

# *The First Presbyterian Church* *in the City of New York*

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## FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

*Service for the Lord's Day*

November 29, 2020 | 11:00 a.m.

*The Session and members of First Church extend a sincere welcome to all persons regardless of race, nationality, gender, or sexual orientation. This includes an open invitation to membership, the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, marriage, funerals, memorial services, and service as an officer of the church.*

### GATHERING

*The peace candle represents our prayers for peace in a broken world. The congregation is asked to offer prayers of intercession for one another and for those who lead in these times of remote worship.*

PRELUDE      Two Settings of "Sleepers, Wake! A Voice Astounds Us"      Lionel Rogg  
and Flor Peeters

WELCOME

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

HYMN 93      "Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates"      TRURO

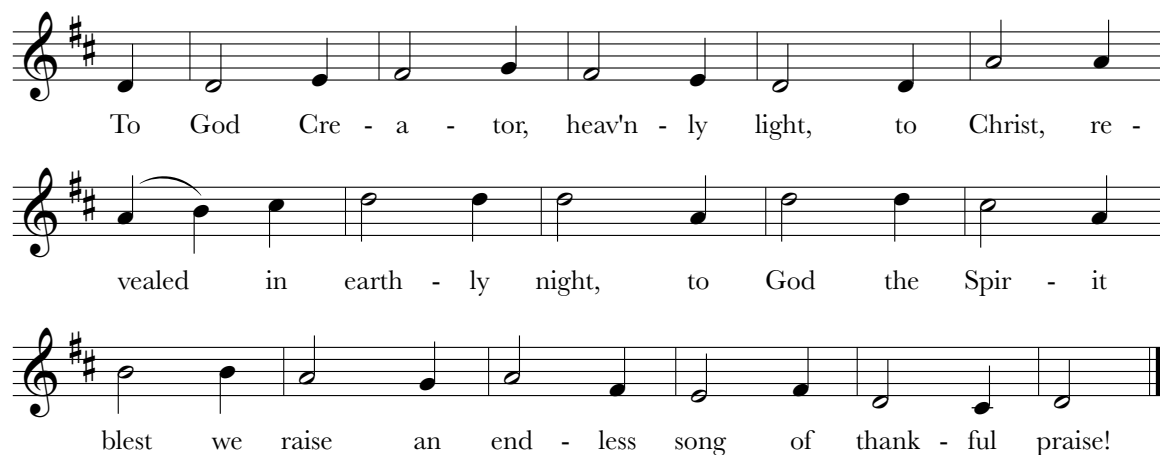
PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**You give us hope Almighty God,  
yet so often we turn from you back into despair.  
You are the hope of the world,  
yet we seek firm footing in our own ways.  
This holy season,  
give us the strength to resist a culture  
of greed and restlessness.  
Help us to find direction and rest in you.  
Turn our eyes away from the gold statues,  
our idols of selfishness and fear.  
Help us to let go of our expectations  
so that we might be ready to welcome  
the the presence of Christ in this world. Amen.**

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

## DOXOLOGY

PUER NOBIS NASCITUR



To God Cre - a - tor, heav'n - ly light, to Christ, re -  
vealed in earth - ly night, to God the Spir - it  
blest we raise an end - less song of thank - ful praise!

## SHARING SIGNS OF PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you.  
**And also with you.**

## CHILDREN'S PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father 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.  
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

## ANTHEM

Ralph Vaughan Williams, arr.

This is the truth sent from above, the truth of God, the God of love; therefore don't turn me from your door, but hearken all, both rich and poor. Thus we were heirs to endless woes, till God the Lord did interpose; and so a promise soon did run: that he would redeem us by his Son. And at that season of the year our blest Redeemer did appear, and here did live, and here did preach, and many thousands he did teach. Thus he in love to us behaved, to show us how we must be saved; and if you want to know the way, be pleased to hear what he did say.  
-English traditional

## HEARING THE WORD

### FIRST LESSON

Isaiah 64:1-9

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,  
so that the mountains would quake at your presence—  
as when fire kindles brushwood  
and the fire causes water to boil—  
to make your name known to your adversaries,  
so that the nations might tremble at your presence!  
When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect,  
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.  
From ages past no one has heard,  
no ear has perceived,

no eye has seen any God besides you,  
who works for those who wait for him.  
You meet those who gladly do right,  
those who remember you in your ways.  
But you were angry, and we sinned;  
because you hid yourself we transgressed.  
We have all become like one who is unclean,  
and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.  
We all fade like a leaf,  
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.  
There is no one who calls on your name,  
or attempts to take hold of you;  
for you have hidden your face from us,  
and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.  
Yet, O Lord, you are our Father;  
we are the clay, and you are our potter;  
we are all the work of your hand.  
Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord,  
and do not remember iniquity forever.  
Now consider, we are all your people.

## SECOND LESSON

Romans 4:13-22

For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations")—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become "the father of many nations," according to what was said, "So numerous shall your descendants be."

He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. Therefore his faith "was reckoned to him as righteousness."

SERMON

"What the World Needs Now: HOPE"

Rev. Greg Stovell

## RESPONDING TO THE WORD

HYMN 94

"Now the Heavens Start to Whisper"

JEFFERSON

## AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Nicene Creed

**We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.**

**And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.**

**And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And we believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. And we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

### OFFERTORY

Boris Ord

Adam lay ybounden, bounden in a bond; four thousand winter thought he not too long. And all was for an apple, an apple that he took, as clerkes finden written in their book. Ne had the apple taken been, the apple taken been, ne had never our lady abeen hevené queen. Blessed be the time that apple taken was: therfore we moun singen, *Deo Gratias*.  
-c. 15th century anon.

## PRAYER OF DEDICATION

### SENDING

### HYMN 348

“Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending”

HELMSLEY

### BENEDICTION

### POSTLUDE

“Rhapsody on ‘Lo, He Comes With Clouds Descending’” William Lloyd Webber

*The congregation is invited to continue worshiping through the postlude, which is offered as a thanksgiving to God.*

**MUSIC NOTES** Like the sermon hymn last Sunday, “Now Thank We All Our God,” the hymn “Sleepers, Wake! A Voice Astounds Us” was written during a season of great tribulation. It was composed around 1598-99 by Lutheran pastor Philip Nicolai (1556–1608) during a devastating plague that claimed thousands. In the preface to writings from the time, Nicolai wrote: “to leave behind me (if God should call me from this world) as the token of peaceful, joyful, Christian departure, or (if God should spare me in health) to comfort other sufferers whom he should also visit with the pestilence...” We hear two organ settings of this joyful hymn which anticipates Christ’s coming: an exuberant fanfare by Swiss composer Lionel Rogg (b. 1936), and a reflective prelude by Belgian composer Flor Peeters (1903-1986) that recalls Bach’s beloved organ prelude on the same hymn. • The haunting “Truth Sent from Above” is a carol that Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) documented while collecting folk songs in Herefordshire, England. Sometimes given the title “Herefordshire Carol,” the carol opens Vaughan Williams’ 1912 “Fantasia on Christmas Carols.” • Boris Ord (1897-1961) was organist of King’s College, Cambridge, known for their annual Service of Nine Lessons and Carols. “Adam Lay Ybounden,” a carol with a text of 15th century origin that recalls events in Genesis 3, is Ord’s only published composition. • The father of two extraordinary musicians – composer Andrew, and cellist Julian – composer and organist William Lloyd Webber (1914-1982) taught at the Royal College of Music, and was director of the London College of Music. He was said to have “had no time for the trappings of verbosity,” and the brief “Rhapsody on ‘Lo, He Comes With Clouds Descending’” is certainly case in point. –Michael Shake

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