



Greenwood Forest
Baptist Church January 7, 2024



Scan for Digital

Bulletin Art "Beloved" by Lauren Wright Pittman

Digital Painting and Collage (inspired by Luke 3:21-22)

Luke's account of Jesus' baptism is brief and vague. He was baptized among "all the people" (Luke 3:21) by an unnamed baptizer, and until he prays, the scene is rather unremarkable. During his prayer, however, an iconic scene unfolds with the heavens opening, the Holy Spirit descending in the form of a dove, and a voice booming from heaven.

As I considered how I might visually respond to this text, it was difficult to imagine this event with a beginner's mind. I've seen lots of imagery of Jesus in the water with clouds breaking open and a dove descending, or Jesus bursting out of water into a beam of light. These images are powerful, but I wasn't sure if creating a similar image would be helpful, or if I'd be offering insight into the text that hadn't already been visually explored.

I began to meditate on what was unspoken and implied in Luke's account, and one moment that stuck out in my imagination was the moment Jesus was underwater. How did Jesus feel when he held his breath and descended into the river?

This image offers a snapshot of Jesus right before he steps into his calling, on the threshold of spectacular affirmation. He is completely suspended, embraced, and upheld by the waters of baptism. The water's surface is choppy. The future is unknown and precarious. His path is a lonely and formidable one, eventually leading to his suffering and death.

Despite what is to come, Jesus reaches toward the surface. Two fish are drawn to the light of his halo, foreshadowing his companionship with fishers and his miraculous feeding of the five thousand. All of creation is leaning into his call.

This is what trusting your belovedness feels like—muscles and bones relieved of gravity's burden, serenity, weightlessness, oneness with creation, and the warmth of God's love permeating every cell of your body and every corner of your soul.





Greenwood Forest
Baptist Church

**an inclusive
community
of faith**

Welcome

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



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Announcements Church Events and Updates

New Teaching Series Begins January 14

God is Red: Learning from Indigenous Spirituality, Decolonizing Your Faith – Jan. 14, 21, 28 @ 9:45am.

Fifty years ago, Native American scholar and activist Vine Deloria, Jr. published *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*. Since then, indigenous voices have repeatedly called for Christians, especially those of European descent, to examine their conscience and leave behind colonizer religion. During this series we will learn together from Native theologians what it means to decolonize our faith and what a Christianity that respects indigenous people might look like. Rev. Dr. Stephen Stacks is facilitating.

Spiritual Formation Retreat Opportunity

CBF of North Carolina's Spiritual Formation Advisory Team is excited to offer a special retreat opportunity this winter aimed at laity. "The Art of Savoring: Spiritual Practices for an Abundant Life" retreat will be held January 26-27 at Camp Agape in Fuquay-Varina. All are invited (clergy & laity) to get away for a period of spiritual reflection and refreshment. During the retreat, we will spend time thinking about how we might more fully embrace the goodness of God and the gifts of this life, both individually and in small groups.

The retreat will be lead by Sarah Blackwell, Derek Hogan, and Greenwood Forest's own Dr. Lydia Hoyle! Registration is \$60. Visit gfbccary.org/cbfretreat for more info.

Tucson Trip | Register by January 31

This summer, we'll be traveling as a group with an organization called **Borderlinks** based in Tucson to the US-Mexico Border and other parts of Arizona (July 1-6). We'll engage in some service, learning, and relationship-building activities with residents of the borderlands and the migrants who cross them. Register at gfbccary.org/tucson by January 31. If you have questions, please direct them to Rev. Spears-Newsome.

Rev. Spears-Newsome Work Anniversary

From the Personnel Committee:

On January 3rd we celebrated Reverend Wesley Spears-Newsome's 7th year of serving as our Associate Pastor of Community and Youth. Among Wes' many responsibilities are leading our youth, coordinating our church's participation in ONE Wake and our other local missions, and lending his design talents to the church website and bulletin. Be sure to give Wes a big "thank you!" for his seven faithful years of ministering in our church and greater community.

Youth Decorations

If you are retiring or have any extra Christmas trees or garland, the youth ministry would love to use them to decorate their forest-themed youth room. Contact Rev. Spears-Newsome if you'd like to contribute!

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)
Anjar Hossain (friend of Kevin Schaefer)
Aaliyah Murray (family of Gail Jones)
Katheron E. Palmer (mother of Randy Palmer)
Fred Seeger
Eddie Stewart (friend of Diana Morde)
Kimberly Taliano (Mercedes Auger's daughter)
Mathias Warne (family of Gail Jones)
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 fbccary.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:

Discipleship Ministry

Our Discipleship Ministry fuels our spiritual growth both as individuals and as a community. We'll enjoy a new churchwide Faith Formation series this month *God is Red: A Native View of Religion* and we look forward to a Discipleship Retreat on March 1-3 on reading Scripture. These efforts wouldn't be possible without your generosity and gifts!

Order of Worship Baptism of our Lord Sunday

✝ 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

Prelude

Welcome to Worship | Rev. Lauren Efrid

Leader: The Lord be with you!

People: And also with you!

Passing of the Peace 📖

Call to Worship (from Psalm 29)

The voice of the Lord is over the waters.

The God of glory thunders over mighty waters.

The voice of the Lord is powerful.

The voice of the Lord is full of majesty.

The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars.

The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire.

The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness.

The voice of the Lord causes the oaks to whirl.

The voice of the Lord strips the forest bare.

In God's temple, all people say "glory!"

The Lord sits enthroned over the flood.

Invocation | Rev. Dr. Stephen Stacks

✝ **Hymn** | *Come, Thou Fount* (pg. 7)

Offertory Prayer | Ken Scott

Offertory | *Fairest Lord Jesus* | arr. Lynette Maynard

✝ **Doxology** | *Tune: OLD HUNDREDTH* 📖

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Praise God all creatures here below.

O praise God. Alleluia!

Praise God above ye heavenly host.

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

O praise God! O praise God!

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

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. A short doxology follows as we offer our gifts.

The Prayers of the People | *Rev. Wesley Spears-Newsome* 📖

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.

† **Hymn** | *Nothing But the Blood* (pg. 8)

Reading | *Mark 1:4-11* | *Rev. Dr. Stacks*

The word of God for us, the people of God.

Thanks be to God.

Anthem | *River* (pg. 10)

Sermon | *Down the Jordan* | *Rev. Efir*

Communion | *Rev. Efir* 📖

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** | *Take Me to the Water* (vv. 1, 3, 4, 6; pg. 9) 📖

Benediction | *Rev. Efir*

Postlude | *Heavenly Hosts in Ceaseless Worship*
arr. Mark Edwards

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.

Final Hymn: An Invitation

During the final hymn, if you'd like to join our community at Greenwood Forest Baptist Church, we invite you to come forward to the altar. When you come forward, you'll be greeted by a minister and a deacon who will then introduce you to the congregation after the hymn. Welcome!

Come, Thou Fount

1. Come, Thou Fount of ev-ery bless-ing, tune my heart to sing Thy grace;
2. Here I raise my Eb - e - ne - zer; hith - er by Thy help I'm come;
3. O to grace how great a debt - or dai - ly I'm con - strained to be!

streams of mer - cy, nev - er ceas - ing, call for songs of loud - est praise:
and I hope, by Thy good plea - sure, safe - ly to ar - rive at home:
Let Thy good - ness, like a fet - ter, bind my wan - dering heart to Thee:

teach me some me - lo - dious son - net, sung by flam - ing tongues a - bove;
Je - sus sought me when a stran - ger, wan - dering from the fold of God;
prone to wan - der, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love;

praise the mount! I'm fixed up - on it, mount of Thy re - deem - ing love.
He, to res - cue me from dan - ger, in - ter - posed His pre - cious blood.
here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it, seal it for Thy courts a - bove.

Nothing But the Blood

1. What makes us all ci - ti - zens? Nothing but the blood of
 2. What tears down our bor - der walls? Nothing but the blood of
 3. What se - cures our lib - er - ty? Nothing but the blood of
 4. What calls us to move past hate? Nothing but the blood of

4
 Je - sus. What re - names us as God's kin? Nothing but the blood of
 Je - sus. What force can u nite us all? Nothing but the blood of
 Je - sus. What dis - arms the pow'rs that be? Nothing but the blood of
 Je - sus. What trans - forms our bro - ken state? Nothing but the blood of

8
 Je - sus.
 Je - sus. O pre - cious is the flow that de - stroy the
 Je - sus.
 Je - sus.

12
 sta - tus quo, — No oth - er fount I know, nothing but the blood of Je - sus!

Tune: PLAINFIELD; Lyrics: Stephen Stacks

Take Me to the Water

1. 7 Take me to the wa - ter, 7
 2. 7 None but the right - eous, 7
 3. 7 I love Je - sus, 7
 4. 7 In the name of Je - sus, 7
 5. I know I got re - lig - ion, I
 6. 7 Glo - ry, hal - le - lu - jah, 7

Take me to the wa - ter, 7 Take me to the
 None but the right - eous, 7 None but the
 I love Je - sus, 7 I love
 In the name of Je - sus, 7 In the name of
 know I got re - lig - ion, I know I got re -
 Glo - ry, hal - le - lu - jah, 7 Glo - ry, hal - le -

wa - ter to be bap - tized. *optional*
 right - eous shall see God.
 Je - sus. Yes, I do.
 Je - sus we shall be saved.
 lig - ion. Yes, I do.
 lu - jah, to be bap - tized. *optional*

Anthem River

Leon Bridges; Evan and Lou Owoc-Edwards, soloists

Been traveling these wide roads for so long
My heart's been far from you
Ten-thousand miles gone

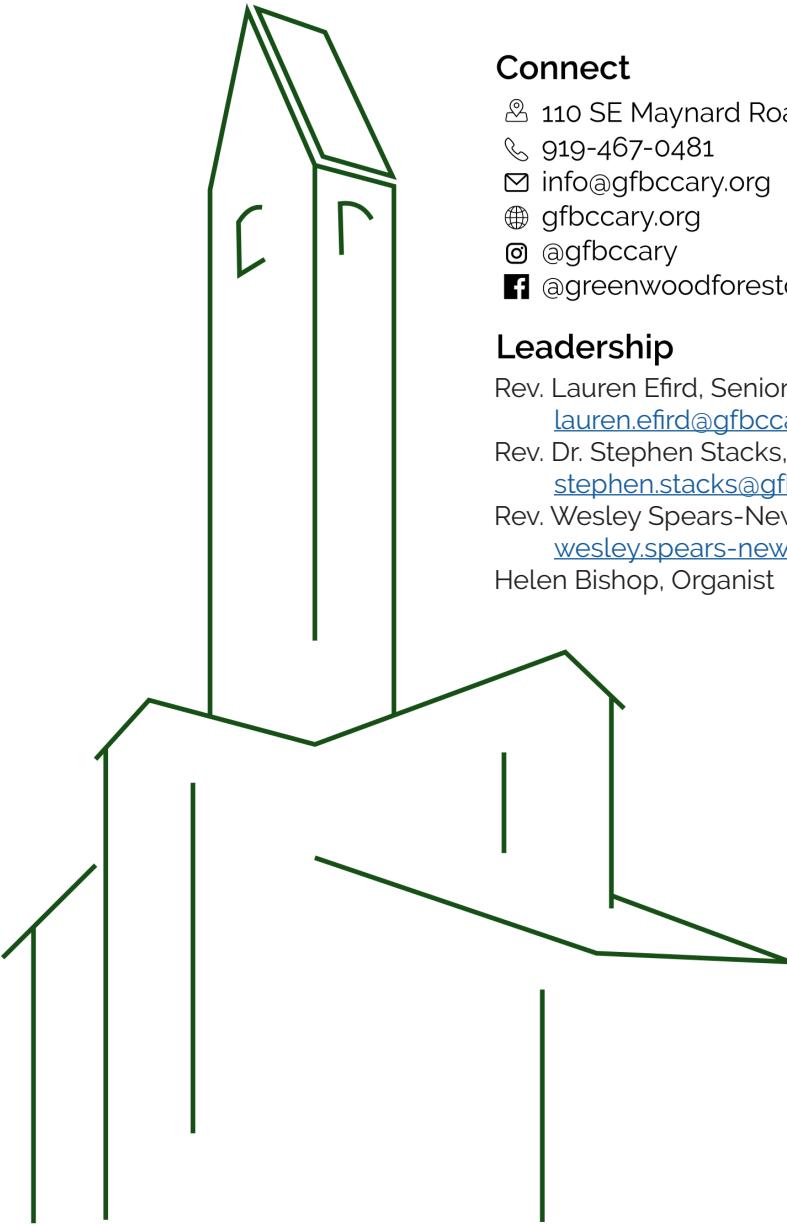
Oh, I wanna come near and give ya
Every part of me
But there is blood on my hands
And my lips aren't clean

In my darkness I remember
Momma's words reoccur to me
"Surrender to the good Lord
And he'll wipe your slate clean"

Take me to your river
I wanna go
Take me to your river
I wanna know

Tip me in your smooth waters
I go in
As a man with many crimes
Come up for air
As my sins flow down the Jordan

I wanna go, wanna go, wanna go
I wanna know, wanna know, wanna know



Connect

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Leadership

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Helen Bishop, Organist

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