

***First Sunday after Christmas Day***  
**December 31, 2023**

Welcome and Announcements		
Prelude		Christopher A. McCroskey
Call To Worship	<i>"The First Noel"</i>	Choir
*Hymn	<i>"Angels We Have Heard on High"</i>	238
Opening Prayer		
The Lord's Prayer		895
"Let the Children Come!"		
	<i>(Those 3 years of age through 8 years of age may go to Children's Church.)</i>	
Old Testament Reading	Isaiah 61:10 – 62:3	Page 656 (O.T.)
Psalter	Psalms 148	861-862
*Hymn	<i>"He Is Born"</i>	228
Gospel Reading	Luke 2:22-40	Pages 58-59 (N.T.)
Sermon	<i>"A Woman of Steadfast Faith"</i>	Tom Geddens
*Affirmation of Faith	<i>"The Apostles' Creed"</i>	881
*Gloria Patri	<i>"Glory Be to the Father"</i>	70
Prayer		
Presentation of Tithes & Offerings		
Offertory		Christopher A. McCroskey
*Doxology	<i>"Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow"</i>	95
*Hymn	<i>"Hark! the Herald Angels Sing"</i>	240
*Dismissal With Benediction		
*Benediction Response	<i>"May the Lord, Mighty God, Bless and Keep You"</i>	Choir
	May the Lord, Mighty God bless and keep you forever, Grant you peace, perfect peace, courage in every endeavor. Lift up your eyes and see God's face and God's grace forever, May the Lord, Mighty God, bless and keep you forever.	

\*The Congregation May Stand

***Leading in Worship Today***

Guest Speaker: *Tom Geddens*      AV Director: *Marie Stiles*  
 Music Director: *Christopher A. McCroskey*      AV Assistant: *Chris Derrick*  
 Time Together: *Wayne & Charlie Hooker*

***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	Jim Stiles	Kaye Floyd	Larry Butler	Patsy Shuler	Christopher McCroskey
Charlie Hooker	Latson Lewis	John Ballentine	Mary Kamoroff	Steve White	Jimmy Grahl
Taylor Linholm	Becky Derrick	Marty Johnson			

**Shut-Ins:** Esther Carter; Gillett Hipp; Linda Maloch; Jean Raynor; Claudia Sineath; George Taylor

**Family and Friends:** **Bryan Collard** (brother-in-law of Mary Sue Lewis); **Charlyn McNeill** (sister of Mary Sue Lewis); **Elizabeth Kelsey & Jamie Barnett** (friends of John & Kay Jordan); **Alex Courtney** (friend of great nephew of Joyce Robinson); **Lawrence Gilbert** (friend of Becky Derrick); **Bob Bohnstengel** (spouse of Jo Ann Heiting's cousin); **Judy Spence** (former member); **Anne Piercy** (former member); **Missy Abrams** (stepdaughter of Lissa Abrams); **Mary Davis** (daughter of Bob & Libby Strickland); **Lauren & Leah Grace Edwards** (granddaughter & great-granddaughter of Hilda Edwards); **Gloria Erd** (friend of Lynn Martin); **Pearl Geddens** (mother of Tom Geddens); **Beverly Lipscomb** (sister-in-law of John Jordan); **Ross Deal** (grandson of Mary Kamoroff); **Nancy Wilson** (friend of Jeanette Hornsby); **David Turner** (brother of Pam Turner); **Ernie & Betsey Hendrix**, **Chip Mixon** (friends of Tommy Gleaton); **Ron & Janet Walker** (friends of Tommy & Chris Gleaton); **Merit Takach** (friend of Joyce and Brent Robinson); **James Boggs** (father of Claire Boggs); **Stacy Coggins** (daughter of Steve Aiello); **Sweat Family** ( friends of Marty Johnson); **Alva Humphries** (friend of Marty Johnson); **Bill Areheart** (friend of Bonnie Ramsey); **David Grandshaw** (brother-in-law of Edwa Meek); **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**, **Teddy Derrick** (uncle of Arvan Derrick); **Haidee Baehr** (friends of Ruth Frady); **Denise Paul**, **Scott & Karen Nelson** (cousins of Gale Frady); **Dan Conner**, **Max Johnson** (friends of Gale Frady); **Bernardo Velasquez**, **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](mailto:trinityumcwc@sc.rr.com).

**OUR PRESENCE ...**

In-Person Attendance 12/24    SS: 10            Worship: 40

**OUR GIFTS ...**

General Fund 12/24            \$ 9,492.45    Gamecock Pantry    \$ 590.00

**OUR SERVICE ...**

**OUR WITNESS."**

**Upcoming Events**

- 01/01 New Year's Day  
Office Closed
- 01/03 Wednesday's Words, 11:30 a.m.  
T.a.G., 7 p.m.
- 01/04 Exercise Class Resumes, 1030 a.m.
- 01/05 Office Closed

**Readings for January 7**

Genesis 1:1-5  
Psalm 29  
Acts 19:1-7  
Mark 1:4-11



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

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

**Our vision is to Connect, Nurture, Inspire and Transform.**



## Simeon & Anna See Jesus

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# Ähn-Kö-hä Exercise class

The Exercise Class will resume on Thursday, January 4, at 10:30 a.m. The class meets every Monday and Thursday at 10:30 a.m. and is open to everyone.

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## “A Woman of Steadfast Faith”

### Gospel Reading: Luke 2: 22-40.

This is the Word of God for the people of God! Thanks be to God! Let us pray: Heavenly Father, God: Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Luke opens this scene by informing us that while Jesus was still a baby, Joseph and Mary took Him to Jerusalem to present Him to God. For the Jewish people, this was an important rite of passage that was performed for all firstborn males. When Luke writes in Luke 2: 22, “as it is written in the Law of the Lord,” he is referencing Exodus 13, verses 2 and 12.

Luke introduces us to Anna in Luke 2: 36. If you love to read the Bible, you have probably wrung your hands more than once saying, “I wish that the Bible told me more about this person!” We are accustomed nowadays to reading complete biographies of famous people. We can read a person's life story from birth to death and all points in between. The Bible does give us complete or near-complete biographies of some of the men and women who appear in its Holy pages, but for most of the men and women of the Bible, we receive only fragments of their life stories. Most of the details of their lives are shrouded in tantalizing mystery.

We therefore may be tempted to accuse Luke of being skimpy in his description of Anna in Luke 2: 36-37, but if we give those two verses a closer look, we find instead that Luke's succinct biography of Anna is quite rich in detail, so much so that we are blessed with a remarkable amount of information about this even-more remarkable woman!

Like Simeon, whom Luke had introduced us to before introducing us to Anna, Anna was quite elderly and, just like Simeon, she had spent most of her adult life anticipating the coming of God's Only Begotten Son. Luke tells us that Anna was eighty-four years-old and a widow. She had only been married for seven years when her husband died. Anna had been a widow ever since, remaining in the Temple and dedicating herself to a pious life of prayer and fasting.

Anna was a woman of steadfast faith. “Steadfast,” meaning “firm,” “fixed,” and “constant.” Her faith in God was not merely a part of her life, but at the forefront of her life. You may even say that her devotion to God was her life! After all, Luke writes that “she never left the Temple but worshiped night and day.” No, Luke does not tell us Anna's life story, but what details he does give us! In Luke 2: 36, we learn that Anna was a prophetess, meaning a woman who announced declarations from God. Anna, in fact, is the only woman in the New Testament described as a prophetess. She holds another great distinction in the New Testament: Luke tells us in that same verse that Anna was of the tribe of Asher, making her one of the very few people in the New Testament whose tribe is documented.

But the greatest of Anna's many godly gifts was revealed in Luke 2: 38: “Coming up to them (meaning, Joseph, Mary and the baby Jesus) at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the Child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.”

In other words, Anna gave thanks to God for seeing Jesus and then joyfully told others that she had seen Him.

Who have you told about Jesus? Who have I told about Jesus? True, evangelism is not every Christian's strong suit, but Jesus told His disciples to go out and make disciples of all people.

Anna reminds me of another woman of steadfast faith. Her name was Sharon. I served with her for many years in the Epiphany Ministry, a ministry that holds weekend-long Christian retreats for troubled youth. Sharon went on to be with the Lord at the beginning of this month. She had a zany sense of humor, maybe even a rather scatological sense of humor! Sharon loved to laugh and she usually had you laughing, too. But she had a serious side to her, too, a devout side. I was blessed to hear Sharon give her testimony many times. It was powerful, heartfelt, rooted in the redeeming love of Christ, and could often move you to tears.

Sharon was therefore a powerfully effective servant of Christ. She could make the kids laugh and loosen them up (and the adults, too!), but she could also open their minds and touch their hearts

when she would tell them what Jesus had done for her. Like Anna, Sharon was a tireless servant who frequently prayed and worshiped God. I am sure, however, that Anna did not share Sharon's bathroom sense of humor, but that is okay! Who knows? This may have been yet another detail about Anna that the Bible leaves out! Okay, probably not.

Sharon told me several years ago about something that had happened to her. Now, I mentioned earlier that Luke may be wrongly accused by some for being skimpy on the details of Anna's life, but I'm the one who is about to get skimpy in the details when it comes to Sharon's story. That is partly because some of the details I have forgotten due to it being several years ago when Sharon shared this with me, but it is also because I do not want to implicate any State government agencies in a negative light!

But I had asked Sharon how she had been, and she replied in her no-sugarcoating way, "I just got out of jail."

My jaw dropped and once I regained control of it, I asked her to explain. Sharon told me that she had been volunteering as a mentor with young ladies who were living in halfway houses. Now, when you have been released from a juvenile detention center and you are living in a halfway house, you are no longer incarcerated but you are not entirely free. This is not a strange concept: For many years, while I believed in God, I was not living my life as if I believed in Him. Sometimes we live our lives on the border between two lands.

One day, Sharon wanted to take the young lady whom she was mentoring out of the house and take her out to get her hair done and her nails done. You know: Get her "foo-fooed up!" Sharon wanted this young lady to feel good about herself. She was going to take her to the beauty salon and then bring her back to the halfway house. Now, this is one of the details that I am hazy on, because I do not remember: I honestly do not know if this was allowed, or if it was allowed but only under certain guidelines.

And so, Sharon was driving the young lady in her car, on their way to the salon, when they came to a red light. And it was when Sharon stopped her car at the red light that the young lady unlocked the passenger's side door and ran. Sharon tried to catch her, but youth almost always trumps age when it comes to a footrace. Sharon soon had to return to the halfway house to inform the authorities there that the young lady who was in her charge was now a fugitive.

Well: What is that old saying? No good deed goes unpunished? Do you think that when Sharon appeared before the judge that he said, "Sharon, I understand what you were trying to do. You were just trying to take the young lady to the beauty salon, get her looking good so that she can feel better about herself and hopefully raise her self-esteem so that hopefully her character could improve. At least your heart was in the right place!"

No, in the State's eyes, the young lady had become a fugitive under Sharon's watch, so now it was Sharon's turn to spend a little time behind bars. She told me that she was in jail for thirty days. Now, given that she had been put in jail for thirty days, you might be wondering how on earth I could compare Sharon to Anna, this devout woman whom Luke told us had never left the Temple and had dedicated her life to God. When I told Sharon how sorry I was that she had had to spend thirty days of her life behind bars, she looked at me like I had missed the whole point altogether.

It was what Sharon revealed to me next that makes her the closest woman to a modern-day Anna whom I have ever been blessed to know. With her eyes widened as if I had said something exceedingly dumb (and I have said many exceedingly dumb things in my life, so I am well-acquainted with the look), Sharon said, "No, don't feel sorry for me. I used my time behind bars as an opportunity to tell other women who were imprisoned with me about Jesus!"

That was what Sharon had in common with Anna. Both women joyfully told others about Jesus.

Man, I'll tell y'all right now: If I ever get put in jail, I will no doubt cry myself to sleep every night! But not Sharon: She saw it not as punishment but as a gift from God to tell other women about Jesus! What courage! What strength! And that kind of courage and that kind of strength to tell potentially hostile audiences about the salvation that comes from Jesus Christ alone is borne of love and faith. When you have the love of Jesus in your heart and you have a steadfast faith in Him, the Holy Spirit will give you that kind of courage and strength to tell someone who may not react kindly of the miracles that Jesus has performed in your life.

I want to have that! I want to have that kind of love and that kind of faith so that I can have that kind of courage and that kind of strength to tell someone that I have seen Jesus, like Anna did that

day in the Temple. It is one thing to talk to fellow believers, especially those whom you know, but it is truly a leap of faith when you do so with someone whom you do not know if he or she will be receptive to hearing about Jesus.

Today is the last day of 2023. What do we normally do on this day? Make a New Year's Resolution, right? Making a New Year's Resolution has become an annual joke in our culture, has it not? We say that we are going to do more of the good things in the New Year and less of the bad things, right? And then we forget about it. We slide back into our normal routines.

How about if we make a vow to God instead? Whoa! That sounds a little too heavy, doesn't it? A vow to God is on the opposite end of a New Year's Resolution! That is one where we feel a lot more guilt if we don't keep it, right? Well, whatever you would rather call it, using Anna and my dearly departed friend Sharon as our role models, why don't, as followers of Christ, we tell ourselves, and God, that we plan to tell someone about Jesus in 2024? Remember, Anna did so joyfully and excitedly to everyone around her! Jesus said in John 14: 6, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." If you believe that then tell someone! And I am not just preaching to you but to me, too! I need to do it! This is what I have resolved to do in the New Year. I don't know what it is going to look like. I don't know how well I am going to do. I may even be a little afraid. Okay, make that very afraid! But I am going to put my trust in God and hope and pray that I can gain an ounce of Anna and Sharon's love and an ounce of their faith and get in turn a little bit of their courage and their strength to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with someone in 2024.

In the Holy Name of Jesus Christ, Amen.