

First Sunday of Advent
November 27, 2022

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude
 Call To Worship Christopher A. McCroskey
“Come, Ye Thankful People, Come” Choir

The Lighting of the Advent Candle
 Blessing of the Christon Tree

*Hymn *“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”* 196

Opening Prayer
 The Lord’s Prayer 895

Proclamation of the Word
 Prayer of Illumination

Old Testament Reading Isaiah 2:1-5 Pages 601-602 (O.T.)
 Psalter Psalm 122 845

*Hymn *“Soon and Very Soon”* 706

New Testament Reading Romans 13:11-14 Page 153 (N.T.)
 Anthem *“Come Bless the Lord”* Choir

Gospel Reading Matthew 24:36-44 Page 31 (N.T.)
 Sermon *“Jesus Is Coming Back!”* Rev. John Jordan

Response to the Word *“The Apostles’ Creed”* 881
 Pastoral Prayer

Presentation of Tithes & Offerings
 Offertory Christopher A. McCroskey

*Doxology *“Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow”* 95

*Hymn *“We’ve a Story to Tell to the Nations”* 569

*Dismissal With Benediction

*Benediction Response *“Give Thanks”* Choir

*Postlude Christopher A. McCroskey

*The Congregation May Stand

Leading in Worship Today

Pastor: *John D. Jordan* AV Director: *Marie Stiles*
 Choir Director: *Christopher A. McCroskey* AV Assistant: *Chris Derrick*
 Church Musician Time Together: *Ruth Frady; Jack Stevens*

VISITORS ARE WELCOME in the service of worship! Please make use of the visitor’s tags (located in the pew backs) to help us better welcome you as a visitor to Trinity this morning. We ask that you also please fill in the pew pad as it passes to register your attendance with us. **Large print hymnals** are available from the ushers.

You may join as a member into the life and work of this congregation by Confession of Faith or by Transfer of Membership from another church. If you would be interested in becoming a member, please speak to the pastor.

TODAY’S LOVELY FLOWERS are given to the ***Glory of God.***

“AS MEMBERS OF THIS CONGREGATION, WE WILL FAITHFULLY PARTICIPATE IN ITS MINISTRIES BY OUR PRAYERS...

Patsy Zeigler	English Pearcy	Kaye Floyd	Ruth Frady	Charlie Hooker	Hilda Edwards
Jimmy Grahl	Lynn Martin	Marty Johnson	Steve Aiello	Patsy Shuler	George Taylor
John Ballentine	Jackie McNeill	Dale Wells	Latson Lewis	Becky Derrick	Kenny Long

Shut-Ins: Shirley Butler; Esther Carter; Gillett Hipp; June Hutto; Georgeann Pace; Jean Raynor; Claudia Sineath

Family and Friends: **Beverly Lipscomb** (sister-in-law of John Jordan); **Ross Deal** (grandson of Mary Kamoroff); **Jimmy Dawkins** (friend of Jeanette Hornsby); **David Turner** (brother of Pam Turner); **Chip Mixon** (friend of Tommy Gleaton); **Ron Walker** (friend of Tommy & Chris Gleaton); **Merit Takach** (friend of Joyce and Brent Robinson); **Frankie Hendrix** (cousin of Billy Pearson); **Howard Stephens** (former church member); **James Boggs** (father of Claire Boggs); **Stacy Coggins** (daughter of Steve Aiello); **Dan & Leslie White** (brother & sister-in-law of Steve White); **Alva Humphries** (friend of Marty Johnson); **Bill Areheart** (friend of Bonnie Ramsey); **Hayley Beaudoin** (niece of Edwa Meek); **Max Nova** (son of friend of Edwa Meek); **Addie Kinard** (cousin of coworker of Edwa Meek); **Stuart & Penny Lloyd** (son & daughter-in-law of Tom & Marilyn Lloyd); **Megan Corby** (daughter of Carlis Edwards); **Chip Hooker** (Wayne Hooker's father); **Robert Bradley** (Business Associate of Simon Ross); **Gary Becton** (friend of Mark Branham); **Florence Lee Carter, Monnie Tiller** (friends of Chris Derrick); **Adrin & Linda Hargett** (stepfather and stepmom of Christopher McCroskey); **Alexa Lookingbill** (wife of coworker of Kathy White); **Katelyn Rose** (daughter of co-worker of Kathy White); **Vickie Edwards** (neighbor of Kathy White); **Teddy Derrick** (uncle of Arvan Derrick); **Haidee Baehr** (friends of Ruth Frady); **Dianne Schmotzer** (sister-in-law of Gale Frady); **Denise Paul, Scott & Karen Nelson** (cousins of Gale Frady); **Dan Conner, Max Johnson** (friends of Gale Frady); **Bryson Raszewski** (grandson of Caroline Hutton Raszewski); **Amelia Zinski** (great-niece of Linda Maloch); **Wayne Blair** (son of Dot Johnson); **Walt & Janet Beck** (friends of Jo Ann Heiting); **Adam Lavender** (son of Phil Lavender)

If you have a friend or family member on the Prayer List, we ask you to please keep us updated. If no word is received, we will trust that our prayers have been answered and remove the name. To update us, please call the office or e-mail us at trinityumcwc@sc.rr.com.

OUR PRESENCE ...

In-Person Attendance 11/20 SS: 11 Worship: 30

OUR GIFTS ...

General Fund 11/20 \$ 948.10

OUR SERVICE ...

OUR WITNESS."

Upcoming Events

11/30 Advent Study, 12 p.m.
T.a.G., 7 p.m.
12/01 Exercise, 10:30 a.m.

Readings for December 4

Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalm 72:1-17
Romans 15:4-13
Matthew 3:1-12

PLEASE NOTE: SPRC WILL MEET NEXT SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4, IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE SERVICE.



Ministers	The Congregation
Pastor	John D. Jordan
Resident Bishop	Jonathan Holston
District Superintendent	Rev. Fran M. Elrod

Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Our vision is to Connect, Nurture, Inspire and Transform



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**ADVENT STUDY
BEGINS WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30
12 P.M.**

On Wednesday, November 30, we will begin our weekly Advent Study, *All the Good: A Wesleyan Way of Christmas*. Within the context of Advent and preparing for the coming of Jesus, we will examine the Wesleyan theology of grace, piety, mercy, and response. Join us at noon in the sanctuary or online on our YouTube channel.

Jesus is Coming Back!

11/27/2022

Matthew 24: 26-44

First Sunday of Advent

Today is the first Sunday of Advent. Advent is a season of preparation. We prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day. We prepare by hanging evergreens, a symbol of eternal life. We light candles to signify that the light has come into the world. We change the paraments to blue, traditionally symbolizing royalty. As the church, we prepare for the birth of Jesus. We usually think of Advent as a time of preparing for Christmas and preparing for the birth of Jesus.

Preparing for the birth of Jesus seems a little odd when you really think about it. Jesus was born over 2,000 years ago. Can you prepare for something that has already happened? I cannot prepare myself for Ashton's birth; she was born 34 years ago. I cannot prepare for her birth now. We cannot prepare for something that has already occurred.

We may prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth at Christmas just as I prepare to celebrate Ashton's birth every April 24. All our preparations are to celebrate the birth of Jesus not for the birth of Jesus. We cannot prepare for the birth of Jesus because the birth of Jesus has already happened.

The word advent means coming or arrival. Notice that this implies something happening in the present or future, not the past. This season of Advent is not preparing for the birth of Jesus, but for the second coming of Jesus! We are not preparing for the Jesus that has come but for the Jesus that will come.

Several questions arise as we consider preparing for the Jesus that will come. When will this happen? How will this happen? What will be happening when Jesus comes? Finally, how do we prepare for the Jesus that will come?

When will this happen? Many throughout the past 2,000 years have tried to figure this out. Most first-generation Christians believed Jesus would come again in their lifetimes. Many others have said it is this date or that date. Many have gone to certain places on certain dates, thinking they knew the time and place of Jesus' coming. However, we know that all these have been proven wrong. Jesus has not come yet. The reality is no one except God the Father knows when Jesus will be sent back. It may be a certain date in time or maybe when there are certain conditions on Earth. The bottom line is no one knows. When Jesus returns is a mystery we cannot figure out or understand.

Though we do not know when Jesus will come, we do know how. Jesus will return suddenly, like a thief in the night. He will come like a flash flood, earthquake, or tornado where there is no warning. He will come like an invading army that strikes without warning snatching some people while leaving others.

Many have used this passage to put forth the "doctrine" of the rapture. The rapture is the belief that the church, the good people, will be taken up to heaven and avoid the final tribulation. I want to say this is not part of Methodist doctrine. The doctrine of the rapture was not developed until the mid to late 19th century. Thus the rapture was not a concept at the time Wesley lived. Wesley would probably consider the rapture to be an opinion, not an essential belief.

There are two contextual issues in this passage that seem to contradict the concept of the rapture. The first is historical. Matthew was written between 80 and 90 CE. This would be within 25 years after the final Jewish revolt which ended with the destruction of the Temple and the siege at Masada. These events would be

fresh on the minds of the first hearers of the Gospel. They would remember how the Roman army rode through their villages snatching people to either be crucified as revolutionaries or sold into slavery. This was not an image of being lifted to salvation.

The second issue is literary. The writer uses the example of the days of Noah and the flood. In the story of Noah, the bad people were taken away by the flood, and the good people, Noah and his family, were left behind.

This passage is not to present a specific doctrine but to address what will be happening when Jesus comes. Ordinary life will be going on as usual. At the time of Noah, people were just living their lives as usual. Two men will be working in the field and two women will be grinding meal when the invading army arrives. Ordinary people like us will be doing our ordinary things.

The difficulty regarding Jesus' return is how we prepare. How do we prepare if we do not know the time? How do we prepare if there are no signs or warnings? How can we make special preparations if we have no warning?

This might have been easier for the people of Mathew's time than it is for us today. We are so used to receiving information almost instantly. We receive warnings when conditions for floods, hurricanes, and tornadoes are right for these events to occur. With satellites and radar, we can know when an enemy is coming. There is little we receive no warning about. But in Matthew's time, they would receive no warning so they always had to be prepared.

We always have to be prepared. We always have to be watchful. We always have to be ready for the coming of Jesus. We do not prepare for Jesus to come in the future, we prepare for Jesus to come today!

Genesis 6: 9 says that Noah was a righteous man and walked with God. Being righteous means following God's commands and being in a relationship with God. Walking with God implies what the image suggests. Noah lived in God's presence, being in a relationship with God, and obeying God's instructions. Noah listened to God and responded to God's instructions. Noah responded to God's instructions because he had faith in God. He had faith in God because he had a relationship and walked with God. Therefore Noah and his family were left behind and saved.

Jesus' return will reveal the faithful. Though the men in the field and the women grinding meal may appear the same, Jesus will reveal which of the two are faithful. Our salvation depends upon our faithful trust in God. By faith, we have a relationship with God. We can walk with God. We can hear and respond to God's instructions as Noah did.

We do not prepare for the return of Jesus by scouring the scriptures to figure out the time, because only God knows. We do not prepare by looking for signs and portents. There have been times of tribulation throughout the past 2,000 years. Our present times of war and tribulation are no different than it was at the time of Matthew. The Church does not prepare by separating itself from the world. As Donald Senior states, While

awaiting with confidence and hope the triumphant return
but be committed to its mission of proclaiming the

of Jesus, the community was not to expend its energy on useless speculation
gospel to the world and living according to Jesus' teaching.¹

As a church, we prepare by participating in the mission of Jesus to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations... and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28: 19-20, NRSV) We keep true to that commission to make disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world. We stay true to our mission.

As individuals, we prepare by living according to Jesus' teachings. We do the will of God as Jesus taught and live by the ethical message of the gospel as a whole.² We live each day of our lives according to God's will for us.

We daily practice our acts of piety- prayer, Bible study, devotions, worship, the sacraments, and listening- so we may hear God's calling for us. Then we respond by doing what God calls us to do.

We daily practice our acts of mercy: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, taking care of the sick, visiting the imprisoned, and working to change social orders which maintain these conditions. We act upon our love for our neighbor.

We do these things every ordinary day. This is how we prepare. Then when that extraordinary day comes when Jesus returns, we will be prepared.

¹ Donald Senior, *The Gospel of Matthew*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997) 164.

² Ibid, 162