

# DIVINE WORSHIP

*The prelude is a sacred curtain dropped between the world and the sanctuary. During this time, be prayerful and reverent in preparation for the worship of our holy God in His sanctuary. (Please silence all phones and electronic devices.)*

**THE PRELUDE** (Handbell Ensemble)

*Carol of the Bells*

**THE STRIKING OF THE HOUR**

**THE WELCOME AND LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE**

**THE FIRST LESSON**

Genesis 3:8–15; 17–19

*God tells sinful Adam that he has lost the life of Paradise and that his seed will bruise the serpent's head.*

**THE SECOND LESSON**

Genesis 22:15–18

*God promises to faithful Abraham that in his seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.*

**THE CAROL** (Choir)

*Hark the Glad Sound!*

**THE THIRD LESSON**

Isaiah 9:2; 6–7

*The prophet foretells the coming of the Savior.*

**THE CAROL** (Unison)

*Joy to the World! The Lord Is Come*  
Trinity Hymnal, 195 vs. 1, 3, 4

**THE FOURTH LESSON**

Isaiah 11:1–3a; 4a; 6–9

*The peace that Christ will bring is foreshown.*

**THE CAROL** (Unison)

*O Little Town of Bethlehem*  
Trinity Hymnal, 201

**THE FIFTH LESSON**

Luke 1:26–35; 38

*The angel Gabriel salutes the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

**THE CAROL** (Unison)

*Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus*  
Trinity Hymnal, 196 vs. 1, 4

**THE SIXTH LESSON**

Luke 2:1; 3–7

*St Luke tells of the birth of Jesus.*

**THE CAROL** (Choir)

*From Heaven Above to Earth I Come*

**THE SEVENTH LESSON**

Luke 2:8–16

*The shepherds go to the manger.*

**THE CAROL** (Unison)

*Angels We Have Heard on High*  
Trinity Hymnal, 214

**THE EIGHTH LESSON**

Matthew 2:1–12

*The wise men are led by the star to Jesus.*

**THE CAROL** (Handbell Ensemble)

*We Three Kings*

**THE NINTH LESSON**

John 1:1–14

*St John unfolds the great mystery of the Incarnation.*

**THE CAROL** (Unison)

*O Come, All Ye Faithful*  
Trinity Hymnal, 208

**THE PASTORAL PRAYER**

**THE HOMILY**

Dr. John Clayton

**THE LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES** (Instrumental Quartet)

*See, amid the Winter's Snow*

**THE CANDLELIGHT CAROL** (Unison)

*Silent Night! Holy Night!*  
Trinity Hymnal, 210 vs. 1-3

**THE PASTORAL BLESSING** (Minister)

Based on Isaiah 60:1

**Congregation:** Thanks be to God! Amen.

**THE POSTLUDE**

*O Holy Night*

## Covenant Presbyterian Church of Fort Smith Welcome & Announcements

**Welcome to Covenant Presbyterian Church of Fort Smith!** We are thankful that you have joined us for this special evening of worship. Due to the dimmed lighting and reverence of the service, please silence and refrain from using all electronic devices.

**Seating:** Please be courteous by moving toward the front of the sanctuary providing room in the back for those arriving late.

**Restrooms:** Restrooms are available at the East-end on the sanctuary level or downstairs at the East-end of the hallway. Please use the restrooms downstairs during the service.

**We celebrate Advent:** Today is Christmas Eve and the conclusion of Advent. Advent is the beginning of the Church Year for most churches in the Western tradition. It begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day and ends on Christmas Eve. The word Advent means "coming" or "arrival." The focus of the entire season is the celebration of the birth of Jesus the Christ in his first advent, and the anticipation of the return of Christ the King in his second advent. Join us in celebrating this double focus on the already but not yet, as we affirm that Christ has come and that He will come again in power and glory.

**The Advent Wreath:** In the celebration of Advent and the coming of Christmas, we light the candles of the Advent wreath. The circle of greenery reminds us that God is eternal, the Alpha and Omega without beginning or end, and also of the hope we have in God, of newness, renewal and eternal life. The candles symbolize the light of God entering the world through the birth of Jesus. The light from the candles reminds us that Jesus is the light of the world that comes into the darkness of our lives, and it also reminds us that we are called to be a light to the world as we reflect the light of God's love and grace to others.

A separate Christian theme is attached to each candle:

*Hope* (purple in color) – "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope" (Romans 15:13).

*Love* (purple in color) – "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

*Joy* (pink in color) – "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice" (Philippians 4:4).

*Peace* (purple in color) – "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7).

*Christ* (white in color) – "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29b).

**Individual Candles:** You should have received an individual candle when entering the sanctuary. We will light these candles as a congregation prior to our closing carol.

**Christmas Eve Offering:** If you would like to give a gift for the continued gospel-centered ministry of Covenant, you may place your gift in the benevolence box at the back of the sanctuary after the service.

*As we celebrate tonight the incarnation of the Son of God, we invite you to return and worship with us every Sunday morning at 10:30 a.m. where we rejoice in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

### Ministry Staff

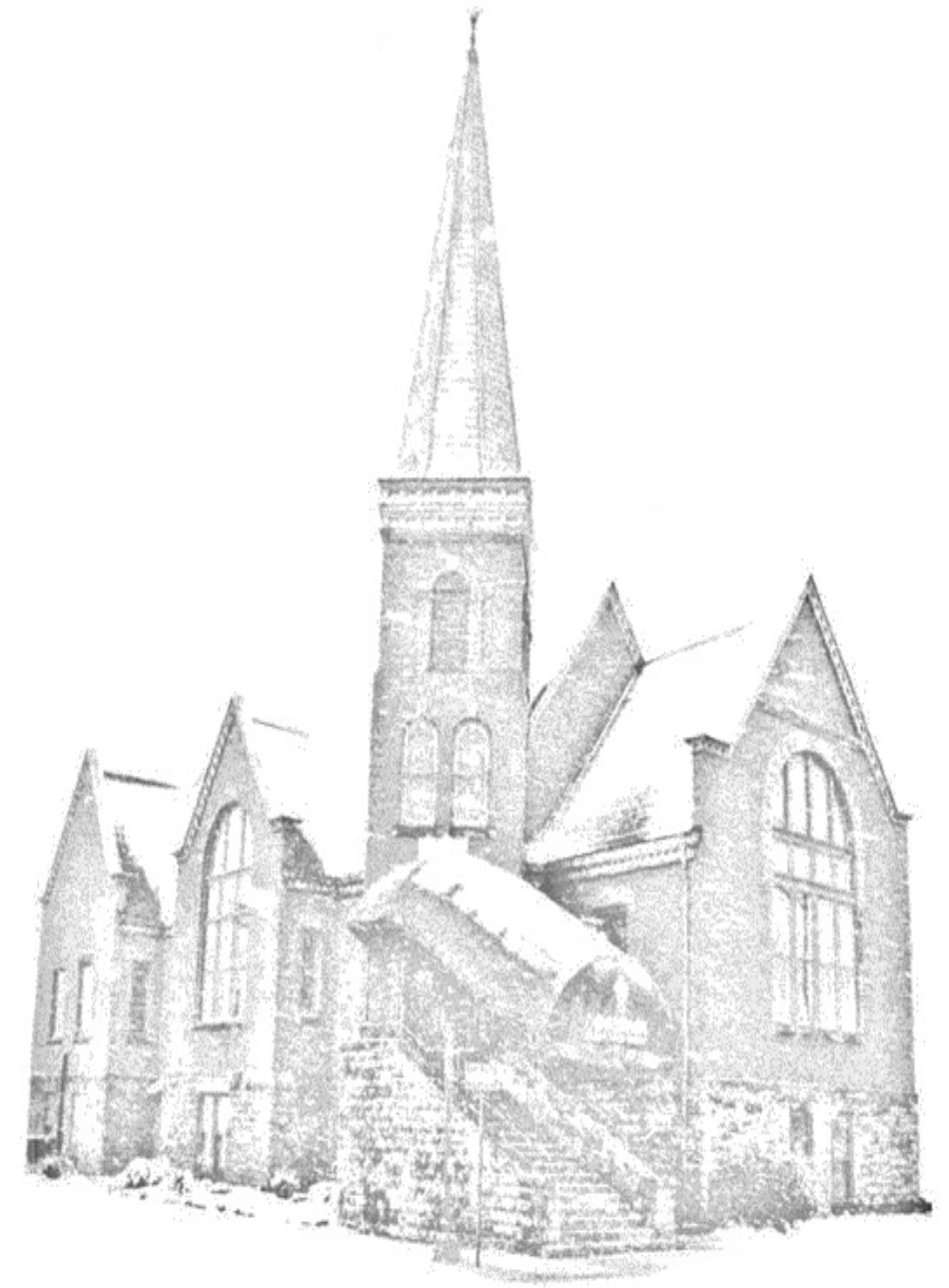
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## Covenant Presbyterian Church Fort Smith, Arkansas



## Christmas Eve, December 24, 2023

5:00 P.M.

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior,  
who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

120 North 9<sup>th</sup> Street, 72901