



*Christmas Eve*  
**CANDLELIGHT  
SERVICE**  
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24 AT 5:00 PM  
First Presbyterian Church  
125 South Jackson Street, Americus, GA  
[www.americuspresbyterian.org](http://www.americuspresbyterian.org)



## First Presbyterian Church

Americus, Georgia

A community of faith responding to God's call.  
Loving, learning and leading people to Jesus Christ.

**Third Sunday In Advent**



*God has called the prophet Isaiah in chapter 61 to bring good news to the people who have returned from exile. For those that have mourned, they are now celebrating. Instead of feeling defeated, they will sing out praise. In the midst of the ruined buildings of the city, the people are to be called Oaks of Righteousness. The people will rebuild, repair, and restore what was destroyed in ancient times. God loves justice and will make a covenant with the people that will never end. God is doing something new, like a garden springing up, and how the earth provides in spring. All nations will see what God has done for the people of Israel and will turn to God in righteousness and praise.*

**First Presbyterian Church of Americus, GA**

Sunday, December 17, 2023 ~ 11:00 a.m.

**Third Sunday In Advent**



\*All Are Invited to Stand in Body or in Spirit.  
The congregation is invited to respond at the **bold** print.

**PRELUDE**.....Pianist Candice Godby

**WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS**.....Pastor Sommer Bower

**\*HYMN (#133)**.....Guitarist Jon Smith and Soloist Dianna Bower

*"O Come, All Ye Faithful"*

Dianna Bower will sing verse 1 and the Congregation is invited to join and sing  
verse 2 and 3 together.



*O Come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant, O Come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!  
Come, and behold Him, Born the King of Angels!*

*O Come, Let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, O Come, let us adore Him,  
Christ, the Lord!*

***Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, Born this happy morning,  
Jesus, to Thee be all glory given;***

***Word of the Father, Now in flesh appearing!***

***O Come, Let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, O Come, let us adore  
Him, Christ, the Lord!***

***Sing, choirs of angels, Sing in exultation! Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!***

***Glory to God, all Glory in the highest!***

***O Come, Let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, O Come, let us adore  
Him, Christ, the Lord!***

**SESSION (Ruling Elders):**

**Class of 2024**

Tom Collins

Carrie Hawkins

Sharon McFarland (clerk)

**Class of 2025**

Ronnie Greer

Terry McDonald

Richard Pollette

**Class of 2026**

Mary Catron

Jim Griffith

David Minich

**2023 Corporation Officers elected on Feb.12, 2023**

President: Tom Collins - VP: Carrie Hawkins

Secretary: Sharon McFarland - Chief Financial Officer: Bill Krenson

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**CHURCH EVENT CALENDAR**

**DECEMBER ELDER ~ Terry McDonald**

**JANUARY ELDER ~ Ronnie Greer**

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**SUNDAY SCHOOL** ~ Join Elder Richard Pollette for Sunday School every week at 9:45am  
in the Fellowship Hall.

**FPC OFFICE HOURS** ~ The church office is open Monday - Thursday 9:00am-3:00pm.

**GARDEN** ~ Kale is ready for harvest. Thank You Fred Richmond!

**Friday, DECEMBER 15** ~ Pastor Sommer summoned for Jury Duty.

**CHRISTMAS EVE ~ SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24** ~ Worship at 11:00am and Candlelight Service  
at 5:00pm. We have beautiful worship services planned on December 24th, both filled with  
music and light and Christmas joy. The Handbell Choir will play in our morning 11:00 am  
worship service. Our 5:00 pm service will be our traditional candlelight service with  
scripture and hymns.

**VACATION** ~ Jaimie Minich will be out of the office Dec 27 - Jan 3.

**NEW YEARS EVE, DECEMBER 31** ~ Guest Pianist, Joy Thompson.

**Kathy Newkirk has moved to Columbus, GA to live with family.**

**Her new address is:**

**Kathy Newkirk, 2228 Westminster Way, Columbus, Georgia, 31904**



*First Presbyterian supports the Harvest of Hope Food Pantry each month financially and with food  
donations. **The month of December, we will be collecting 20 oz - Jelly (any flavor).***

*Donations can be brought to Sunday 11am Worship or to the office Mon - Thurs 9am—3pm.  
As we are fed each month by our Lord Jesus through Holy Communion, we do our best to help feed  
others in need.*

## PRAYER LIST

We lift up prayers for those listening Sunday mornings on WISK 98.7, Radio.  
May they be spiritually fed. Please Pray For - Our Nation, Our Church; Our  
Presbytery, Our Pastor, Our Staff, Our Officers, Campus Ministry,  
Our Community and especially:

### MEMBERS AND CHURCH FRIENDS AT HOME &/OR IN RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES

Bob & B.J. Bryan Nancy Miller Gloria Johnson Pat Hill  
Blanche Palmer Kathy Newkirk Anne & Malcolm Perry

### MEMBERS REMEMBERED

Tyler Richmond  
Kevin Richmond

### PRAYER REQUESTS

~Gloria Johnson ~ Prayers for Gloria Johnson who has not been feeling very well.  
~Dick Shelton ~ Flint River Presbytery has requested intentional and perpetual prayer for all  
the churches, affiliates, staff and volunteers in our Presbytery. This week we are lifting up  
FRP Staff Volunteer for Property and Legal Counsel, Dick Shelton. Thankful Prayers for Dick.  
~ Tom Collins ~ We extend our condolences to the family of beloved Tom Collins. Funeral  
Services were on Thursday, December 14 at 4pm at First Presbyterian of Americus. The  
committal will be on Wednesday, December 27 at First Presbyterian Church in Pickens, South  
Carolina. Robinson Funeral Home in Easley, SC is handling the committal arrangements.  
~ Emily Collins ~

171 Westshore Drive, Americus, GA 31719

### MISSIONARIES REMEMBERED IN PRAYER

-Ben & Esther Campbell, Push the Rock Intl.  
- Tim & Lois Hunter, Spoken Worldwide  
- Rev. George Haugen (PC USA Minister), Antioch Partners

### December Birthdays:

December 9 ~ Carrie Hawkins  
December 12 ~ Jim Buffaloe  
December 13 ~ Cara Hawkins  
December 14 ~ Ronnie Greer  
December 14 ~ Katie Minich  
December 23 ~ Russ Childers  
December 23 ~ Pat Hill  
December 23 ~ Sharon Parks

### December Anniversaries:

December 20 ~ Earl and Beth Williams  
December 28 ~ Ray and Donja Tripp

If we have missed a birthday or anniversary, please  
let us know. A sign up sheet is on the narthax table.

\*\*\*Please notify the church office at 924-2162 or  
[office@americuspresbyterian.org](mailto:office@americuspresbyterian.org)  
if you would like to add someone to our prayer list and/or  
request a PrayerGram.

## LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

*O Wisdom, coming forth from the mouth of the Most High,  
pervading and permeating all creation.  
You order all things with strength and gentleness.  
Come now and teach us the way to salvation.*

### **Come, Lord Jesus!**

*O Adonai, Ruler of the house of Israel,  
you appeared in the burning bush to Moses  
and gave him the law on Sinai:  
Come with outstretched arm to save us.*

### **Come, Lord Jesus!**

*O Root of Jesse,  
rising as a sign for all the peoples,  
before you earthly rulers will keep silent,  
and nations give you honor:  
Come quickly to deliver us.*

### **Come, Lord Jesus!**

*O Key of David,  
Scepter over the house of Israel,  
you open and no one can close,  
you close and no one can open:  
Come to set the prisoners free.*

### **Come, Lord Jesus!**

*O Radiant Dawn,  
splendor of eternal light,  
Sun of justice:  
Come, shine on those who live in darkness  
and in the shadow of death.*

### **Come, Lord Jesus!**

*After the 3rd candle is lighted:*

*God of grace, ever faithful to your promises, the earth rejoices in hope of our  
Savior's coming and looks forward with longing to his return at the end of time. Prepare  
our hearts to receive him when he comes, for he is Lord forever and ever. Amen.*





**SPECIAL MUSIC**.....Guitarist Jon Smith and Soloist Rachel Lairsey  
*“Still, Still, Still”*

**SCRIPTURE**

**Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-11**

- 1** The spirit of the Lord God is upon me  
because the Lord has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives  
and release to the prisoners,  
**2** to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor  
and the day of vengeance of our God,  
to comfort all who mourn,  
**3** to provide for those who mourn in Zion—  
to give them a garland instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.  
**4** They shall build up the ancient ruins;  
they shall raise up the former devastations;  
they shall repair the ruined cities,  
the devastations of many generations.
- 8** For I, the Lord, love justice,  
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;  
I will faithfully give them their recompense,  
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.  
**9** Their descendants shall be known among the nations  
and their offspring among the peoples;  
all who see them shall acknowledge  
that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.

NRSV updated edition  
***The Good News of Deliverance***



**‘Silent Night’**

*It was Christmas Eve in the Austrian Alps. At the newly constructed Church of Saint Nicholas in Oberndorf, a Tyrol village near Salzburg, Father Joseph Mohr prepared for the midnight service. He was distraught because the church organ was broken, ruining prospects for that evening’s carefully planned music. But Father Joseph was about to learn that our problems are God’s opportunities, that the Lord causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him. It came into Father Joseph’s mind to write a new song, one that could be sung with a guitar. Hastily, he wrote the words, “Silent Night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright...” Taking the text to his organist, Franz Gruber, he explained the situation and asked Franz to compose a simple tune. That night, December 24, 1818, “Silent Night” was sung for the first time as a duet accompanied by a guitar at the aptly named Church of Saint Nicholas in Oberndorf. Were it not for a broken organ, there would never have been a “Silent Night.”*

**‘Still, Still, Still’**

*“Still, still, still” is an Austrian Christmas carol and lullaby. The melody is a folk tune from the district of Salzburg. The tune appeared for the first time in 1865 in a folksong collection of Vinzenz Maria Süß (1802–1868), founder of the Salzburg Museum. The words describe the peace of the infant Jesus and his mother as the baby is sung to sleep. They have changed slightly over the years but the modern Standard German version remains attributed to Georg Götsch (1895–1956). There are also various English translations.*



# HYMN HISTORY

## ‘O Come, All Ye Faithful’

*John Francis Wade, author of this hymn, was hounded out of England in 1745. He was a Roman Catholic layman in Lancashire; but because of persecution arising from the Jacobite rebellion, streams of Catholics fled to France and Portugal, where communities of English-speaking Catholics appeared. In France, Wade taught music and became renowned as a copyist of musical scores. His work was exquisite. At age 32 he produced a Christmas carol that began “Ye Faithful, Approach Ye”. Wade’s Christmas Carol became very popular in France. 100 years later, a Roman Catholic Priest named Rev. Frederick Oakeley in England in 1845 learned of the Christmas Carol, but was struggling with the opening verse. He changed it to be “O Come, All Ye Faithful” and the rest is history. Two brave Englishmen, Catholics, lovers of Christmas and lovers of hymns, living a hundred years apart, writing in two different nations, combined their talents to bid us come, joyful and triumphant, and adore Him born the King of angels.*

## ‘O Holy Night’

*"O Holy Night" (original title: Cantique de Noël) is a sacred song for a Christmas performance. Originally based on a French-language poem by poet Placide Cappeau, written in 1843, with the first line "Minuit, Chrétien, c'est l'heure solennelle" (Midnight, Christian, is the solemn hour) that composer Adolphe Adam set to music in 1847. In Roquemaure in France at the end of 1843, the church organ had recently been renovated. To celebrate the event, the parish priest persuaded poet Placide Cappeau, a native of the town, to write a Christmas poem. Soon afterwards, in that same year, Adolphe Adam composed the music. The song was premiered in Roquemaure in 1847 by the opera singer Emily Laurey. Transcendentalist, music critic, minister, and editor of Dwight's Journal of Music, John Dwight, adapted the song into English in 1855. This version became popular in the United States, especially in the North, where the third verse (including "Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother, And in his name all oppression shall cease") resonated with abolitionists. The carol reflects on the birth of Jesus as humanity's redemption.*

**10** I will greatly rejoice in the Lord;  
my whole being shall exult in my God,  
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;  
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,  
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland  
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.  
**11** For as the earth brings forth its shoots  
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,  
so the Lord God will cause  
righteousness and praise  
to spring up before all the nations.

### Hebrews 1:1-3

**1** Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. **2** And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe. **3** The Son radiates God’s own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven.

*This is the Word of God, for the people of God.*

**Thanks be to God.**

**SERMON**.....Pastor Sommer Bower

*“O Radiant Dawn”*

**OFFERTORY**.....Guitarist Jon Smith and Soloist Rachel Lairsey

*“O Holy Night”*

**\*DOXOLOGY (606)** .....Pianist Candice Godby

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Him, all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host.  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.***

**PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

**\*HYMN (#122)**.....Guitarist Jon Smith and Soloist Rachel Lairsey

*“Silent Night, Holy Night”*

Rachel Lairsey will sing verse 1 and the Congregation is invited to join and sing verses 2, 3 and 4 together.



*Silent night! Holy night! All is calm, all is bright  
'round yon virgin mother and child! Holy infant, so tender and mild,  
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.*

***Silent night! Holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight.  
Glories stream from heaven afar, heav'nly hosts sing, "Alleluia!  
Christ the Savior is born! Christ the Savior is born!"***

***Silent night! Holy night! Son of God, love's pure light  
radiant beams from Thy holy face with the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth! Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth!***

***Silent night! Holy night! Wondrous star, lend thy light;  
with the angels let us sing "Alleluia" to our King:  
"Christ the Savior is born! Christ the Savior is born."***

**BENEDICTION**

**POSTLUDE**.....Pianist Candice Godby

***We are absolutely delighted that you've chosen to worship with us today!***

***May Christ's peace be with you until we meet again.***

***You can always join us on our***

***website: [americuspresbyterian.org](http://americuspresbyterian.org) and on***

***facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/fpcamericus/>.***



**Our celebration of Joy and Advent continues in the Fellowship Hall with Cookies and Cocoa for All!! Please Join Us!**



Works Cited

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