



Greenwood Forest Baptist Church

December 15, 2024



Bulletin Art

"Joseph's Dream" by Lauren Wright Pittman inspired by Matthew 1:18-25 (hand-carved block printed with oil-based ink on patterned paper)

The angel holds Joseph as his dream unfolds in quilted vignettes. At the top, Mary gazes ahead, pondering her role in welcoming the Son of God into the world. Below, a squishy baby Jesus peacefully rests as his glory shines on a longing world eager to soak up the light of Emmanuel. Just as a dream holds layers of meaning, this image reflects more than the sum of its parts.

I'm fascinated by symbology. Stars have come to represent both Mary and Jesus in liturgical art, so I decided to research stars in quilting. It turns out that quilting holds its own wealth of symbology through choices in color, shapes, patterns, etc. A star quilt holds significance in a number of different cultures, including the Lakota. Star quilts are given at important moments throughout one's life, including birth, and the eight-pointed morning star "represents fulfillment, the release from darkness, [and] ushering in a new day." (A quote from Kevin Locke, Lakota Sioux. nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/evolution-expression.)

This brings me to another fascination of mine, Biblical numerology. One of my most well-worn resources is a glossary of common liturgical symbols in European Christian art called, *Symbolism in Liturgical Art* (Appleton and Bridges, 1959). In it, the writers describe that the eight-pointed star is often used in imagery of Christ as an allusion to the eighth day of creation when Christ rose from the dead, "a beginning of days outside of time" (97). It delights me that this eight-pointed star is made up of triangles with three sides. The number three references the Trinity, and therefore, the communal fullness of the Divine.

In researching imagery for Mary, I realized that both stars and lilies are often used in European art to celebrate Mary's purity. My glossary reads: "Her bearing of Christ without loss of her virginity is seen as similar to stars sending out their light without loss of brightness" (96). Of all the things we can lift up about Mary, such as her courage, strength, or steadfast love, why emphasize her virginity? This feels incredibly limiting and dismissive and misses how incredible and multifaceted Mary is. In my image, I want to reclaim the imagery of stars and lilies to represent how Mary is a brilliant, shining example of radical faithfulness in the face of every possible earthly fear. Lilies are resourceful, hearty plants which represent rebirth across cultures. I would argue that Mary is resilient in the face of an impossible task, and in many ways, the entire story of the people of God is reborn through Mary's bravery.

—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.

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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.



Announcements | Church Events and Updates

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 we 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)

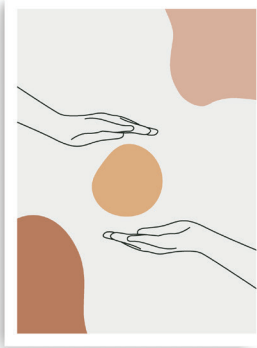
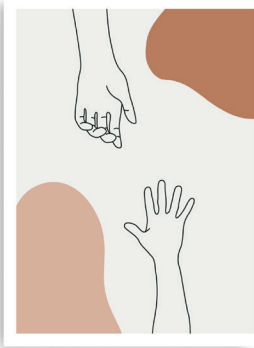
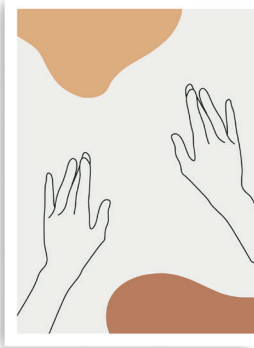
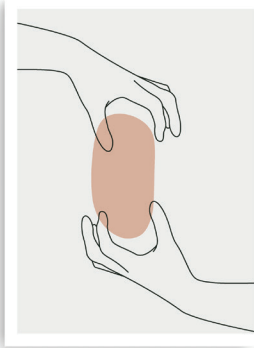
December 24:

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

Service of Lament

Join us for our annual Service of Lament on December 18 at 6pm in the sanctuary. The holidays can be a time of resurfaced grief and mourning for many of us. Whether that's your current experience or not, we hope you'll join us in coming alongside those who are suffering this season and for us to remember those we have lost.

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
- 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. The project went before the Cary Town Council for Public Hearing this month!

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 (Joy) | Diana McGahan

Prelude | O Come, O Come, Emmanuel | arr. M. S. Kelsey

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) 📖

In this weary world,

we sing of joy.

In this fragile world,

we lift each other up.

In this beautiful world,

we look for God.

In this tender world,

we hold onto hope.

This is the invitation of faith.

So in this time of worship,

may we sing, lift up, look for, and hold onto our with-us God.

With hope in our hearts, amen!

Invocation | Diana McGahan

† **Hymn** | Joy to the World (pg. 7)

Offertory Prayer | Blair Biser

Offertory | Joy, Joy, Joy | arr. Mark Hayes 📖

† **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.

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 Prayers of the People | Rev. 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 | O Little Town of Bethlehem (pg. 8)

Reading | Matthew 1:18-25 | Rev. Spears-Newsome

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

Thanks be to God.

Anthem | Canticle of the Turning (pg. 10)

Sermon | Hope is Worth the Risk | Rev. Dr. Stephen Stacks

† Hymn | Hope is Worth the Risk (pg. 9) 

Benediction | Rev. Dr. Stacks

Postlude | Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers | arr. Michael Burkhardt

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!

Joy to the World

1. Joy to the world! the Lord is come; let earth re - ceive her King;
 2. Joy to the earth! the Sav - ior reigns; let men their songs em - ploy;
 3. No more let sins and sor - rows grow, nor thorns in - fest the ground;
 4. He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the na - tions prove

let ev - ery heart pre - pare Him room,
 while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
 He comes to make His bless - ings flow
 the glo - ries of His righ - teous - ness,

and heaven and na - ture sing, and heaven and na - ture
 re - peat the sound - ing joy, re - peat the sound - ing
 far as the curse is found, far as the curse is
 and won - ders of His love, and won - ders of His

1. And heaven and na - ture sing, and

sing, and heaven, and heaven and na - ture sing.
 joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
 found, far as, far as the curse is found.
 love, and won - ders, won - ders of His love.

heaven and na - ture sing,

O Little Town of Bethlehem

1. O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, how still we see thee lie!
2. For Christ is born of Ma - ry, and gath - ered all a - bove,
3. How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly the won - drous gift is given!
4. O ho - ly Child of Beth - le - hem, de - scend to us, we pray;

A - bove thy deep and dream-less sleep the si - lent stars go by;
while mor - tals sleep the an - gels keep their watch of won - dering love.
So God im - parts to hu - man hearts the bless - ings of His heaven.
cast out our sin, and en - ter in, be born in us to - day!

yet in thy dark streets shin - eth the ev - er - last - ing Light;
O morn - ing stars, to - geth - er pro - claim the ho - ly birth,
No ear may hear His com - ing, but in this world of sin,
We hear the Christ - mas an - gels the great glad tid - ings tell;

the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to - night.
and prais - es sing to God the King, and peace to all the earth!
where meek souls will re - ceive Him still, the dear Christ en - ters in.
O come to us, a - bide with us, our Lord Em - man - u - el!

Hope is Worth the Risk

Words by Anna Strickland, 2024

Traditional French melody



Col - lege stu - dents ga - ther pro - tes - ting for peace
Young girls in I - ran to pro - test the re - gime
In Tai - wan the dream - ers flood the streets with blooms
Li - ber - i - an wom - en scarred by ci - vil war
Eth - nic mu - sic rings out from the Bal - tic Sea
Age to age and coast to coast peo - ple have stood



Stand - ing firm in spite of vio - lence from po - lice
Take off their hi - jabs to let their hair be seen
Sun - flow - ers and li - lies li - ber - ty's per - fume
Keep the peace talks go - ing by bar - ring the doors
As the peo - ple sing their right to li - ber - ty
Risk - ing some - thing big in hope of some - thing good



Em - pires will fight with force or pol - i - tics



Still the Spi - rit whis - pers, "Hope is worth the risk"

Anthem Canticle of the Turning

Rory Cooney

My soul cries out with a joyful shout
that the God of my heart is great,
And my spirit sings of the wondrous things
that you bring to the one who waits.

You fixed your sight on the servant's plight,
and my weakness you did not spurn,
So from east to west shall my name be blest.
Could the world be about to turn?

*My heart shall sing of the day you bring.
Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears,
For the dawn draws near,
And the world is about to turn.*

Though I am small, my God, my all,
you work great things in me.
And your mercy will last from the depths of the past
to the end of the age to be.

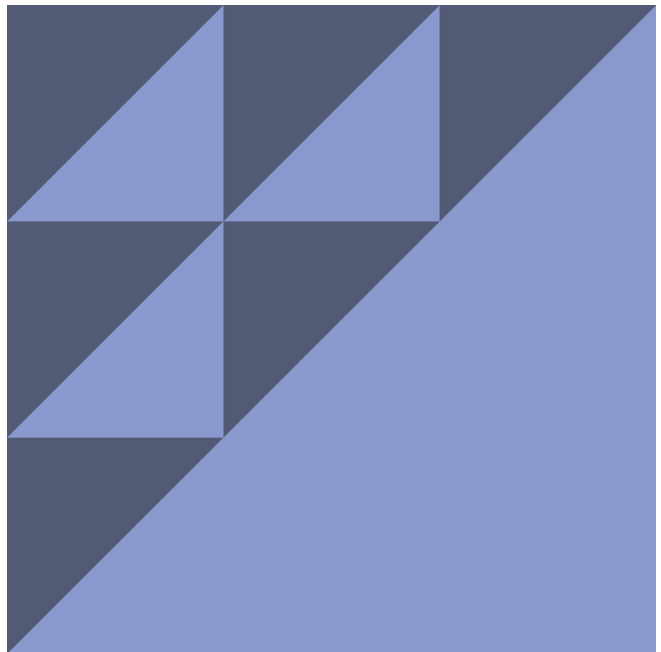
Your very name puts the proud to shame,
and those who would for you yearn,
You will show your might, put the strong to flight,
for the world is about to turn.

From the halls of power to the fortress tower,
not a stone will be left on stone.
Let the king beware for your justice tears
every tyrant from his throne.

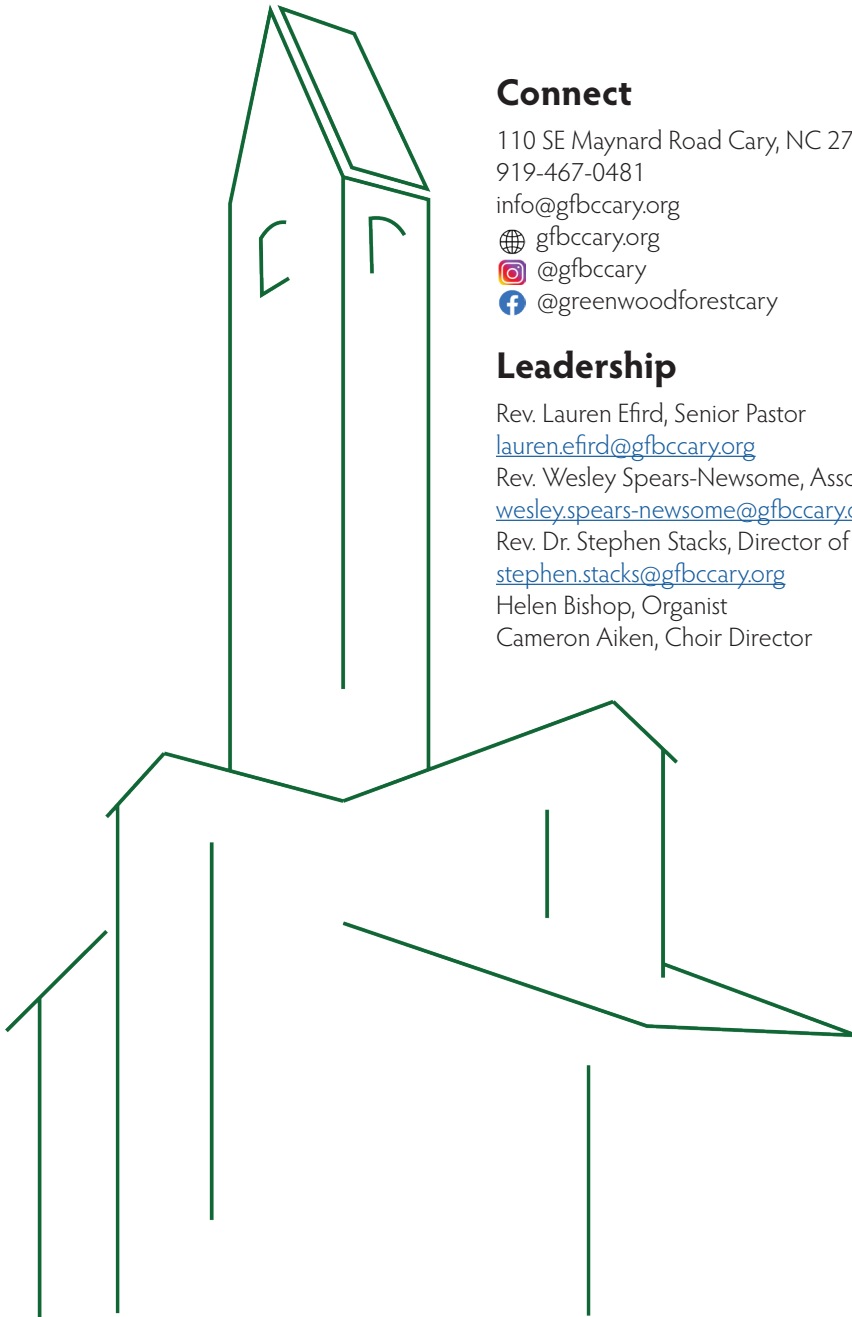
The hungry poor shall weep no more,
for the food they can never earn;
These are tables spread, ev'ry mouth be fed,
for the world is about to turn.

Though the nations rage from age to age,
we remember who holds us fast:
God's mercy must deliver us
from the conqueror's crushing grasp.

This saving word that our forbears heard
is the promise that holds us bound,
'Til the spear and rod be crushed by God,
who is turning the world around.



Can you find this square on the pulpit quilt?



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Helen Bishop, Organist

Cameron Aiken, Choir Director

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