

# Greenwood Forest Baptist Church

Dec. 24, 2023



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Greenwood Forest  
Baptist Church

an inclusive  
community  
of faith

# Welcome

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We are so glad you've chosen to join us this week. Greenwood Forest Baptist Church is an inclusive community of faith, which means we welcome, affirm, and include all God's people in their diversity of genders, sexual orientations, races, ethnicities, ages, abilities, and backgrounds. We are each beloved by God and we are happy to welcome you to our church exactly as you are.

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## REMINDERS



Nursery care is available for infants and toddlers. There is also a glider in the back of the sanctuary if you need to rock your little ones.



Hearing assistance devices are available at the back of the sanctuary along with a transcript of the sermon.



Services are livestreamed and you may end up on camera.



Gender-neutral, single-occupant bathrooms are located at the back of the sanctuary in the Narthex.



[gfbccary.org](http://gfbccary.org)



[greenwoodforestcary](https://www.facebook.com/greenwoodforestcary)



[@gfbccary](https://www.instagram.com/gfbccary)

# Bulletin Art "Surrogacy" by Hannah Garrity

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*Oil paint, charcoal, and copper leaf on canvas (inspired by Luke 2:1-20)*

Dr. Christena Cleveland published a book in 2023 called *God is a Black Woman*. In it, she shares her powerful testimony describing her journey to meet the Black Madonnas carved centuries ago from lava rock. This resonates with my lifelong yearning for Mother God.

Male language for God has always been a wall to my ability to connect in worship. Now, it is a wall that I break through every week—changing words, rewriting liturgy in the moment, saying “Mother” where “Father” is printed, trying “Lady” where “Lord” is printed. In this case, “Yahweh” is actually best. Who are we to squash God into patriarchy so perpetually?

But when someone else joins me in this necessary work, that is when the barrier is removed. I hear it sometimes: “She,” “Mother.” Almost always, the liturgist feels the need to explain themselves. In liturgy discussion, gaslighting is common. “We should be more inclusive.” All of a sudden?

Recently, I was standing at The Dwelling at Richmond Hill.<sup>1</sup> The former slave quarters are open and offered for visitation. After our tour, the idea that one should remove their shoes before entering this holy haven came up. Our tour group was all white people and we discussed this idea from a theoretical standpoint. But earlier, before we entered, I felt it. I was holding a seltzer water can from lunch and felt incredibly rude entering the space with it, so, without understanding, I backtracked and placed my purse and the can outside. I knew not why. After the tour, in our discussion about shoes, our white tour guide mentioned that Black members of the staff felt a great reverence, a holy presence at The Dwelling. The space held the presence of God; it was like entering a sanctuary.

I remember the same feeling when I was young, touring the slave quarters at Monticello.<sup>2</sup> But now, listening to the Richmond Hill staff testimony, I understood these spaces in a new way, with a reverence for the God-like presence of the Black mother in the depths of oppression.

“Listen to Black women.” This cry has become a mantra over the last few years. I saw in that moment what Cleveland so eloquently explains in her book. In the pigmentocracy we inhabit, the Black mother is the closest figure to God, and “whitemalegod” is the very farthest. He promotes oppression; She is the savior of the most oppressed. And so I listen.

In this painting, Black Mother God has asked her daughter Mary to hold the role of surrogate for the pregnancy of infant Creator. Mary has carried the child to term. She has given birth. God embraces Mary as well as the Holy Infant in gratitude. For without Mary’s surrogacy, the incarnation could not be.

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<sup>1</sup> Richmond Hill is an ecumenical fellowship, residence and urban retreat center in Richmond, VA. On its campus lie the remains of a historic enslaved dwelling. The remains are currently undergoing restoration efforts in order to become a place of learning, reflection, and prayer.

<sup>2</sup> Monticello, VA, was the primary plantation of Thomas Jefferson, a Founding Father and the third president of the United States.

# Community Notes Prayer Requests and Giving



## PRAY

*Please keep in prayer these members of our community and their friends and family. To add a name to the prayer list, please contact the church office. Names rotate off and can be re-added upon request.*

Nell Allen  
Gilles Bikindou  
Valerie Brooks  
Jeff Cisco (friend of Susan Beck)  
Scott Davenport (friend of the Biser family)  
Stephanie Fancher (friend of Gerry Ritter)  
Sue Hughes at the death of her brother,  
James Mark Frazier  
Anjar Hossain (friend of Kevin Schaefer)  
Max Miller (Amanda Warren's father)  
Aaliyah Murray (family of Gail Jones)  
Katheron E. Palmer (mother of Randy Palmer)  
Fred Seeger  
Eddie Stewart (friend of Diana Morde)  
Mathias Warne (family of Gail Jones)  
Kathy Watkins  
Our partners at Ebenezer Baptist in Cuba



## GIVING

*All of the ministries of Greenwood Forest Baptist Church are supported by members of our community like you. Thank you! Supporting us is easy. You can:*

- Give online at [gfbccary.org/give](http://gfbccary.org/give)
- Place your gift in the offering plate before or after worship.
- Set up an automated bank draft through the church office.
- Set up a recurring gift through your bank's "bill pay" function.

A monthly finance update is available in the weekly church email. If you're not receiving our weekly email and would like to, please contact the church office.

## Monthly Ministry Highlight:

### Advent and Christmas Events

We have a lot going on this holiday season from all our ministry areas. We connect with our fellowship ministries through Christmas Breakfast, congregational care in the Service of Lament, worship and music in Lessons and Carols, Youth at the Advent Party, and children at their special Christmas Eve service. None of these experiences are possible without your gifts to this inclusive community of faith!

# Order of Worship Christmas Eve

✝ This icon indicates an invitation to stand or express reverence however you see fit.

📖 This icon indicates a worship aid is available in the righthand column.

🎵 Hymns and song lyrics are available in the songbook following the Order of Worship.

## Chiming of the Hour

✝ **Processional Hymn** | *Hark, the Herald Angels Sing* (pg. 7)

**Welcome to Worship** | *Rev. Lauren Efirid*

Leader: The Lord be with you!

**People: And also with you!**

**Passing of the Peace** 📖

**Preparation for Worship**

*Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence* | *arr. Dengler*

**Lighting of the Christ Candle** | *Jessi Banks and Evin Bellamy*

**Call to Worship (A Sanctified Art)**

There is room for you here. If you're weary and worn, or hopeful and patient.

**If you're tired and lost, or wrapped up in hope.**

If you're new to this place, or have been here before.

**Come in, come in. There is room for you here.**

The angels are singing,

**"Be not afraid."**

The angels are singing,

**"Good news and great joy!"**

So come in, come in!

**There is room for us here.**

**Invocation** | *Rev. Wesley Spears-Newsome*

✝ **Hymn** | *Make Room* (pg. 8)

**Offertory Prayer** | *Carol Carter*

**Offertory** | *Room for All of Us* (pg. 10) 📖

Today's color is **white**, representing the glory of the coming of Jesus Christ.

## The Passing of the Peace

The passing of the peace is a symbolic enactment of the reconciling love and mercy of God in our midst, expressed through a peace sign, a handshake, a wave, conversation, etc. We hope you will take the time to greet and speak with those around you or with someone you haven't met!

## Prayer in Worship

We use many kinds of prayers in worship. The Call to Worship is a communal prayer using call and response. The Invocation is a single individual inviting (or invoking) God into our worship this morning. The Prayers of the People uses intercessory prayer to ask God to come to the world's aid. The benediction is a blessing offered over those gathered in worship.

## The Offertory

During the offertory music, we pass plates across the pews as a way to make our collective offering to God and the wellbeing of this community.

**Doxology** | *Tune: CRANHAM* 📖

What can I give him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb,  
If I were a wise man, I would do my part,  
Yet what I can I give him, give him my heart

**The Prayers of the People** | *Rev. Dr. Stephen Stacks* 📖

Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

**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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

**Reading** | *Luke 2:1-20* | *Rev. Spears-Newsome*

The word of God for us, the people of God.  
**Thanks be to God.**

**Anthem** | *O Holy Night* (pg. 10)

**Sermon** | *We Make Room* | *Rev. Efird*

**Communion** | *Rev. Efird* 📖

**Prayer of Confession: Merciful God, we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart. We have failed to be obedient disciples. We have failed to be an obedient church. We have not done your will, we have broken your law, we have rebelled against your love, we've not loved our neighbors, and we've not heard the cry of the needy. Forgive us for what we have done and for what we've left undone, and free us for joyful obedience through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**Mystery of Faith: Christ has died, Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**

† **Hymn** | *Silent Night* (pg. 9)

**Benediction** | *Rev. Efird*

**The Doxology**

A "doxology" is a short hymn that usually praises the Trinity. We sing the doxology as we present our offerings back to God.

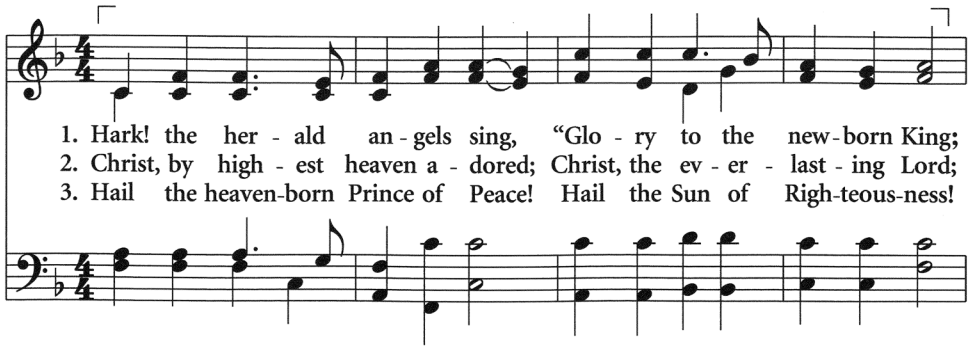
**The Prayers of the People**

This prayer typically has five parts: a confession, prayers for the earth, prayers for the world, prayers for the church, and prayers for those with needs in our own community.

**Communion**

During Communion, we gather around the table as Christ showed us, to remember and give thanks. We have an open table—all who wish to take Communion are invited. We practice intinction, which means you receive a piece of bread and dip it in the cup. A gluten-free option is available on the altar.

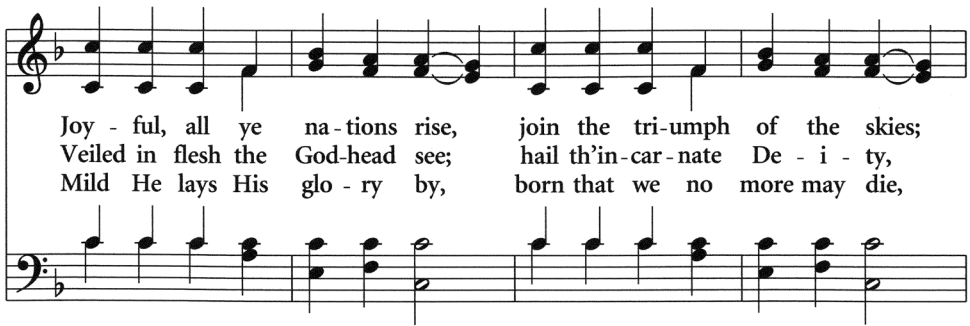
# Hark, the Herald Angels Sing



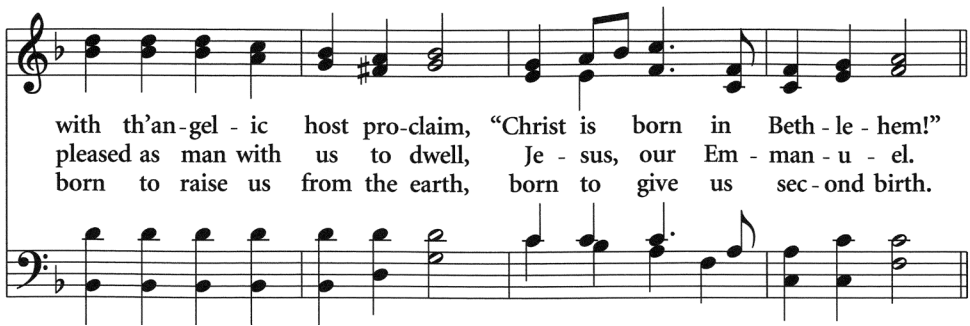
1. Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new-born King;  
2. Christ, by high - est heaven a - dored; Christ, the ev - er - last - ing Lord;  
3. Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righ-teous-ness!



peace on earth, and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners rec - on - ciled!"  
late in time be - hold Him come, off-spring of a vir - gin's womb.  
Light and life to all He brings, risen with heal - ing in His wings.



Joy - ful, all ye na - tions rise, join the tri - umph of the skies;  
Veiled in flesh the God-head see; hail th'in - car - nate De - i - ty,  
Mild He lays His glo - ry by, born that we no more may die,



with th'an - gel - ic host pro - claim, "Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!"  
pleased as man with us to dwell, Je - sus, our Em - man - u - el.  
born to raise us from the earth, born to give us sec - ond birth.



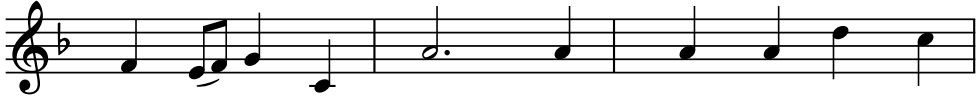
# ST. LOUIS ("O Little Town of Bethlehem")

Text: Anna Strickland (2023)

Music: Lewis H. Redner (1868)



A - lone with - in our sil - oed hearts, the  
In clut - tered minds we hoard our thoughts though  
When fear and an - ger lead to walls a -



walls are clos - ing in A co - zy home where  
an - xious or un - true Our past mis - takes, our  
- round our cal - loused souls Where wounds and scars have



all is known, fa - mil - iar as a friend But  
re - cent aches are framed and left in view The  
made us hard and pressed us for con - trol Ex -



through the cracks and win - dows the star - light finds a  
Spi - rit's winds are rag - ing to blow it all a -  
- pan - sive Christ, ex - pand us to ev - er make more



way To break in - to our grief and gloom and  
- way To make more space for love and grace we'll  
room Crack souls a - part and sprout our hearts so



fill it bright as day  
find with each new day  
har - dened seeds can bloom

**Make Room**

# Silent Night

1. Si - lent night, ho - ly night, all is calm, all is bright  
2. Si - lent night, ho - ly night, shep - herds quake at the sight.  
3. Si - lent night, ho - ly night, Son of God, love's pure light  
4. Si - lent night, ho - ly night, won - drous star, lend thy light;  
*Stil - le Nacht, hei - li - ge Nacht! Al - les schläft, ein - sam wacht*

round you vir - gin moth - er and child! Ho - ly In - fant so ten - der and mild,  
Glo - ry streams from heav - en a - far, heav - en - ly hosts sing "Al - le - lu - ia,  
ra - diant beams from Thy ho - ly face, with the dawn of re - deem - ing grace,  
with the an - gels let us sing Al - le - lu - ia to our King;  
*nur das trau - te, hoch - hei - li - ge Paar. Hold - er Kna - be im lock - i - gen Haar,*

sleep in heav - en - ly peace, sleep in heav - en - ly peace.  
Christ the Sav - ior is born, Christ the Sav - ior is born."  
Je - sus, Lord, at Thy birth, Je - sus, Lord, at Thy birth.  
Christ the Sav - ior is born, Christ the Sav - ior is born.  
*schlaf in himm - li - scher Ruh', schlaf in himm - li - scher Ruh!?"*

# **Offertory** Room for All of Us

The Many

They said no room  
They said move on  
They turned, turned you away.  
We've been there too  
Felt that alone  
Been hurt, been hurt that way.

Oh but it's hard  
To open the door  
Not lock, lock love away  
We've been there too  
Felt so afraid  
To try, try another way

*Your light came shining  
Into this crying night  
Bringing hope, bringing healing  
Your love revealing.  
Your light came shining  
Into this crying night  
To say it's ok  
there's room  
for all of us here*

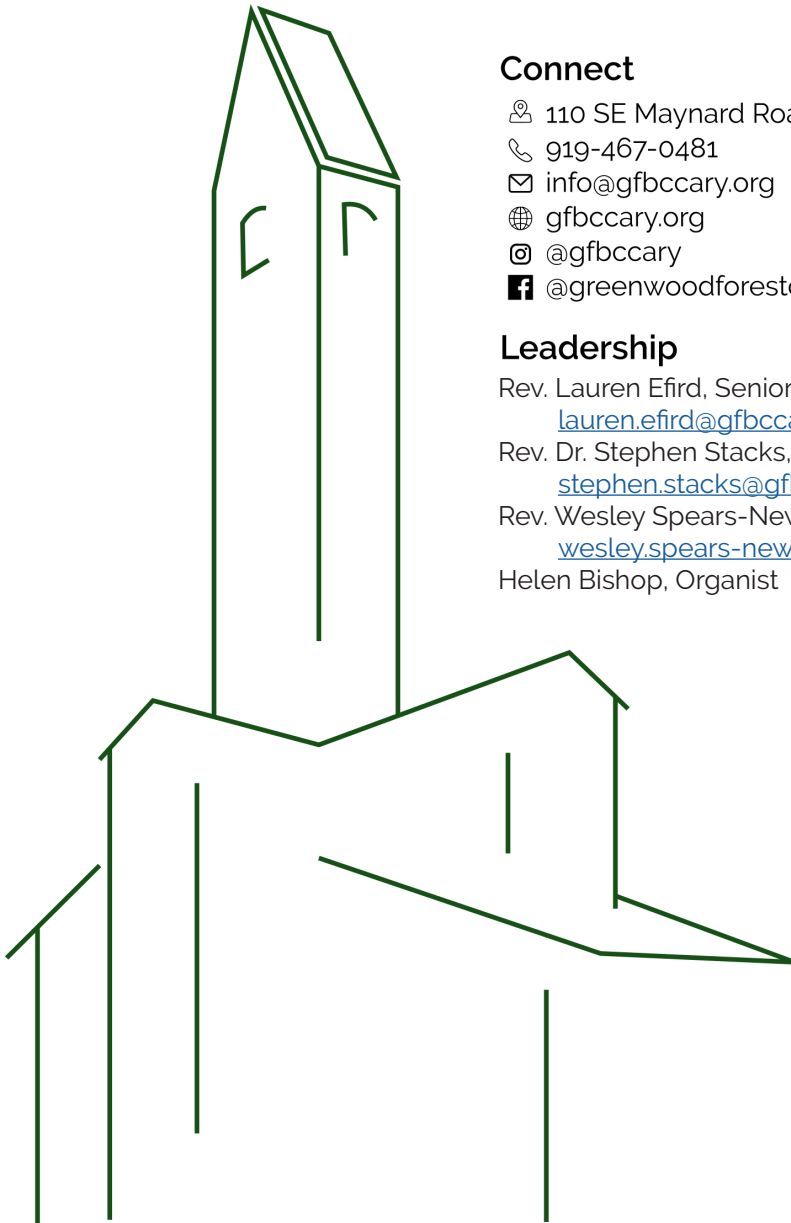
We are on this earth to love

## **Anthem** O Holy Night

Adolphe Adam

O holy night! the stars are brightly shining;  
It is the night of the dear Savior's birth.  
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,  
Till he appeared and the soul felt its worth.  
A thrill of hope—the weary world rejoices,  
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!  
Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices!  
O night divine, O night when Christ was born!  
O night, O holy night, O night divine!

Truly he taught us to love one another;  
His law is love and his gospel is peace.  
Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother,  
And in his name all oppression shall cease.  
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we;  
Let all within us praise his holy name.  
Christ is the Lord! O praise his name forever!  
His pow'r and glory evermore proclaim!  
His pow'r and glory evermore proclaim!



## Connect

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🌐 [gfbccary.org](http://gfbccary.org)

📷 @gfbccary

📘 @greenwoodforestcary

## Leadership

Rev. Lauren Efird, Senior Pastor

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Rev. Dr. Stephen Stacks, Associate Pastor

[stephen.stacks@gfbccary.org](mailto:stephen.stacks@gfbccary.org)

Rev. Wesley Spears-Newsome, Associate Pastor

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Helen Bishop, Organist

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*Additional Resources for Advent and Christmas come from A Sanctified Art.*