



Greenwood Forest
Baptist Church January 28, 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.



Current Sermon Series:

TAKE ME TO YOUR RIVER

Jan. 7: Down the Jordan (Mark 1:4-11)

Jan. 14: Surrender to the Good Lord (Mark 10:35-45)

Jan. 21: Blood on My Hands (Acts 9:1-31)

Jan. 28: I Wanna Come Near (Acts 8:26-39)



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.

CONTENTS

- 3 | Announcements
- 4 | Community Notes
- 5 | Order of Worship
- 7 | Songbook

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



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



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

Announcements Church Events and Updates

Teaching Series Concludes

During this latest series we have been learning 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 the final session Sunday at 9:45am.

Tucson Trip Deadline

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). Register at gfbccary.org/tucson by January 31.

Black History Month

In honor of Black History Month, our worship services during February will feature music from Black composers and artists, as well as liturgical elements from the African American Heritage Hymnal. Our keynote preacher this year is Rev. Racquel Gill, who will be with us in worship on February 11. We will also welcome back the NCCU University Choir on February 25 to sing a program of spirituals in collaboration with our Sanctuary Choir.

Here at GFBC, we celebrate Black History Month alongside our Black congregants and Black siblings everywhere as a way to honor Black stories, beauty, and contributions, but also as a way to signal our continued commitment to Black lives throughout the year. For us, Black History Month is not a way to absolve ourselves of the year-round and life-long work of anti-racism, but a moment to celebrate and to recommit ourselves to the gospel work of inclusivity in our worship and in our lives.

Ministry Monday

We'll be gathering for our first Ministry Monday of 2024 on January 29 beginning at 6pm. We meet in two groups:

Group A Committees (6-7pm): Children's Ministry, Congregational Care, Personnel, Properties, and Youth

Group B Committees (7-8pm): Discipleship, Finance, Outreach and Fellowship, and Worship

We'll be meeting in-person at the church in the Faith Formation Hallway with breakout rooms for each committee. We look forward to seeing you there!

Randy Palmer Anniversary

From the Personnel Committee:

On January 27th we celebrate the 20th anniversary of Randy Palmer as our custodian. We have been incredibly blessed to have Randy care for our church building for two decades. For those of us who may not see him here at the church building during the week, many know Randy from his active participation and leadership in Sunday worship where he shares his singing and speaking talents. Please make a point to thank Randy for his dedication to our church community and congratulate him on this milestone.

Discipleship Retreat

Our annual discipleship retreat is coming soon (March 1-3). Following our retreat on prayer last year, this year we'll be digging into how to read the Bible. Sign up and check out the full schedule at gfbccary.org/bible.

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
Mercedes Auger
Gilles Bikindou
Tom Brooks, Sr.
Deborah Davis (friend of Susan Beck)
Aaliyah Murray (family of Gail Jones)
Katheron E. Palmer (mother of Randy Palmer)
Fred Seeger
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 Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

✝ 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 | *River* | Leon Bridges

Welcome to Worship | *Rev. Lauren Efirid*

Leader: The Lord be with you!

People: And also with you!

Passing of the Peace 📖

Call to Worship (from Psalm 145) 📖

The LORD is gracious and merciful,

Slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

The LORD is good to all,

And God's compassion is over all that God has made.

The LORD upholds all who are falling,

And raises up all who are bowed down.

The eyes of all look to you,

And you give them their food in due season.

You open your hand,

Satisfying the desire of every living thing.

You are just in all your ways,

And kind in all your doings.

You are near to all who call on you,

To all who call on you in truth.

You fulfill the desire of all who fear you;

You also hear their cry, and save them.

You watch over all who love you,

My mouth will ever speak your praise!

Invocation | *Rev. Wesley Spears-Newsome*

✝ **Hymn** | *With Water Freely Flowing (pg. 7)*

Today's color is **green**, representing growth and change.

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.

Offertory Prayer | *Sally Shaver*

Offertory | *Shall We Gather at the River* | *arr. Berry*

† **Doxology** | *Tune: LASST UNS ERFREUEN* 📖

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!

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.

† **Hymn** | *Just a Closer Walk with Thee* (pg. 8)

Reading | *Acts 8:26-39* | *Rev. Spears-Newsome*

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

Thanks be to God.

Anthem | *My Soul is a River* (pg. 10)

Sermon | *I Wanna Come Near* | *Rev. Efird*

Reaffirmation of Baptism

† **Hymn** | *Down by the Riverside* (pg. 9) 📖

Benediction | *Rev. Efird*

Postlude | *Wade in the Water* | *arr. Chuck Marohnic*

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

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.

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!

With Water Freely Flowing

Unison

1. With wa - ter free - ly flow - ing we cel - e - brate new birth,
2. The Spir - it, swift - ly soar - ing, de - scend - ing as a dove,
3. By wa - ter and the Spir - it bap - tized in Christ, we rise

in sa - cred sign ex - press - ing God's love for all on earth.
con - veys the start - ling Pres - ence on all whose vow is love.
to walk new paths un - fold - ing be - fore our o - pened eyes.

The Well of Liv - ing Wa - ter springs up for us this day;
The Breath of God with - in us en - liv - ens and sus - tains,
We jour - ney from this mo - ment, faith's pil - grim - age em - brace.

en - gulfed by love's ac - cept - ance, our fears are washed a - way.
be - yond this rite of pas - sage with us al - ways re - mains.
By Spir - it and by wa - ter we feel and sense God's grace.

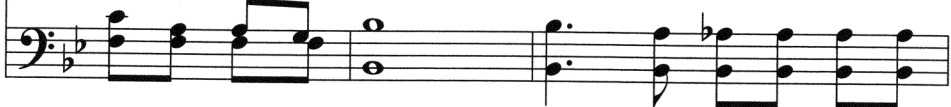
Just a Closer Walk with Thee



Refrain Just a clos - er walk with thee, grant it,
1 I am weak, but thou art strong; Je - sus,
2 Through this world of toil and snares, if I
3 When my fee - ble life is o'er, time for



Je - sus, is my plea, dai - ly walk - ing close to
keep me from all wrong; I'll be sat - is - fied as
fal - ter, Lord, who cares? Who with me my bur - den
me will be no more; guide me gent - ly, safe - ly



thee: let it be, dear Lord, let it be.
long as I walk, let me walk close to thee. *Ref.*
shares? None but thee, dear Lord, none but thee. *Ref.*
o'er to thy shore, dear Lord, to thy shore. *Ref.*



Down by the Riverside

1. Gon - na lay down my sword and shield, down by the riv - er - side,
2. Gon - na lay down my bur - den, down by the riv - er - side; gon - na
gon - na
lay down my sword and shield, down by the riv - er - side, gon - na
lay down my bur - den, lay down my sword and shield, down by the riv - er - side, gon - na
stud - y war no more. I ain't gon - na stud - y war no
more, ain't gon - na stud - y war no more, ain't gon - na stud - y

war no more, ain't gon-na stud-y war no more, ain't gon-na
stud-y war no more, I ain't gon-na

stud-y war no more, ain't gon-na stud-y war no more.

Prelude River

Leon Bridges; Evan Owoc-Edwards, Lou Owoc-Edwards, Randy Palmer, Zelma Palmer, and Stephen Stacks

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

Anthem My Soul is a River

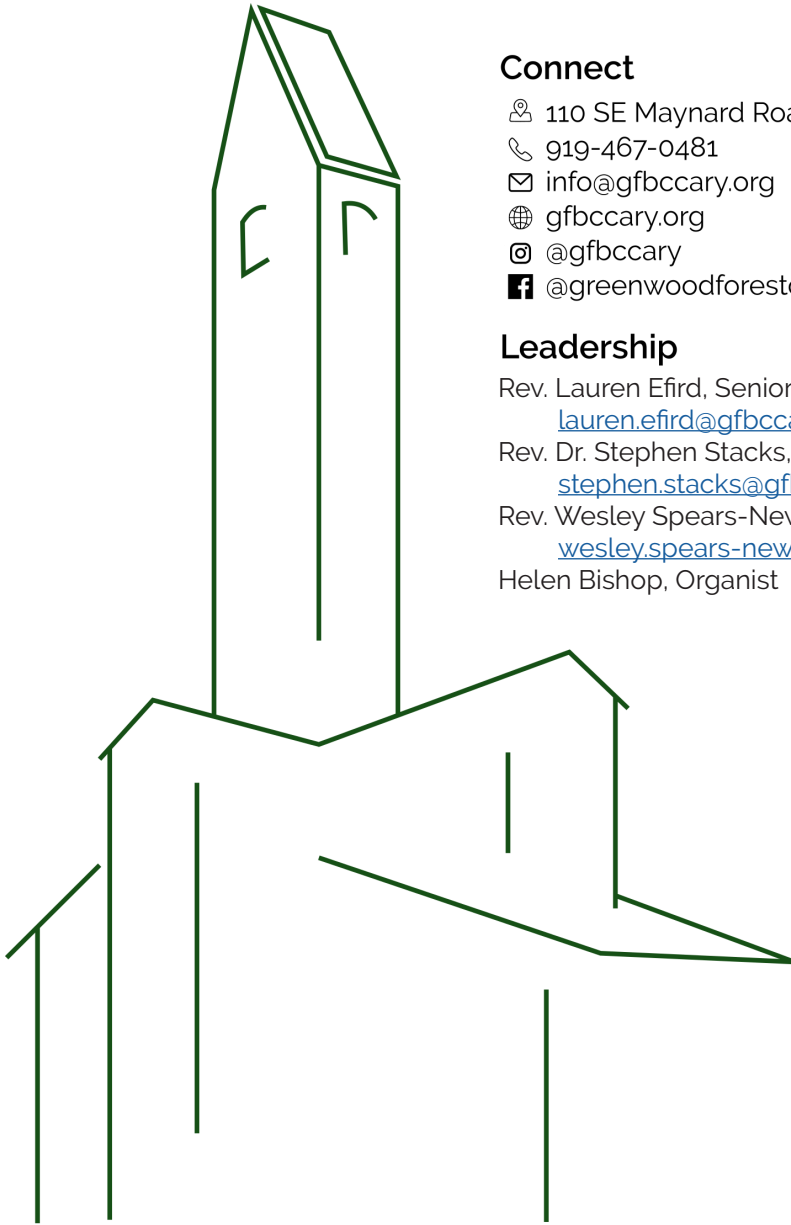
Ben Allaway

My soul is a river windin' through a weary land.

"Let justice roll, roll down like waters, righteousness like a mighty stream"
Washin' o'er a thirsty land.

My soul is a river, your soul is a river,

Join up down the river, fill a mighty ocean with peace.



Connect

📍 110 SE Maynard Road Cary, NC 27511

☎ 919-467-0481

✉ info@gfbccary.org

🌐 gfbccary.org

📷 @gfbccary

📘 @greenwoodforestcary

Leadership

Rev. Lauren Efird, Senior Pastor

lauren.efird@gfbccary.org

Rev. Dr. Stephen Stacks, Associate Pastor

stephen.stacks@gfbccary.org

Rev. Wesley Spears-Newsome, Associate Pastor

wesley.spears-newsome@gfbccary.org

Helen Bishop, Organist

Reprinted hymns come from Celebrating Grace, Glory to God, or the The African American Heritage Hymnal unless otherwise noted. Copyrighted music use covered by CCLI License #1243530, OneLicense #A-721397.

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