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## LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY

**WELCOME VISITORS AND NEW MEMBERS!** If this is your first visit, we would love to say hello and welcome you to our church family. **Contact us:** Please reach out by contacting Stacy Pulliam at [spulliam@ipc-usa.org](mailto:spulliam@ipc-usa.org). **Visit our website:** [ipc-usa.org/welcome](http://ipc-usa.org/welcome)

**FLOWER DEDICATION:** The flowers on the foyer table are given to the glory of God and in loving memory of Mark L. Miller.

**BEER & CAROLS:** Join us on Monday, Dec. 15, from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. at The Grocery (2823 Central Ave., Homewood) for Beer & Carols. Enjoy great food, festive libations, children's music beginning at 5:30 p.m., and classic carols starting at 7:00 p.m.—plus a visit from Santa. Space is limited, so please RSVP at [ipc-usa.org](http://ipc-usa.org) on the Sign Up Links page, and you can pre-purchase your dinner.

**WEDNESDAY CHAPEL & LUNCH:** Join us on Wednesday, Dec. 17, at noon in the Chapel for the final noonday service of the season, which will be our Blue Christmas service. A light lunch will follow in the Great Hall for those who register by noon on Tuesday, Dec. 16, at [ipc-usa.org](http://ipc-usa.org) on the Sign Up Links page.

**ADVENT SUNDAY SCHOOL:** Join us on Sunday, Dec. 21, at 10:00 in the Great Hall for the annual Christmas Carol Sing. All are welcome to join this special Advent gathering.

**JOIN US ON SUNDAY, DEC. 21,** at 5:00 p.m. in Highland Hall for a candlelit Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols at The Table. This special service features contemporary Christmas music, beloved hymns, and meaningful readings as we celebrate the season together.

**THE GIVING TREE** is available through Dec. 22 as a meaningful way to give an alternative Christmas gift. By making a donation in honor of a family member, friend, teacher, or coworker, you can support IPC Social Services and the Children's Fresh Air Farm. Gifts may be purchased online or by contacting Catherine Sager in Community Ministries at [csager@ipc-usa.org](mailto:csager@ipc-usa.org).

**IPC CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES** on Wednesday, Dec. 24. All are welcome to attend our Family Nativity Service with the Children's Nativity Choir at 11:00 am. At 4:00 and 6:00 p.m., we will hold our traditional candlelit Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols. All three services are in the sanctuary, and childcare is available.

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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, which starts the liturgical year. It begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas and ends on Christmas Eve. It is signified by the color violet which represents hope as well as prayer, penance, and sacrifice. It is a time of preparation and longing for the coming of Christ in the humble flesh, in our daily hearts, and in glory forevermore.

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## CONNECT WITH IPC'S PASTORAL & PROGRAM STAFF

**Rev. Kevin J. Long**  
Pastor  
[kevin.long@ipc-usa.org](mailto:kevin.long@ipc-usa.org)

**Rev. Susan A. Clayton**  
Associate Pastor, Congregational  
Care and Adult Ministries  
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**Rev. D. Nicole Newton**  
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**Rev. David J. Seamon**  
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**Stacy Pulliam**  
Member Engagement and  
Assimilation Coordinator  
[spulliam@ipc-usa.org](mailto:spulliam@ipc-usa.org)

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## PARTICIPANTS IN TODAY'S SERVICE

**Rev. Nicole Newton**, Associate  
Pastor  
**Sarah Mason**, Worship Leader  
**Brett Burcham**, Acoustic Guitar  
**Eric Onimus**, Bass Guitar  
**Carlos Pino**, Electric Guitar

**Jeff Lopez**, Horns  
**Fred Rogan**, Steel Guitar  
**Tommy Bowen**, Horns  
**Hayden Thomas**, Sound  
**Aly & Larry Butts**, Advent Candle

# THE TABLE

## Independent Presbyterian Church



DECEMBER 14, 2025

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT



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### Independent Presbyterian Church

Church office: 3100 Highland Avenue, Birmingham, AL 35205  
Office Hours: 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. | Phone: 205.933.1830  
[www.ipc-usa.org](http://www.ipc-usa.org) | [www.facebook.com/ipcbirmingham](https://www.facebook.com/ipcbirmingham)  
This congregation is affiliated with The Presbyterian Church (USA)

# WELCOME TO THE TABLE

## GATHERING

We *gather* as a community and prepare our hearts to worship God

*Prelude*

*Gathering Song*

*Welcome*

*Lighting of the Third Advent Candle*

*Opening Hymn* *“Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee”*

Verse 1: Joyful, Joyful, we adore thee,  
God of Glory, Lord of love;  
Hearts unfold like flowers before thee,  
Opening to the sun above.  
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness;  
Drive the dark of doubt away.  
Giver of immortal gladness,  
Fill us with the light of day!

Verse 2: All thy works with joy surround thee,  
Earth and heaven reflect thy rays,  
Stars and angels sing around thee,  
Center of unbroken praise.  
Field and forest, vale and mountain,  
Flowery meadow, flashing sea,  
Chanting bird and flowing fountain,  
Call us to rejoice in thee.

Verse 3: Thou art giving and forgiving,  
Ever blessing, ever blest,  
Well-spring of the joy of living,  
Ocean depth of happy rest!  
Thou our Father, Christ our brother,  
All who live in love are thine;  
Teach us how to love each other,  
Lift us to the joy divine.

## LISTENING

We *listen* for the word of God through  
confession, passing the peace, Scripture, and preaching

*Prayer of Confession (unison)*

Holy One, we admit that we fell short again this year. We hoped to give more and spend less, but we did not. We planned to slow down and be present with others, yet we packed our days with meetings and tasks. We wanted to write thoughtful notes to those we love, but we let our lists take over. We longed for a holy season, but we let it become rushed and noisy instead.

Forgive us, Lord. Help us follow the One who welcomes all, who blesses the little ones, and who came near so we could know your heart. Amen.

*Please observe a period of silence for personal reflection.*

*Declaration of Pardon*

Leader: Friends, this is the good news of the gospel.  
All: In Jesus Christ we are forgiven!

*Peace*

Leader: May the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.  
All: And also with you.  
Leader: Let us share the peace of Christ with one another.

*Please exchange the peace with the words,  
“The peace of Christ be with you.”*

*Holy Interruption*

*Confessional Response: “Glory to God, Whose Goodness Shines on Me”*  
Glory to God, whose goodness shines on me,  
and to the Son, whose grace has pardoned me,  
and to the Spirit, whose love has set me free.  
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Amen.

*Prayer for Illumination*

*Scripture Lesson* *Isaiah 35:1-10*

*Sermon: “When the Desert Starts to Sing”*

## RESPONDING

We *respond* to the hearing of God’s word through  
reflection, prayer, offering, and communion

*Invitation to Discipleship*

*Sharing of Gifts*

*In gratitude for the love and grace extended to us by God, we share  
our resources to support ministries of justice, mercy, and beauty.*

- Offering Song: “Advent Hymn”
- To give online, text OFFERING to (205) 927-3100 and follow the steps.

*Celebration of the Sacrament of The Lord’s Supper*

- Prayers of the People and The 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. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil; For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

- Words of Institution
- Communion of the People
- Communion Song: “Christus Victor (Amen)”
- Prayer after Communion

## SENDING

We are *sent* out into the world to love God and our neighbors

*Closing Hymn* *“Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus”*

Verse 1: 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

Verse 2: 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 own sufficient merit  
Raise us to Thy glorious throne

*Benediction*

*Postlude*

*Our service is over, let our service begin.  
fed by mystery, forgiven of sin.  
Now our faith made real, when brokenness we heal.  
our service is over, let our service begin.*