

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Stockton, CA**

December 7, 2025 - 11:00 a.m.

Advent Blessings

I WAIT FOR THE LORD, MY
WHOLE BEING WAITS,
AND IN GOD'S WORD
I PUT MY HOPE.
PSALM 130:5



OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

As God's family through Jesus Christ, we seek:

- *to know God through prayer, worship, and Bible study*
- *to be open to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit*
- *to share God's love with each other, our community, and the world*

~GATHERING THE FAMILY OF GOD~

PRELUDE **J.S. Bach: Prelude in C Major, WTC Book I** **DIEGO BUSTAMANTE**
(All are invited to enjoy the Prelude as part of our worship service. We request that voices are kept to a whisper to allow for a meditative atmosphere.)

CHORAL INTROIT

WELCOME

Advent Candle Lighting **Marilyn Franklin and Doug and Cheryl Hunt**

One: Children of God, we come, tired of waiting, burdened by the weight of watching. We surrender to God's holy "not yet," embracing the stillness. We come, and God-with-us is present in our longing. As we gather today, we remember the promised gifts of the Messiah. In the lighting of two candles, we set our gaze upon beacons that sustain us through sleepless nights and restless days. We bear this light together.

All: We call this candle Hope. We call this candle Peace. (as two candles are lit)

One: Eternal Source, amid life's turmoil, we find our way by turning to you. When courage fades and trust feels fragile, your promises remain steady and true. You are the unfailing light on our path, You, O God, are our hope and our peace, the quiet strength in our deepest longing. With the Holy Spirit as our guide, we join the John the Baptist's father, Zechariah, in testifying to your timeless, unending faithfulness in the shadowiest of day:

"Because of the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to shine upon those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:77-79).

Sometimes peace can be difficult to find in our weary world. Yet, you offer us peace, a gift, not as the world gives, but a peace unencumbered by life's demands or the chaos of our souls. We say "yes" to the peace you give, and seek to make peace with our lives.

OPENING HYMN **O Come, O Come, Emmanuel** **#88 vs. 1,6,7**
(All are invited to stand in body or spirit.)

V1. O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.

Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

V6. O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thine advent here; disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight. **Refrain**

V7. O come, desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind; bid envy, strife, and discord cease; fill the whole world with heaven's peace. **Refrain**

CALL TO RECONCILIATION

Craig Holmes

One: Colossians 1:19-20 says that God was pleased to have all of God's fullness dwell in Jesus and through him to reconcile to all things to God. As we meditate on the need for reconciliation we find in ourselves and our world, join me in prayer, using the silence to bring the burdens on your heart.

All: **Jesus, the image of the invisible God, we open our hands and hearts to offer you our prayers for reconciliation. We offer you these prayers asking that you would show us where we need repentance in our hearts, our actions, our words, our church, our world's systems and structures, and everything else that you would redeem in and through us, that we may participate in your reconciliation. We offer now this time of waiting on your voice, listening for your illumination, reassurance, and guidance as our Prince of Peace.**

A MOMENT FOR SILENT REFLECTION

(This single minute of quiet is offered to encourage you to share your personal thoughts with God as well as listen to God through the presence of the Holy Spirit.)

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Craig Holmes

One: Friends, Jesus is sent into our weary world to reconcile all things to God through his sacrificial love for us. Let us take hold of this gift of life!

All: **God is not done with us! By the grace of Jesus Christ we are forgiven and freed from that which separates us from God and each other.**

Passing of the Peace

Craig Holmes

One: The peace of Christ strengthens us to live each day in hope and compassion, knowing that the well of God's love will never run dry. It is this peace that we seek to share in this moment, through our words and heartfelt welcome of each other. May the peace of Christ be with you all!

All: **And also with you**

One: Amen. Let us turn to greet each other with Christ's peace. As we are practicing peace today, I invite you to use the phrase "May Christ's peace surround you this holiday season."

Children's Message and Blessing

Rev. Ashley L. Skrabec

Sunday School is provided for children in preschool through 5th grade. All kids in this age range are invited to come up for the Children's Message and to follow Miss Melanie after the blessing.

Song of Preparation It Came Upon the Midnight Clear #123 vs.1,3,4

(All are invited to stand in body or spirit)

- V1. It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old, from angels bending near the earth, to touch their harps of gold: "Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heaven's all-gracious King": the world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.
- V3. Yet with the woes of sin and strife the world has suffered long; beneath the heavenly hymn have rolled two thousand years of wrong; and we at war on earth hear not the tidings that they bring; O, hush the noise and cease the strife to hear the angels sing!
- V4. And you, beneath life's crushing load, whose forms are bending low, who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow, look now, for glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing: O, rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing.

~Hearing God's Word~

PRAYER FOR UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

Craig Holmes

One: Holy Spirit, thank you for your word. Open our hearts and minds to hear what you are saying to us today.

Reading from the Early Church Ephesians 2:13-22

Craig Holmes

One: The Word of the Lord **All: Thanks be to God**

Reading from the Gospels

Mark 3:1-5

Rev. Ashley L. Skrabec

One: The Word of the Lord **All: Thanks be to God**

Peacemaking Meditation

Communion Song

Come to the Table of Grace

#507 vs. 1,2,4

- V1. Come to the table of grace. Come to the table of grace.
This is God's table; it's not yours or mine. Come to the table of grace.
- V2. Come to the table of peace. Come to the table of peace.
This is God's table, it's not yours or mine. Come to the table of peace.
- V4. Come to the table of hope. Come to the table of hope.
This is God's table, it's not yours or mine. Come to the table of hope.

**Invitation to the Table
Prayer of Thanksgiving
Sharing of the Bread and Cup**

JOYS AND CONCERNS

LORD'S PRAYER

(Please feel free to pray the words below or use the language of your heart.)

Our parent who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

Invitation to the Offering

Doxology

Offertory

Prayer of Dedication

~GOING FORTH TO SERVE GOD~

SENDING HYMN

People, Look East

#105 vs. 1,3-5

(All are invited to stand in body or spirit.)

- V1. People, look east. The time is near of the crowning of the year. Make your house fair as you are able; trim the hearth and set the table.
People, look east and sing today: Love, the guest, is on the way.
- V3. Birds, though you long have ceased to build, guard the nest that must be filled. Even the hour when wings are frozen God for fledging time has chosen.
People, look east and sing today: Love, the bird, is on the way.
- V4. Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim one more light the bowl shall brim, Shining beyond the frosty weather, bright as sun and moon together.
People, look east and sing today: Love, the star, is on the way.
- V5. Angels, announce with shouts of mirth Christ who brings new life to earth. Set every peak and valley humming with the word, the Lord is coming.
People, look east and sing today: Love, the Lord, is on the way.

BENEDICTION

Rev. Ashley L. Skrabec

CHORAL AMEN

POSTLUDE Rodgers and Hammerstein: You'll Never Walk Alone from Carousel

DIEGO BUSTAMANTE

(All are invited to enjoy the Postlude as part of our worship service. If you choose to leave during the Postlude, please do so silently.)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There will be no Zoom Coffee Hour this morning.

Church Meetings

Sunday - Dec. 7, 2025

Today's Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy is from Presbyterian Outlook's *Wait for the Lord: An Advent Candle Liturgy* written by Dr. Montisa Anntoinette Watkins and Rev. Shavon Starling-Louis

Monday - Dec. 8, 2025

4:30pm - Spiritual Growth Meeting (Zoom)
7:00pm - Weekly Prayer Meeting (Zoom)

Tuesday - Dec. 9, 2025

12:30pm - Presby. Women's Bible Study

Wednesday - Dec. 10, 2025

9:30am - Finance, Building & Grounds

Thursday - Dec. 11, 2025

10:00am - Advent Bible Study (Geneva Rm)

Monday - Dec. 15, 2025

9:30am - Session Meeting

December 21-27

Family Promise

Coffee hour and Potluck Schedule

(set up, clean up)

After worship fellowship schedule

December 7 - Carol / Marilyn
December 14 - Jane / Marilyn
December 21 - Cheryl / Marilyn
December 28 - /Marilyn

WORSHIP ASSISTANTS

December 7th Craig Holmes
December 14th Gail Herron
December 21st Eleanor Lawrence
December 28th Carol Dietrich

Love Christmas music? Want to sing in the choir but can't commit weekly? On the Sunday before Christmas we will have a 'pickup' choir which will rehearse at 9:30am to lead the worship service that morning. Sign up or let Diego know if you plan to attend and he will email the music ahead of time for those who'd like to practice.

JOIN US FOR OUR ADVENT STUDY
THURSDAYS 10 AM IN-PERSON
MONDAYS 7 PM ON ZOOM
Books available after worship or for purchase online

JOIN US FOR
Christmas Eve at First Presbyterian
7 pm
31 E Vine St. Stockton
CAROLS, CANDLELIGHT, AND HOPE BORN ANEW
Potluck soup supper following the service

* **December Potluck** *
FAMILY HERITAGE MEAL
All are invited to bring a favorite holiday dish that celebrates your family and heritage
* * * * *
DECEMBER 14TH

Family Promise Adventure: December 21- December 28, 2025
(Times may change)

Day	Welcome Home arrive 6:15 PM	Providing Dinner 6:30	Overnight Support leave at 6:15 AM	Meals planned
Sunday 12/21	Cheryl/Doug		Cheryl/Doug	
Monday 12/22			Tola/Chris	
Tuesday 12/23			Craig/Sylvia	
Wed 12/24		Open Door House of Prayer		
Thurs 12/25				
Friday 12/26				
Sat 12/27	Cheryl/Doug		Cheryl/Doug	
Sunday 12/28	Cheryl/Doug			

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS
I would like to donate \$ ___ towards the purchase of ___ poinsettias. (\$10/each)
Name: _____ Phone: _____
I will pick up my poinsettia(s) after worship on December 24th.
Donations in excess of the cost of the Christmas Poinsettias in our Sanctuary will be used for the beautification of our sister churches in Colombia.
In Memory of: _____
In Honor of: _____
In Appreciation for: _____
Deadline is Monday, December 15th.

It's time to order **Poinsettias!** If you would like to purchase and dedicate a poinsettia to adorn our sanctuary this Christmas, please fill out the form and place in the offering plate. Poinsettias can be taken home following Christmas Eve Service on December 24th.

REQUESTED PRAYERS

The Church Office and members of the church receive several prayer requests each week.

Please pray for:

- Prayers for all affected by the shooting - for grieving family and friends, the ongoing investigation, and for our city.
- Craig stated a concern that after Saturday's shootings in Stockton he was reminded of the Cleveland School shooting in Stockton 36 years ago. He reported that nothing has changed since that horrible incident, and asked for prayers for our community and it's leadership that that something can change and we never have a repeat of this violence here.
- Mara asked for prayers for her apartment building and all of it's residents. The manager has moved and has not been replaced and they are concerned.
- Sylvia asked for prayers for Frances who called to say her son Anthony was in the hospital with severe intestine problems, Prayers for healing for both of them
- Carol shared the joy that the family had gathered on Saturday to celebrate her mother's 102nd birthday and also that of her eldest daughter who is also celebrating her birthday this week. God's blessings on them both.
- Sylvia asks prayers of peace and comfort for the family of Suzanne following her passing.
- Prayers for comfort and strength for Frances McPherson as she navigates health challenges.
- Cynthia A asked for prayers for her sister Susan who is having a heart procedure this week, and also for safe travel for Cynthia as she goes to be with her.
- Pastor Ashley shared the joy of attending the 70th Anniversary Celebration at the Open Door House of Prayer Church a week ago. The church participates in many community projects, including Family Promise as a support congregation to First Presbyterian. The church is an asset to our community and Pastor Ashley was happy to celebrate with them.
- Mara asked for prayers for her son-in-law who chipped a bone in his foot just before the family left their home for a trip to Helsinki, Finland. Prayers for safe travels
- Prayers of protection for Radi's son Saic asked for prayers for everyone in the Philippines as they recover from the tsunami and flooding that has hit their country and for people everywhere dealing with disasters.
- Pastor Ashley asked for prayers of protection and peace for people of Sudan and all over the world where there is violence and injustice.
- Shalise asked for prayers for all those affected by the ICE campaign and to put an end to unjust practice.
- We pray for all those who are on H1B visas and their families as they are shaken by potential changes to their immigration status
- Pastor also asked for prayers for our country and it's leaders, asking for peace and justice for all during this turbulent and difficult time in our country and our world.
- Pastor Ashley requests prayer for all asylum-seekers and immigrants who are living in fear and for all who have been detained or deported without due process.

If you have a prayer request, please contact the Church Office or Pastor Ashley. Joys and concerns are added to the prayer list of the people who have signed up to be members of the WE CARE PRAYER TEAM. If you would like to be a part of the WE CARE PRAYER TEAM, contact Cheryl Hunt or call the Church Office.

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Board of Elders (Session)—Committee Chair

Charlie Briggs -	Spiritual Growth Co-Chair
Carol Dietrich -	Finance, Buildings & Grounds
Cheryl Hunt -	Hospitality Co-Chair
Jane Knoop -	Nominating and Support & Endowment Co-Chair
Gretchen Louden -	Hospitality Co-Chair
Kim Roider -	Spiritual Growth Co-Chair
Janet Sepiol -	Personnel and Support & Endowment Co-Chair
Clerk of Session -	Janet Sepiol
Pastor -	Rev. Ashley Love Skrabec

Ministers—all the members of the church

First Presbyterian Church is committed to loving and serving all people, including those from diverse generations, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, gender identities, sexual orientations, and life experiences. Whatever your story, you are welcomed by Jesus Christ and by this church family.

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