

# THE TABLE

Independent Presbyterian Church



DECEMBER 22, 2024  
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

## WELCOME TO INDEPENDENT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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WORSHIP is at the center of the life of IPC.  
As you prepare yourself for worship,  
we invite you to reflect quietly on these words:

*God of Advent, of darkness, of waiting, we wait ...  
for the hungry to be fed,  
for freedom for all,  
for the weapons of war to be abolished,  
for everyone to have clean water and sanitation,  
for an end to suspicion between Christian, Muslim and Jew,  
for peace in our world ...  
God of Advent, of darkness, of waiting, we wait ...  
for your Kingdom to come.”*

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### CURRENT WORSHIP SERIES

Welcome to Independent Presbyterian Church and this service of Advent Lessons and Carols. Advent is a season of both quiet reflection and joyful expectation. This service is intended to be a time of spiritual preparation, as we watch and wait for the coming of the Kingdom of God. Through our experience of sacred Word and music, the story of the coming of Christ gradually unfolds and deepens our understanding of God’s message of love and redemption. The liturgy itself embodies the sense of Advent movement — through the increasingly powerful prophecies and promises of Holy Scripture. May these words and this music propel you quietly toward the true joy of Christmas.

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### THE LITURGICAL YEAR

IPC follows the liturgical calendar to mark the seasons of our life together. We are currently in the season of Advent, the four weeks leading up to Christmas in which we prepare ourselves for the coming of the Christ child. Advent is signified by the color purple representing preparation and repentance. Each week we light a candle in the wreath for the four themes of Advent: hope, peace, joy (pink) and love.

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### IF THIS IS YOUR FIRST VISIT:

**Complete the Welcome Register** and pass it to the person next to you.

**Join us in the foyer directly after Worship.** Greeters are available who would love to welcome you and answer any questions you might have.

**Visit our website:** [ipc-usa.org/welcome](http://ipc-usa.org/welcome).

## PRELUDE

### ANTHEM: *"In Labor All Creation Groans"*

In labor all creation groans till fear and hatred cease,  
Till human hearts come to believe: In Christ alone is peace.

In labor all creation groans till prejudice shall cease,  
Till every race and tribe and tongue in Christ will live in peace.

In labor all creation groans till rape and murder cease,  
Till women walk by night unharmed and Christ is this world's peace.

In labor all creation groans till false divisions cease,  
Till enemies are reconciled in Christ who is our peace.

## LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE & CALL TO WORSHIP

David Seamon

### BIDDING PRAYER

Holy One, be the light in our darkness tonight.

As we have lit the candle of hope, we pray for those who feel hopeless . . .

As we have lit the candle of peace, we pray for all victims of violence . . .

As we have lit the candle of joy, we pray for those whose hearts are weighed down by sorrow . . .

And now as we light the candle of love, we pray for those who do not feel loved  
and for those who struggle to love others . . .

Holy One, be the light in our darkness tonight,

that we might reflect your light into the dark corners of our world. Amen.

### THE FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 40:1-8

Grace Daniels

*To God's people locked and waiting in a faraway land, the prophet Isaiah announces good news:  
God is returning and calling us home!*

**C**omfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.'

### HYMN #88: *"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (stanzas 1-3 with no refrain)*

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

O come, thou Wisdom from on high,  
who orderest all things mightily:  
to us the path of knowledge show;  
and teach us in her ways to go.

O come, O come, thou Lord of might,  
who to thy tribes on Sinai's height  
in ancient times didst give the law  
in cloud and majesty and awe.

*The prophet Jeremiah offers hope for new growths of justice all around us.*

**T**he days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."

HYMN #88: "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

O come, thou Root of Jesse, free  
thine own from Satan's tyranny;  
from depths of hell thy people save  
and give them victory o'er the grave.

O come, thou Key of David, come,  
and open wide our heavenly home;  
make safe the way that leads on high,  
and close the path to misery.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come to thee, O Israel.

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

THIRD LESSON: Zechariah 9:9-10

Ed Thomas

*To a nation weary of war and violence, God will inspire a leader who creates communal peace.*

**R**ejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war-horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

ANTHEM: "O Day of Peace"

*O day of peace that dimly shines  
Through all our hopes and prayers and dreams,  
Guide us to justice, truth, and love,  
Delivered from our selfish schemes.*

*May the swords of hate fall from our hands,  
Our hearts from envy find release,  
Till by God's grace our warring world  
Shall see Christ's promised reign of peace.*

*Then shall the wolf dwell with the lamb,  
Nor shall the fierce devour the small;  
As beasts and cattle calmly graze,  
A little child shall lead them all.*

*Then enemies shall learn to love,  
All creatures find their true accord;  
The hope of peace shall be fulfilled,  
For all the earth shall know the Lord.*



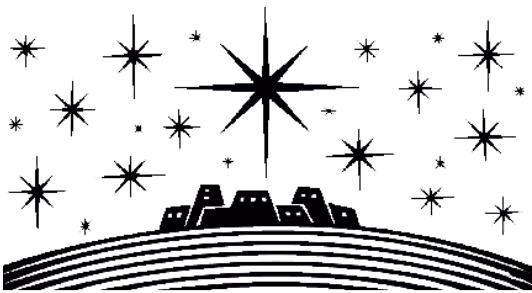
*The one who is to rule Israel will soon be born from a very unexpected place.*

**B**ut you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace.

**HYMN #121:** *“O Little Town of Bethlehem”*

O little town of Bethlehem,  
how still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
the silent stars go by.  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
the everlasting light;  
the hopes and fears of all the years  
are met in thee tonight.

O holy child of Bethlehem,  
descend to us, we pray;  
cast out our sin and enter in;  
be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels  
the great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us; abide with us,  
our Lord Emmanuel!



**FIFTH LESSON:** Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

McClain Robinson

*The people who feel lost in eternity will be enveloped in the presence of God today.*

**T**he people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onwards and for evermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

**HYMN #123:** *“It Came Upon the Midnight Clear”*

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.

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!

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.



*The prophet Isaiah announces the renewal of the land and of God's people in a moment just around the corner.*

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

HYMN #129: "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"

Lo, how a rose e'er blooming  
from tender stem hath sprung,  
of Jesse's lineage coming,  
by faithful prophets sung.  
It came, a floweret bright,  
amid the cold of winter,  
when half spent was the night.

Isaiah 'twas foretold it,  
the rose I have in mind;  
with Mary we behold it,  
the virgin mother kind.  
To show God's love aright  
she bore for us a Savior,  
when half spent was the night



*The highest angel Gabriel comes to the smallest among us to announce that the kingdom is coming right now.*

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her

CAROL: "Gabriel's Message"



The angel Gabriel from heaven came  
His wings as drifted snow  
His eyes as flame  
"All hail" said he "thou lowly maiden Mary  
Most highly favored lady," Gloria

"For known a blessed mother thou shalt be  
All generations laud and honor thee  
Thy Son shall be Emanuel  
By seers foretold  
Most highly favored lady," Gloria

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head  
"To me be as it pleaseth God," she said,  
"My soul shall laud and magnify His holy name."  
Most highly favored lady, Gloria

SPOKEN WORD REFLECTION: A WEARY WORLD REJOICES

David Seamon

*Adapted from "Advent for Weary Souls" by Amena Brown*

HYMN: "Silent Night, Waiting Night"

CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Nicole Newton

- Invitation to the Table
- Prayers of the People and The Lord's Prayer
- Words of Institution
- Communion of the People (by Intinction)
- Music: "Hark the Herald"
- Prayer after Communion

HYMN #145: "Come Thou Long Expected Jesus"

Come Thou long expected Jesus  
Born to set Thy people free  
From our fears and sins release us  
Let us find our rest in Thee  
Israel's strength and consolation  
Hope of all the earth Thou art  
Dear desire of every nation  
Joy of every longing heart

Born Thy people to deliver  
Born a child and yet a King  
Born to reign in us forever  
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring  
By Thine own eternal spirit  
Rule in all our hearts alone  
By Thine all sufficient merit  
Raise us to Thy glorious throne



+BENEDICTION

+POSTLUDE

+Rise in Body or Spirit



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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**WELCOME VISITORS AND NEW MEMBERS!** We would love to welcome you as a new member of our family of faith at IPC. Please indicate your interest by contacting Stacy Pulliam at [spulliam@ipc-usa.org](mailto:spulliam@ipc-usa.org). “Like” us on Facebook at [@IPC\\_Birmingham](https://www.facebook.com/IPC_Birmingham).

**CHRISTMAS EVE SCHEDULE:** On December 24, all are welcome to attend our Family Nativity Service with the Children’s Nativity Choir at 11:00 am. At 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m., we will hold our traditional Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols. All three services are in the sanctuary, and childcare is available.

**CHURCH OFFICE HOLIDAY SCHEDULE:** IPC will be closed on December 25 and January 1. The church will be open from 8:30 am to 1:00 p.m. on December 24, 26-27, and 30-31.

**HOLIDAY WORSHIP SCHEDULE:** On Sunday, December 29, we will observe our Holiday Worship Schedule and gather for one morning worship service at 10 am in the sanctuary. There will be no Sunday school and no Table worship service that day.

**IPC YOUTH:** It’s time to register for our Gatlinburg trip from January 17 to January 20. Youth 7th-12th grade are welcome. Find additional information and registration online or in the youth email!

**SAVE THE DATE:** Biblical Explorations with Rev. Susan Clayton and Dr. Jeff Leonard are thrilled to announce a nine-day trip to Rome and Assisi next summer traveling May 31 - June 8, 2025. Let us know if you are interested! Find our interest form at [ipc-usa.org](http://ipc-usa.org) on the Sign Up Links page.

**2025 ANNUAL GIVING:** We are so grateful for those who have given generously to support the mission of Jesus Christ at IPC. If you have not yet submitted a pledge, the time is now to join us in responding to Christ’s call for our church. Find pledge cards at the reception desk, or make an online pledge by texting PLEDGE to (205) 927-3100 and following the prompts.



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### Independent Presbyterian Church

Church office: 3100 Highland Avenue, Birmingham, AL 35205

Office Hours: 8:30-4:30 | Phone: 205.933.1830

[www.ipc-usa.org](http://www.ipc-usa.org) | [www.facebook.com/ipcbirmingham](https://www.facebook.com/ipcbirmingham)

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