

*WELCOME TO*  
**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
*OF BISMARCK, ND*



CHRISTMAS EVE  
*Candlelight*  
SERVICE

**December 24, 2024**

**9:00 p.m. Service**

**Our Mission**

We are a community called to love God through worship and prayer, receiving and serving our neighbors with the compassion of Christ, open to new beginnings and the spiritual growth of children, youth and adults.



### **Worship Participants:**

Rev. Dr. Leanne Simmons, Pastor

Debi Rogers, Chancel Choir dir.

Andrea Nguyen, Keyboards

Josh Stokka, Audio/Visual Specialist

Mark Jensen, Youth Ministry dir.

Alice & Dave Nix ~ Ushers

Alice & Dave Nix, and Pastor Leanne ~ Communion servers

### **ATTENDANCE BOOKS**

You will find an Attendance Pad at the end of each pew. Please fill it out and leave it in pew for the church office to collect. (please include any updated address information)

Thank you to everyone for helping us with collecting attendance and statistics we submit to the Presbytery.

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# Christmas Eve Service

December 24th, 2024 ~ 9:00 p.m.

First Presbyterian Church of Bismarck, ND

**Prelude** “O Holy Night” arr. David Lanz

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Lighting the Advent Candle** Signe Snortland & Kimball Banks

**Call to Worship**

L: From the darkness of Creation, God brought forth Light!

**P: That Light flooded over the waters of creation, sparkling, dancing!**

L: From the fear and alienation, God sent forth a leading Pillar of Light!

**P: That Light directed people who were on the path of freedom.**

L: From the cries of the people, God offered the lights of Hope

**P: Those lights beckoned people to God’s presence.**

L: From the yearning of the spirit, God’s light was born again in a child

**P: That Light shall never be diminished.**

**All: Praise God for the warm light of God’s Incarnate Love.  
AMEN.**

**Hymn of Rejoicing** “Angels, From the Realms of Glory” PH#22

**Prayer of Confession**

**Lord of Light and Hope, All too often we focus on the darkness of the world and forget that you have already sent us undying light and never ceasing help. The babe in the manger brought to us a hope and a light that cannot be extinguished, no matter how it is opposed by the forces of darkness. Forgive us when we so easily get entangled in our own plans and concerns, and forget to pay attention to the true event of the coming of Christ. Help us to relax and listen, instead of rush and shout. May the songs of** →

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**the angels, the surprise of the shepherds, and the joy of the Holy Family become part of our preparations and our lives. Open our ears, our eyes, our hearts and our spirits to again hear the old, old story, spoken by new voices in new ways. Remind us again of your never-changing love for us. Prepare us to serve you by serving others. This night we offer this prayer of our hearts to you, gracious God. AMEN.**


**Assurance of Pardon**

**Christmas Eve Offering and Prayer**

**Pastor:**

For centuries, God's promise of a final, beautiful Kingdom of God had played on the imagination of ancient Hebrews. The prophet Isaiah had written about it, describing a coming time of ultimate justice for all: a time when war would cease and all weapons would be melted down for use as agricultural implements, a time when all predatory behaviors would end, so much so that a child could play next to a lion's den or a snake pit and not be harmed. The courts before which people went for judgment would be fair, not favoring the rich or powerful, but dispensing peace as only God can dispense peace. Scripture describes it as a Kingdom in which there will be no want: vineyards will flourish, milk and honey will flow, and everyone would have enough. And all of this peace and justice would be brought in by a descendent of David, who would come to the throne as a Messiah.

The people pictured him in many ways: some as a general leading an army, some as a priest imposing true worship, some as a King from a rich, royal line. But nobody pictured anyone like Jesus. What Isaiah chapter 9 had foretold, they could never imagine, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. 

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**Reading One: Mary**

Signe Snortland

*Mary, like most believers, never thought of the Messiah being born under such humble circumstances. She is amazed to learn what God is going, and despite the fact that such a birth is outside of her experience, she says, “yes.”*

*Luke 1:26-38*

In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee,<sup>27</sup> to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary.<sup>28</sup> The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”<sup>29</sup> Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.<sup>30</sup> But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God.<sup>31</sup> You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.<sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,<sup>33</sup> and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”<sup>34</sup> “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”<sup>35</sup> The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.<sup>36</sup> Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month.<sup>37</sup> For no word from God will ever fail.”<sup>38</sup> “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.

**Hymn**

“The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came”

PH#16

**Reading Two: Mary’s song**

*Mary imagines the world turn upside down  
by the coming of the Messiah, whose reign, she believes  
will bring the end of injustice and poverty.*

*Luke 1:46-55*

<sup>46</sup> And Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord



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- 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
48 for he has been mindful  
of the humble state of his servant.  
From now on all generations will call me blessed,  
49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me—  
holy is his name.<sup>50</sup> His mercy extends to those who fear him,  
from generation to generation.  
51 He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;  
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.  
52 He has brought down rulers from their thrones  
but has lifted up the humble.  
53 He has filled the hungry with good things  
but has sent the rich away empty.  
54 He has helped his servant Israel,  
remembering to be merciful  
55 to Abraham and his descendants forever,  
just as he promised our ancestors.”

**Special Music** “Magnificat (My Soul Magnifies the Lord)”  
Canticle of Mary, Lori True - Soloist: Debi Rogers

**Reading Three:** Joseph

*Joseph imagines the scandal that will be brought upon him  
by the birth of Christ and considers distancing  
himself from the holy drama.*

*Matthew 1:18-25*

18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. 19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife,



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because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

<sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

<sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: <sup>23</sup> “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

<sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

<sup>25</sup> But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

**Special Music**

“A Bundle of Straw”

James Ward,

arr. Heather Sorenson, soloist: Erin Horn

**Reading Four: Shepherds**

Matthew Skaret

*Shepherds, who never imagined the Christ coming  
in their time and day are startled to hear the message  
of the angels, shocking them out of their complacency.*

*Luke 2:1-20*

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. <sup>2</sup> (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) <sup>3</sup> And everyone went to their own town to register.

<sup>4</sup> So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. <sup>5</sup> He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, <sup>7</sup> and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

<sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord



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shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

<sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

<sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

<sup>16</sup> So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

**Special Music** “The First Noel” arr. Heather Sorenson

**Reading Five: Wise Men** Barb Satran

*Herod imagines that the Christ child will be a warrior-king, raising an army to topple his regime. He decides to strike first.*

*Instead of a throne, Jesus becomes a political refugee.*

*Matthew 2:1-12*

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem <sup>2</sup> and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

<sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all





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Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup> When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup> "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

<sup>6</sup> "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

<sup>9</sup> After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup> On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

**Special Music** "O Little Town of Bethlehem" arr. H. Sorenson

**Reading Six:** The Ministry of Christ is Nothing Like People Imagined  
Shari Orser

*Luke 4:14-21*

<sup>14</sup> Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside.

<sup>15</sup> He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

<sup>16</sup> He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom.

He stood up to read, <sup>17</sup> and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:



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<sup>18</sup> “The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free,  
<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

<sup>20</sup> Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and  
sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened  
on him. <sup>21</sup> He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is  
fulfilled in your hearing.”

**Hymn**

“Live Into Hope”

PH#332

## **The Feast of the Lord**

Invitation to the Table

Prayer over the Elements

Words of Institution

Celebration by Intinction

Prayer after Communion



**Reading Seven:** Light Comes to Earth

Erin Horn

(light from the Christ Candle is distributed during this reading)

*And so, Jesus introduced himself as the coming of light  
to a dark world. As we light our candles tonight,  
let us pledge ourselves to be servants of his Kingdom of Light,  
sharing his brightness where ever we go.*

*John 1:1-14*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with  
God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the  
beginning. <sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made; without him  
nothing was made that has been made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and  
that life was the light of all mankind. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the  
darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God whose name was John.



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<sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe.

<sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

<sup>9</sup> The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. <sup>11</sup> He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - <sup>13</sup>children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

<sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

**Hymn** "Silent Night, Holy Night" PH#60

**Prayer**

**Benediction and Blessing**

**Postlude** "Joy to the World" arr. David Lanz

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## *STAFF*

Rev. Dr. Leanne Simmons, Pastor

Maureen Chrest, Administrative Assistant

Carol Thompson, Financial Assistant

Wanona Goetz, Parish Nurse

Arvy Smith, Pianist/Organist

Gail Snustad, Pianist/Organist

Debi Rogers, Chancel Choir Director

Lael Hoerauf, Westminster Chimes Director

Josh Stokka, Audio/Visual Specialist

Judy Lentz, Membership Services Coordinator

Shawn Stettner, Child Care Center Director

Vanessa Hein, Assistant Child Care Director

Mary Jones, Nursery

Mark Jensen, Youth Ministry Director

Ruth Jensen, Christian Ed. Intern



O Holy Night

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