

The Work of Christmas

Dan Forrest

NDPC Community Choir
Poem by Howard Thurman

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among others,
To make music in the heart.

* CALL TO WORSHIP

Stand as the Christ candle enters.

Sylvia Broome

The Word made flesh is here!

The Word is knocking;

The Word awaits;

The Word comes to live with us.

We welcome you, Jesus:

the Way,

the Word,

the Light,

the Life,

the Love of God is here!

* OPENING SONG

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Glory to God #88

WELCOME

Rev. Mary Anona Stoops

FIRST READING

- Catherine deVinck, *Poems of the Hidden Way* (1991), Carter Broome

Listen!

Something strains to be born
to shake itself free:
something brand new trembles
at the far edge of our minds:
the shape of a world to come
conceived in our present labor and pain.

Image: Borys Fiodorowicz, 3,1415926535879323, 2020. God has fingerprints! [IG: @borysfiodorowicz]

SONG

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

Glory to God #129

SECOND READING

Isaiah 9:2-7, Matt Eby

Image: Judith Tutin (Irish, 1979–), Breaking, 2011. Diptych, St. Aidan's Cathedral, Enniscorthy, County Wexford, Ireland.

SONG

Gloria

NPC Community Choir
Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Antonio Vivaldi

THIRD READING

-Madeleine L'Engle, "A Sky Full of Children" (1997), Barbara Gifford

Was there a moment, known only to God, when all the stars held their breath, when the galaxies paused in their dance for a fraction of a second, and the Word, who had called it all into being, went with all that love into the womb of a young girl, and the universe started to breathe again, and the ancient harmonies resumed their song, and the angels clapped their hands for joy?

Power. Greater power than you can imagine, abandoned, as the Word knew the powerlessness of the unborn child, still unformed, taking up almost no space in the great ocean of amniotic fluid, unseeing, unhearing, unknowing. Slowly growing, as any human embryo grows, arms and legs and a head, eyes, mouth, nose, slowly swimming into life until the ocean in the womb is no longer large enough, and it is time for birth.

Image: Maryna Solomennikova, Kyivan Madonna, 2022, digital painting

* SONG

Joy to the World

Glory to God #134

FOURTH READING

Luke 2:1-20, Rev. Mary Anona Stoops

Image: Crèche, December 2023, Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church, Bethlehem. Photo: Munther Isaac.

SONG

O Holy Night

Marielle Mai, Soprano

Adolphe Adam

O holy night! the stars are brightly shining;
It is the night of the dear Savior's birth.
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope -- the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!
Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born!
O night, O holy night, O night divine!

FIFTH READING -Thomas Merton, from *Raids on the Unspeakable* (1966), James Waltemath Lewicki

We live in the time of no room, which is the time of the end. The time when everyone is obsessed with lack of time, lack of space, with saving time, conquering space, projecting onto space and time the anguish produced within them by the technological furies of size, volume, quantity, speed, number, price, power, and acceleration. The primordial blessing, "increase and multiply," has suddenly become a hemorrhage of terror. We are numbered in billions, and massed together, marshalled, numbered, marched here and there, taxed, drilled, armed, worked to the point of insensibility, dazed by information, drugged by entertainment, surfeited with everything, nauseated with the human race and with ourselves, nauseated with life.

As the end approaches, there is no room for nature. The cities crowd it off the face of the earth. As the end approaches, there is no room for quiet. There is no room for solitude. There is no room for thought. There is no room for attention, for the awareness of our state. In the time of the ultimate end, there is no room left for us.

Into this world, this demented inn, in which there is absolutely no room for him at all, Christ has come uninvited. But because he cannot be at home in it—because he is out of place in it, and yet must be in it—his place is with those others who do not belong, who are rejected because they are regarded as weak; and with those who are discredited, who are denied the status of persons, and are tortured, exterminated. With those for whom there is no room, Christ is present in this world. Christ is mysteriously present in those for whom there seems to be nothing but the world at its worst.

Image: William Kurelek (Canadian, 1927–1977), Stand-In for the Christmas Stable, Alberta, 1975. Mixed media on masonite, 24 × 24 in. Collection of Howard F. Ahmanson Jr. and Roberta Green Ahmanson.

SONG

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Glory to God #121

OUR PRAYERS: THE HOPES AND FEARS OF ALL THE YEARS

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.

INVITATION TO SHARE THE LIGHT

John 1:1-5

At the invitation of the pastor, the person in each row who is seated closest to the center aisle may come forward to light your candle from the Christ candle in the manger. As you come forward, form a single line in the middle of the aisle; return to share the light of Christ with those in your pew.

* CANDLELIGHT CAROL

Silent Night, Holy Night

Glory to God #122

* BENEDICTION

* CLOSING SONG

O Come, All Ye Faithful

Glory to God #133

At the conclusion of the song, please extinguish your candle and bring it to a collection basket near the door as you leave. Merry Christmas!

POSTLUDE

NOTES ON WORSHIP TODAY:

OUR OFFERING



*Tonight, we invite you to make gifts to the **PCUSA Christmas Joy Offering**, which provides emergency financial support to clergy and their families and supports Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.*



You may also make a gift to NDPC by using this QR Code. Scan the code, enter the amount of your gift, and in the dropdown menu called "Fund," find "Non Pledge" Thank you for supporting NDPC!

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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! It takes courage to show up at a new church. Please introduce yourself to those around you as you are comfortable. If you share your email address in the red Welcome Pads, we will send you the weekly NDPC e-newsletter. You can learn more about NDPC's programs at www.ndpc.org. We come from many different backgrounds, traditions, and cultures to worship. Feel free to use language and pronouns for God and for yourself that are authentic to you. After worship, the pastors would love to meet you in person.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION:

Children are welcome in worship at NDPC. Kids are free to move around in the narthex, where you can listen to worship with your child, and there are child-friendly quiet activities in the Children's Corner that can be taken back to your seat. The presence of children in worship is a gift, never a disruption.

Would a large print hymnal, magnifying glass, or hearing assist device help you worship? Ask an usher and they will gladly assist you. Let us know how we can make worship accessible for you.

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

Revs. David Lewicki, Mary Anona Stoops, and Erin Reed Cooper are available to meet for pastoral care. Pastoral care is confidential and can be held in-person or virtually. Email david@ndpc.org, maryanona@ndpc.org, or 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*

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Jerel Jefferson, *Music Fellow*

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