

Sunday, December 28, 2025 – 9:30 am

First Sunday of Christmas

TODAY'S FOCUS: PRESENCE. John gives us the overture of God's miraculous symphony: an embodied God, prophesied by Isaiah, finally come to earth through the personhood of Jesus. Can we still feel the presence of God without the physical presence of Jesus?

PRELUDE — Betsy Foushee

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS — Lin

PASSING THE PEACE OF CHRIST — Lin

OPENING HYMN UMH #250 "Once in Royal David's City" (plus other hymns by request)

1. Once in royal David's city stood a lowly cattle shed,
where a mother laid her baby in a manger for his bed;
Mary, loving mother mild, Jesus Christ, her little child.

2. He came down to earth from heaven who is God and Lord of all,
And his shelter was a stable, and his cradle was a stall.
With the poor, the scorned, the lowly lived on earth our Savior holy.

CALL TO WORSHIP — Isabella Presnall

One: Beloved, we have waited, watched, and witnessed the coming of the Christ child. As we gather today on the other side of Christmas, we might be tempted to ask, "What now?"

Many: We continue to wait and watch for the day that all the earth awaits.

One: In this season of Christmas, we remember that though Christ has come among us, the good news of freedom for captives, flourishing for the poor, and power returned to the disempowered does not reign in so many places.

Many: We continue to wait and watch for the day that all the earth awaits.

One: With Mary and Joseph, we listen for God to show us how to protect and advocate for the vulnerable among us.

Many: We continue to wait and watch for the day that all the earth awaits.

One: As we gather to worship today, may God bind us together in love, empowering us to live as followers of the Christ child who declare good news wherever we go.

Many: We gather today as people who wait, watch, and work for the day that all the earth awaits.

ALL: Thanks be to God! Amen.

Written by Dr. Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries, June 2025. Used by permission.

OPENING PRAYER — Lin

SPECIAL MUSIC — Shelly Anderson "I Wonder as I Wander"

HYMN TFWS #2233 "Where Children Belong"

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE — Aleta Purcell

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 63:7-9/John 1:14-18 — Isabella Presnall

From ISAIAH 63:7-9

⁷ I will recount the gracious deeds of the LORD, the praiseworthy acts of the LORD, because of all that the LORD has done for us and the great favor to the house of Israel that he has shown them according to his mercy, according to the abundance of his steadfast love. ⁸ For he said, "Surely they are my people, children who will not act deceitfully," and he became their savior ⁹ in all their distress. It was no messenger or angel but his presence that saved them; in his love and pity it was he who redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

From JOHN 1:14-18

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") ¹⁶ From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, himself God, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

MESSAGE "Becoming Flesh" Rev. Lin Cheek

HYMN SING (3 or 4 hymns)

OFFERTORY — Betsy Foushee

DOXOLOGY UMH #94

PRAYER OF DEDICATION — Lin Cheek

All: Steadfast God of hope and promise, even when the world makes no room, even when fear seems stronger than hope, you are with us. You have walked with us, you have wept with us, you have loved us. Receive these gifts, O God, give out of our love for you. Use what we bring—not just our treasure, but our time, our voices, our compassion—to heal what is broken, to protect the vulnerable, and to embody your saving love in the world. In the name of Jesus, our Light in the shadows. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER/LORD'S PRAYER — Lin

ALL: 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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

HYMN SING (2 or 3 hymns)

BENEDICTION — Lin

POSTLUDE — Betsy Foushee

Prelude/Postlude—Betsy Foushee

Offertory— Betsy Foushee

Organ —N/A

Liturgist — Isabella Presnall

Special Music — Shelly Anderson

Accomp.— Betsy Foushee

Song Leader — Bonnie Clark

Violin — Rae Ann Norell

Children's Message— Aleta Purcell

"I Wonder as I Wander"