



# Greenwood Forest Baptist Church

December 1, 2024





# WORDS

## FOR THE BEGINNING

Advent is a season of endings and beginnings. As the calendar year comes to a close, a new church year begins. Christ's birth ushers us into new ways of living and loving; and yet, the world as we know it spins madly on. And so, we invite you to move through this Advent season as if you are entering a sacred new chapter, holding fast to the reminders that will bolster you for the journey ahead. As you journey through this season, may you find words for belovedness and hope. May you find words for beginning again. For no matter what you are facing, no matter what this new day brings, love is your beginning.

(Thematic Elements and Art from A Sanctified Art)

## Bulletin Art

"Favored One" by Lauren Wright Pittman inspired by Luke 1:26-38 (digital painting)

God chooses Mary, a young, unmarried woman—with little value as far as society is concerned—to be the conduit through which Love takes on flesh. "Why me?" I can almost hear Mary's spiraling thoughts even before she knows the purpose of the angel's visit. And then the angel pronounces what is to come. I imagine Mary first confused, then nearly crushed by the weight of an impossible burden. How do I square this reading with the fact that Mary is favored by God?

I originally created this image for Sojourners Magazine. I was invited to create an illustration based on Natalie Wigg Stevenson's reflection on the Annunciation through a queer theological lens. Stevenson's writing stretched me beyond my limits, and once I got past my discomfort, I became grateful for this challenge. Her commentary broke open my perspective and rebuilt it with affirmation, agency, consent, and pleasure. She notes that Mary is affirmed by the angel: "Greetings, favored one!" (v. 28), Mary exhibits agency: "How can this be?" (v. 34), and offers consent: "Here I am . . . let it be with me according to your word" (v. 38). Stevenson's writing introduced a question I had never considered: What if Mary experienced pleasure? This notion proved incompatible with my internalized shame. It challenged my deep-seated feelings of unworthiness and threatened to overturn the construct of a God who is repelled by anything human—especially the very natural human qualities of pleasure and desire. The exercise of sitting with this thought felt revolutionary.

As I attempted to create imagery to accompany her work, I found myself in tears. What if my fully embodied self, including the most human parts of me, are not only acceptable but beloved by the creator of the universe? What if because of my me-ness, God couldn't stay away, and chose to come near and take on flesh too?

- Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

# 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, citizenship statuses, 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.



# Announcements | Church Events and Updates

---

## Family Promise (Dec. 8-14)

We're providing meals and groceries for families experiencing homelessness December 8-14 at the Family Promise Center. If you can shop for groceries or want to provide a meal for these families, contact Elizabeth Deters at [elizabeth.deters@duke.edu](mailto:elizabeth.deters@duke.edu)!

## For Pastoral Needs...

Please contact the church office or Rev. Wesley Spears-Newsome directly while Rev. Efrid is on leave.

## Gratitude & Stewardship

We're exploring gratitude and stewardship in the life of our community this month. You'll hear from different church members each week about why this community matters to them. There's also a tree in the back of the Narthex where we invite you each week to write something you're thankful for about this community on a leaf and add it to the tree. We're thankful for you!

## Staff Love Offering

At GFBC, we have an Advent tradition of collecting a love offering for our staff. The offering is distributed to the staff as an expression of our gratitude for their hard work, dedication, leadership, and faithful service to the church throughout the year. If you would like to contribute, please give your contribution to either Leta Huntsinger or Blair Biser or make use of the envelopes placed in each Faith Formation classrooms. You may make checks payable to Leta Huntsinger or you can use Venmo to send the money to @Leta-Huntsinger (last digits of phone number are 6291). Donations will be collected through Wednesday, Dec. 18. Thank you for your generosity!

## Stories & Spirituality Churchwide Faith Formation (December 15)

Mark your calendars! Rev. Spears-Newsome spent his sabbatical this year exploring writing and reading progressive spiritual literature for children. Join us in the Fellowship Hall on December 15 at 9:45am to hear some of the stories Wes wrote and what else he learned while away.

## Advent and Christmas Schedule of Services

We're excited to welcome you to our Advent and Christmas Services over the next several weeks!

### **December 1:**

First Sunday of Advent (11am)

### **December 8:**

Second Sunday of Advent (11am)  
Youth Ministry Advent Party

### **December 15:**

Third Sunday of Advent (11am)

### **December 18:**

Service of Lament (6pm)

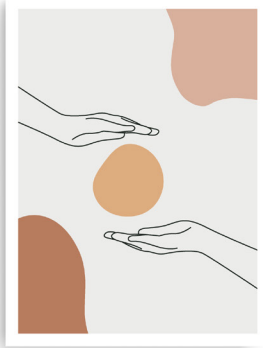
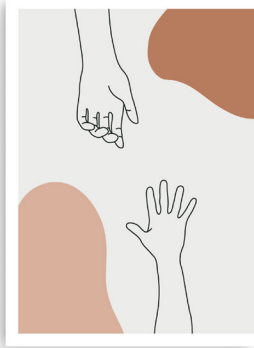
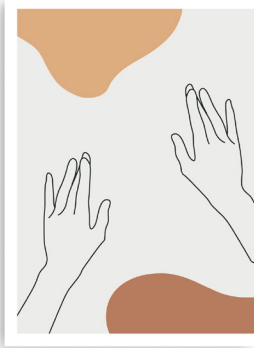
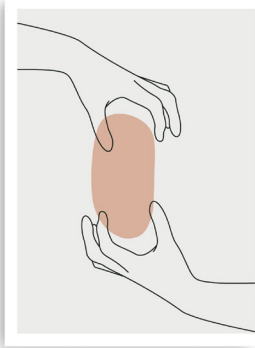
### **December 22:**

Fourth Sunday of Advent and  
Service of Lessons and Carols (11am)

### **December 24:**

Children's Christmas Eve (11am)  
Candlelight Christmas Eve (8pm)

# Community Notes | Prayer Requests and Giving



## Prayer

*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.*

Gilles Bikindou

Jo Brooks

Edwina Erwin

Barney Graham

Doris Martin

Jennie Pegram

Fred Seeger

Kathleen Wicker

Our siblings in Western North Carolina

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: Property Repurposing

We've been working for several years now on better utilizing our property to benefit the wider Cary community. We house several community efforts, recovery meetings, and even host a business! The most significant part of this effort is the development of a four-story mixed-use building to meet community needs of housing and childcare. We hope that the project will go before the Cary Town Council for a public hearing!

# Order of Worship | Advent

✝ 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

**Lighting the Advent Wreath (Hope)** | Jazzmoné Sutton

**Prelude** | O Come, O Come, Emmanuel | arr. Mary McDonald

**Welcome to Worship** | Rev. Wesley Spears-Newsome

Leader: The Lord be with you!

**People: And also with you!**

**Passing of the Peace** 📖

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

God says,

**"Do not be afraid!"**

God says,

**"I have called you by name."**

God says,

**"I will be with you."**

God says,

**"You are precious and honored in my sight."**

At the beginning of this season,

**at the start of this week,**

at the top of this hour,

**may we wrap ourselves in these words.**

May we begin again.

**Let us worship our Holy God!**

**Invocation** | Steve Denning

✝ **Hymn** | Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

**Stewardship Testimony** | GFBC Youth

**Offertory Prayer** | Jazzmoné Sutton

**Offertory** | Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence | arr. Don Phillips 📖

Today's color is **purple**, representing repentance and reflection on the coming of God.

## 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.

† **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** | Dylan Melton 

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** | In Case No One Ever Told You (pg. 8)

**Reading** | Luke 1:26-38

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

**Thanks be to God.**

**Anthem** | All Good Gifts (pg. 10)

**Sermon** | You Are a Blessing | Rev. Spears-Newsome

**Communion** 

**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** | This is a Day of New Beginnings (pg. 9) 

**Benediction** | Rev. Spears-Newsome

**Postlude** | in Dulcimer Jubilo | arr. Martha Sherrill Kelsey

**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!

# 7 Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

1. Come, Thou long - ex - pect - ed Je - sus, born to set Thy  
2. Born Thy peo - ple to de - liv - er, born a child, and

peo - ple free; from our fears and sins re - lease us;  
yet a King, born to reign in us for - ev - er,

let us find our rest in Thee. Is - rael's strength and con - so -  
now Thy gra - cious king - dom bring. By Thine own e - ter - nal

la - tion, hope of all the earth Thou art; dear de - sire of  
Spir - it rule in all our hearts a - lone; by Thine all - suf -

ev - ery na - tion, joy of ev - ery long - ing heart.  
fi - cient mer - it, raise us to Thy glo - rious throne.



# In Case No One Ever Told You



In case no one e - ver told you or  
You are the mas - ter-piece born of God's  
You are u - nique - ly cre - a - ted for

4



you have for - got - ten You are a bless - ing and  
i - ma - gin - a - tion E - ven the parts that are  
love and be - long - ing For - cing your - self to be

9



have been since you were be - got - ten  
cry - ing out for res - tor - a - tion  
some - one you're not is ex - haus - ting

13



Fash-ioned from love Sent to the earth from a - bove  
All that you are Born out of star - dust and scars  
You are a gift There is no box you must fit

18



You're no - thing short of a god - send  
Re - flects God's per - fect cre - a - tion  
Let your be - lov - ed - ness blos - som

# This is a Day of New Beginnings

Unison

1. This is a day of new be - gin - nings, Time to re -  
 2. For by the life and death of Je - sus, God's might - y  
 3. Then let us, with the Spir - it's dar - ing, Step from the  
 4. Christ is a - live, and goes be - fore us To show and  
 5. In faith we'll gath - er 'round the ta - ble To taste and

mem - ber and move on, Time to be - lieve what love is  
 Spir - it, now as then, Can make for us a world of  
 past and leave be - hind Our dis - ap - point - ment, guilt, and  
 share what love can do. This is a day of new be -  
 share what love can do. This is a day of new be -

bring - ing, Lay - ing to rest the pain that's gone.  
 dif - f'rence, As faith and hope are born a - gain.  
 griev - ing, Seek - ing new paths, and sure to find.  
 gin - nings; Our God is mak - ing all things new.  
 gin - nings; Our God is mak - ing all things new.

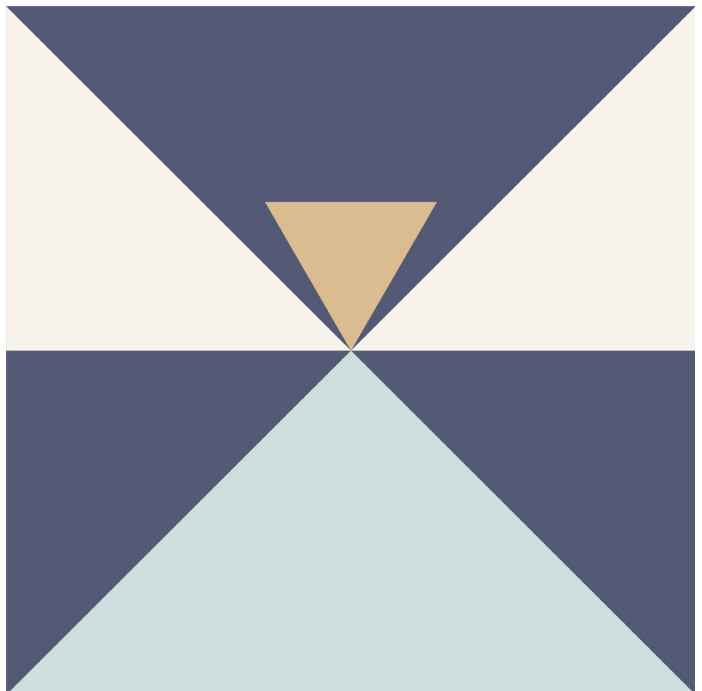
# Anthem "All Good Gifts" from *Godspell*

Stephen Schwartz | Soloist: Cameron Aiken

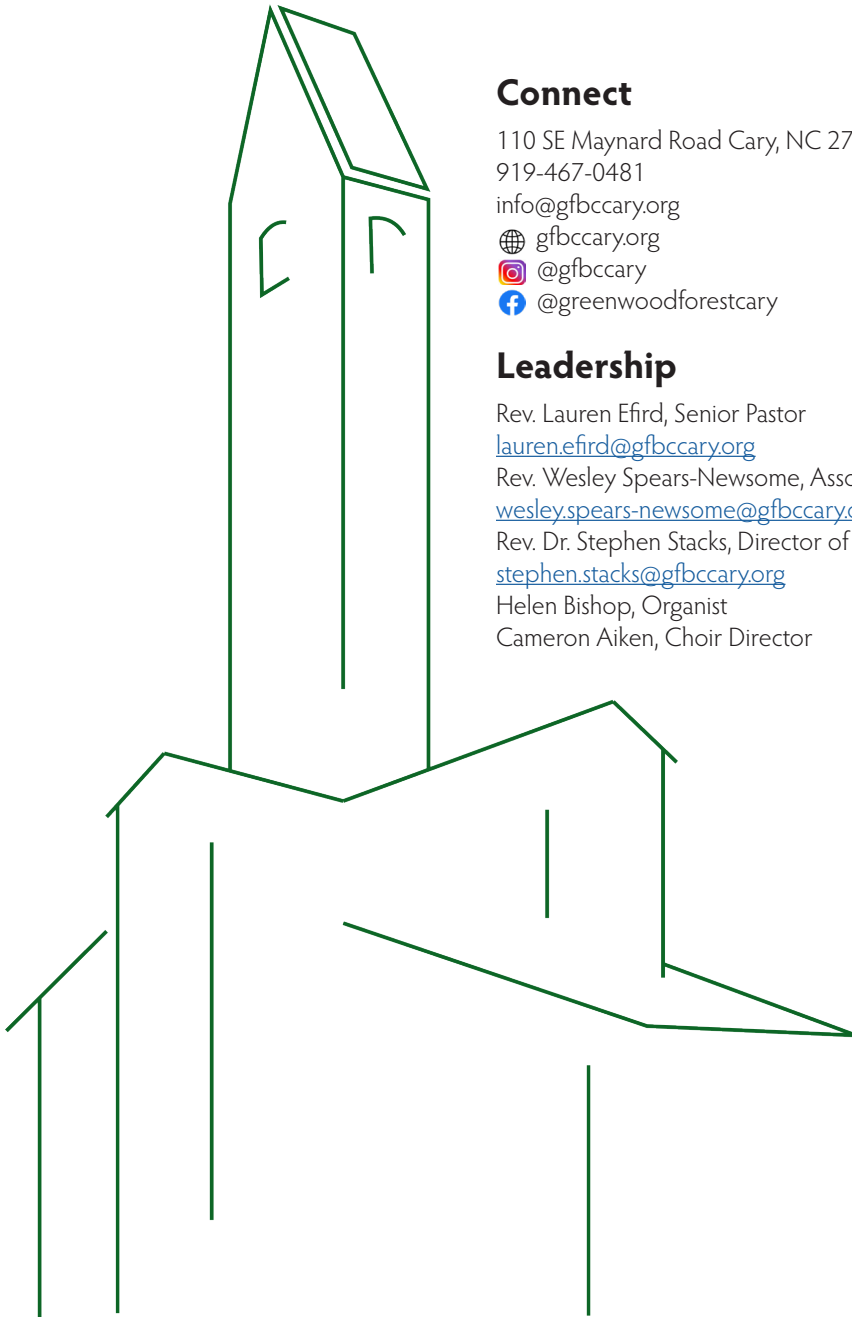
We plow the fields and scatter the good seed on the land,  
But it is fed and watered by God's almighty hand.  
He sends us snow in winter, the warmth to swell the grain,  
The breezes and the sunshine, and soft refreshing rain.

*All good gifts around us  
Are sent from heaven above  
So thank the Lord, oh thank the Lord for all his love.*

We thank thee, then, O Father, for all things bright and good,  
The seedtime and the harvest, our life our health our food,  
No gifts have we to offer for all thy love imparts  
But that which thou desirest, our humble thankful hearts!



*Can you find this square on the pulpit quilt?*



## Connect

110 SE Maynard Road Cary, NC 27511

919-467-0481

[info@gfbccary.org](mailto:info@gfbccary.org)

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

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

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

## Leadership

Rev. Lauren Efird, Senior Pastor

[lauren.efird@gfbccary.org](mailto:lauren.efird@gfbccary.org)

Rev. Wesley Spears-Newsome, Associate Pastor

[wesley.spears-newsome@gfbccary.org](mailto:wesley.spears-newsome@gfbccary.org)

Rev. Dr. Stephen Stacks, Director of Liturgy & Formation

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

Helen Bishop, Organist

Cameron Aiken, Choir Director

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.