



METROCREST

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



Responding to God's Inexpressible Gift

**Morning Worship
Third Sunday of Advent
December 17, 2023**

Welcome!

To all who are spiritually weary and seek rest;
To all who mourn and long for comfort;
To all who struggle and desire victory;
To all who sin and need a Savior;
To all who are strangers and want fellowship;
And to whoever will come –

*This church opens wide her doors and offers her welcome
in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

God Calls Us To Worship

Welcome

Lighting of the Third Advent Candle

Call to Worship - Psalm 100:1-5

Leader: Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.

Unison: Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into His presence with singing!

Leader: Know that the LORD, He is God! It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.

Unison: Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise! Give thanks to Him; bless His name!

Leader: For the LORD is good; His steadfast love endures forever, and His faithfulness to all generations.

We Respond To God's Call

Opening Hymn - "See, Amid the Winter's Snow"

Trinity Hymnal #199

See, amid the winter's snow,
Born for us on earth below,
See the tender Lamb appears,
Promised from eternal years.

(Refrain)

Hail, thou ever blessed morn!
Hail, redemption's happy dawn!
Sing through all Jerusalem,
Christ is born in Bethlehem.

Lo, within a manger lies
He who built the starry skies:
He who, throned in height sublime,
Sits amid the cherubim. **(Refrain)**

Women

Say, ye holy shepherds, say –
What's your joyful news today?
Wherefore have ye left your sheep,
On the lonely mountain steep? **(Refrain)**

Men

"As we watched at dead of night,
Lo, we saw a wondrous light;
Angels singing "Peace on earth,"
Told us of the Savior's birth." **(Refrain)**

Sacred infant, all divine,
What a tender love was Thine,
Thus to come from highest bliss,
Down to such a world as this! **(Refrain)**

Teach, O teach us, holy child,
By Thy face so meek and mild,
Teach us to resemble Thee,
In Thy sweet humility. **(Refrain)**

Acknowledging God's Presence

Seasonal Theme - "Responding to God's Inexpressible Gift"

Theme Verse - 2 Corinthians 9:15

Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift!

Hymn - "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"

Trinity Hymnal #221

Lo, how a rose e'er blooming
From tender stem hath sprung,
Of Jesse's lineage coming,
As men of old have sung.
It came, a flow'ret 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 to men a Savior,
When half-spent was the night.

The shepherds heard the story,
Proclaimed by angels bright,
How Christ, the Lord of glory,
Was born on earth this night.
To Bethlehem they sped
And in the manger found Him,
As angel heralds said.

This flow'r, whose fragrance tender
With sweetness fills the air,
Dispels with glorious splendor
The darkness ev'rywhere.
True man, yet very God;
From sin and death He saves us
And lightens ev'ry load.

O Savior, child of Mary,
Who felt our human woe;
O Savior, King of glory,
Who dost our weakness know,
Bring us at length, we pray,
To the bright courts of heaven
And to the endless day.

We Confess Our Sins

Call to Confession - 1 Corinthians 4:5b - Adapted

When the Lord comes, He will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness, and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Therefore in the light of Christ, let us humbly confess our sins to Almighty God.

Prayer of Confession

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of Your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in Your will, and walk in Your ways, to the glory of Your Name. Amen.

Please take a moment for personal reflection and confession.

Assurance of Pardon - 1 John 2:1-2 - Adapted

Leader: If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Unison: Thanks be to God.

Hymn - "What Child is This"

Trinity Hymnal #213

What child is this, Who, laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?

This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The babe, the Son of Mary.

Why lies He in such mean estate,
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear; for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear, shall pierce Him through;
The cross be borne for me, for you.
Hail, hail the Word made flesh,
The babe, the Son of Mary.

So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh;
Come peasant, king, to own Him.
The King of Kings salvation brings,
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.
Raise, raise the song on high;
The virgin sings her lullaby:
Joy, joy, for Christ is born,
The babe, the Son of Mary.

We Profess Our Faith And Pray

Affirmation of Faith - Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; He descended to hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Greeting

Hymn - "Sing We the Song of Emmanuel"

Sing we the song of Emmanuel;
This the Christ Who was long foretold.
Lo, in the shadows of Bethlehem,
Promise of dawn now our eyes behold.

God Most High in a manger laid;
Lift your voices and now proclaim:
Great and glorious, Love has come to us;
Join now with the hosts of heaven.

Come we to welcome Emmanuel;
King Who came with no crown or throne.
Helpless He lay, the Invincible,
Maker of Mary, now Mary's son.

O what wisdom to save us all,
Shepherds, sages, before Him fall.
Grace and majesty, what humility;
Come on bended knee, adore Him.

Go spread the news of Emmanuel;
Joy and peace for the weary heart.
Lift up your heads, for your King has come;
Sing for the Light overwhelms the dark.

Glory shining for all to see,
Hope alive, let the gospel ring.
God has made a way, He will have the praise;
Tell the world His name is Jesus.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come,
Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily
bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is
the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

We Receive God's Word

Reading God's Word - 2 Corinthians 9:1-5

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

Unison: **Thanks be to God.**

Understanding and Applying God's Word

Pastor Bill Lovell

"Ready to Respond!"

Sermon Series - "Responding to God's Inexpressible Gift"

We Respond To God's Grace

Closing Hymn - "All Praise to Thee, Eternal Lord"

Trinity Hymnal #219

All praise to Thee, eternal Lord,
Clothed in a garb of flesh and blood;
Choosing a manger for Thy throne,
While worlds on worlds are Thine alone.

Once did the skies before Thee bow;
A virgin's arms contain Thee now;
Angels who did in Thee rejoice
Now listen for Thine infant voice.

A little child, Thou art our guest,
That weary ones in Thee may rest;
Forlorn and lowly is Thy birth,
That we may rise to heav'n from earth.

Thou comest in the darksome night
To make us children of the light,
To make us, in the realms divine,
Like Thine own angels round Thee shine.

All this for us Thy love hath done;
By this to Thee our love is won;
For this we tune our cheerful lays,
And shout our thanks in ceaseless praise.

God Sends Us Out With His Blessing

Closing Blessing - 2 Corinthians 13:11,14

Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full reconciliation, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

"See, Amid the Winter's Snow" Words by Edward Caswall, music by John Goss. **"Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"** Words anonymous, Tr. by Theodore Baker, Harriett R. Spaeth, John C. Mattes, Music Arr. by Michael Praetorius. **"What Child is This"** Words adapted by William C. Dix. **"Sing We the Song of Emmanuel"** Matt Boswell, Matt Papa and Stuart Townend
Copyright © 2015 Messenger Hymns, Townend Songs, Love Your Enemies Publishing. **"All Praise to Thee, Eternal Lord"** Words by Martin Luther, Music by Robert Schumann. CCLI License #451603.

Sermon Text

English Standard Version - 2 Corinthians 9:1-5

1 Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the ministry for the saints, 2 for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year. And your zeal has stirred up most of them. 3 But I am sending the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this matter, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be. 4 Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated—to say nothing of you—for being so confident. 5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction.

The Message - 2 Corinthians 9:1-5

1-2 If I wrote any more on this relief offering for the poor Christians, I'd be repeating myself. I know you're on board and ready to go. I've been bragging about you all through Macedonia province, telling them, "Achaia province has been ready to go on this since last year." Your enthusiasm by now has spread to most of them.

3-5 Now I'm sending the brothers to make sure you're ready, as I said you would be, so my bragging won't turn out to be just so much hot air. If some Macedonians and I happened to drop in on you and found you weren't prepared, we'd all be pretty red-faced—you and us—for acting so sure of ourselves. So to make sure there will be no slipup, I've recruited these brothers as an advance team to get you and your promised offering all ready before I get there. I want you to have all the time you need to make this offering in your own way. I don't want anything forced or hurried at the last minute.

Greek New Testament - Προς Κορινθίους Β', 9.1-5

1 Περὶ μὲν γὰρ τῆς διακονίας τῆς εἰς τοὺς ἁγίους περισσὸν μοὶ ἐστὶν τὸ γράφειν ὑμῖν, 2 οἶδα γὰρ τὴν προθυμίαν ὑμῶν ἣν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν καυχῶμαι Μακεδόσιν ὅτι Ἀχαΐα παρεσκεύασται ἀπὸ πέρουςι, καὶ τὸ ὑμῶν ζήλος ἡρέθισεν τοὺς πλείονας. 3 ἔπεμψα δὲ τοὺς ἀδελφούς, ἵνα μὴ τὸ καύχημα ἡμῶν τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν κενωθῇ ἐν τῷ μέρει τούτῳ, ἵνα καθὼς ἔλεγον παρεσκευασμένοι ἦτε, 4 μὴ πῶς ἐὰν ἔλθωσιν σὺν ἐμοὶ Μακεδόνες καὶ εὕρωσιν ὑμᾶς ἀπαρασκευάστους καταισχυνθῶμεν ἡμεῖς, ἵνα μὴ λέγω ὑμεῖς, ἐν τῇ ὑποστάσει ταύτῃ. 5 ἀναγκαῖον οὖν ἡγησάμην παρακαλέσαι τοὺς ἀδελφούς ἵνα προέλθωσιν εἰς ὑμᾶς καὶ προκαταρτίσωσιν τὴν προεπηγγελμένην εὐλογίαν ὑμῶν, ταύτην ἐτοίμην εἶναι οὕτως ὡς εὐλογίαν καὶ μὴ ὡς πλεονεξίαν.

Sermon Notes

2 Corinthians 9:1-5

Pastor Bill Lovell

"Ready to Respond!"

"The Collection" (1 Corinthians 16:1-4)

Ready

Zealous

Willing

"Your money flows most effortlessly toward your heart's greatest love."
~Tim Keller

Church Life Notes

Today - December 17, 2023

1. **Third Sunday of Advent:** Advent is the first season of the church year, a time when we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ and His Second Coming in glory. This year our worship theme throughout Advent will be "Responding to God's Inexpressible Gift."
2. **Serving Today:** This morning's scheduled Liturgy Leader is John Fowler. Our scheduled Prayer Leader is Will Grover. The Metrocrest Advent Singers will lead us in singing today's first hymn. We are also blessed to be joined by numerous guest musicians playing a number of musical instruments.
3. **Giving Online:** To access our secure online giving portal, you may use the QR code on the back of the bulletin.
4. **MPC Youth Ministry:** Tonight, our large group meeting for middle and high school youth will meet from 6:00-8:00pm.

Upcoming Activities & Events

5. **Christmas at Metrocrest:** We will gather for the Fourth Sunday of Advent next Sunday morning, December 24, at 10:15am. We will gather that evening for our Christmas Eve Service at 6:00pm. We have not scheduled a service on Christmas Day.
6. **MPC Sunday School:** In observance of Christmas and New Year's, there will be no Sunday School Classes for Children, Youth, or Adults on December 24 or 31.
7. **Hymn Sing:** Everyone is invited to a Christmas hymn sing at the home of Madeleine and Caleb Esmond this Tuesday, December 19, from 7:00-9:00pm, at 616 Woodland Street, Denton, TX 76209. RSVP to caleb.esmond@gmail.com.
8. **Upcoming Adult Class:** Please plan now to participate in our upcoming Adult Sunday School Class – "The Gospel According to Isaiah" – led by Will Grover, **beginning January 7**, at 9:00am.
9. **Annual Congregational Meeting:** We are set to meet on Sunday, January 28, following the 10:15 service, to elect new officers and reflect on God's faithfulness to us.

News & Needs

10. **Life Change** for December will support the PCA Ministerial Relief Fund, which assists needy, retired, and disabled pastors, missionaries, church lay workers, their widows, and children.
11. **Prayer Ministry:** Help us keep our prayer requests current and up-to-date by letting us know **via email** when we can remove or revise requests on Realm and on the list in the Sunday bulletin. Thanksgivings will also be posted on Realm.

12. **End-of-Year Giving:** Please remember that donations to MPC must be postmarked or received in the church office by Sunday, December 31, in order to be receipted for Tax Year 2023.
13. **Officer Nominations:** Starting today, we are inviting nominations for the Session, the Board of Deacons, and the Board of Trustees. Nomination Forms are in the Lobby. Before nominating someone, please ask them to make sure they are able and willing to serve.
14. **Calling All Care Groups:** In the new year, we are aiming to raise the profile of Care Groups and to encourage all members to join one! Watch for more information in January!

High Fives & Thanks

15. **Greeting Cards:** Thanks to the MPC Youth Group for hand-making greeting cards to give our sick and shut-in members.
16. **Christmas Pageant:** Thanks and High-Fives to everyone who pitched in to make last Sunday's Christmas Pageant such a joy, including the brilliant cast; moms who served as Costumers and Personal Assistants to the cast; Pianist Caleb Esmond; Stage Crew Brian Laird, Dalton Dallas and Steve Withers; Sunday School Coordinator Liz Withers; and Pageant Director Grace Laird.
17. **Christmas Party:** Thanks also to everyone who attended last Sunday's annual Christmas Party and brought food to share.

Prayer Requests

18. **For The World:**
 - **Armed Conflicts** - For God's mercy on the suffering people in Israel, Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, and Yemen.
19. **For Our Church's Mission and Ministry:**
 - **Hearts Full of Praise** - For God to fill our hearts with praise and make us ready to respond to His inexpressible gift in Christ.
 - **Church Finances** - For God's gracious provision.
20. **For One Another:**
 - **Marriages** - For God's blessing on all those married or getting married.
 - **Health Issues** - For God's blessing on Yvonne Alford (Bill Lovell's friend), Connie Bielefeld (Margaret Marrs' grandmother), Kathy Carruth (Rick Carruth's mom), Steve Collinsworth, Krystal Hays (Bill & Shona Camp's neighbor), Maurane Huckaby, Jim Huckaby (Colton Huckaby's grandfather), Suzanne Larsen, Cherry Leslie, Marcia Livingston (David Wamsley's sister), Ashley Marble, Jeannie Marion (Mike Marion's stepmother), Lauren Muckleroy (friend of Scott Marrs), Kristen Novak (Steve & Liz Wallin's daughter), Larry Perry, Ron Revell, David Wamsley, Marlene Wamsley, Lori Winn, and Norm Winn; and also for God's blessing on Madeleine Esmond, expectant mommy due in January.

Welcome to Metrocrest! Please take a few moments to leave your contact information with Pastor Bill or a member of the Welcome Team. We would love to know that you worshipped with us today and share more information about our church.



How can we pray for you? MPC is a praying church! You can share your prayer requests with us by (1) using one of the cards found in the lobby; or (2) pointing your smartphone camera at this QR code to access a digital card. Please indicate whether your request is private or public. You may also request to pray with an Elder.

Do you want to make a donation? To fund MPC's mission and ministry, we depend on God's provision through you. If you'd like to make a donation this morning, you can do so by (1) placing it in the collection basket during the Offertory; or (2) pointing your smartphone camera at this QR code to access our secure online giving portal.



Thank you for your financial support! At MPC, we aim for financial transparency. Here's where we stand several months into this fiscal year (July-June): Last week's giving - \$6,350; our weekly giving goal - \$7,885; our actual giving to-date - \$158,898; and our projected giving to-date - \$189,231. We know these are difficult times for everyone. Please be as generous as you can in your personal stewardship, and *please pray for God's faithful provision.*



Let's get connected! MPC uses an app called Realm to allow you to update your personal information, communicate with groups and teams, follow church announcements, look up members, manage online giving, and join events. To get started, contact us through the church office at info@metrocrestchurch.org!

Bill Lovell	<i>Pastor</i>	bill@metrocrestchurch.org
Laura Stites	<i>Administrative Assistant</i>	laura@metrocrestchurch.org
Nick Rhodes	<i>Music Director</i>	nick@metrocrestchurch.org
Will Grover	<i>Treasurer</i>	treasurer@metrocrestchurch.org
Joseph Marble	<i>Youth Director</i>	joseph@metrocrestchurch.org



The Session (Elders)
John Fowler
Paul Hartgrove
Larry Perry

The Board of Deacons
Dalton Dallas
Will Grover