

Greenwood Forest Baptist Church

December 7, 2025



Scan for Digital

Bulletin Art

Hope Like a Dancer

by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Inspired by Matthew 11:1-11

11"x14" Gouache, paint pens, colored pencils, and ink on paper

John the Baptist was thrown in prison after publicly questioning the legality of Herod's marriage (Matthew 14:3-5). He was not afraid to go toe-to-toe with the powerful, and perhaps he expected Jesus' ministry to look more confrontational and politically strategic. In questioning Jesus, I wonder if John sought a particular answer to hang his hope on, that maybe the Messiah would be how he'd imagined him. Maybe Jesus would bust him out of jail and take things straight to Herod, but Jesus offers something else.

In this image, John sits in prison, letting the disciples' testimony settle in. People with hearing, visual, and physical impairments experience new senses and mobility. Those with skin diseases are cleansed. Those with little material comfort are offered irrepressible hope, and the lungs of the dead are filled with the breath of life. I decided to imagine this good news through the dancing light of a lantern in John's prison cell. I chose dancing figures because dancing feels like a primal response to the radical healing taking place outside the prison walls. As these six dancers illuminate the cell, I imagine John, even if for a moment, breaking into a bit of laughter at the magnitude of Jesus' ministry. Jesus was quite literally doing the unimaginable. He was removing barriers so that the marginalized were no longer reduced to begging and sitting on mats, shoved to the edges of society. He was not only healing physical ailments; perhaps more importantly, he was restoring people to community.

Out of all the miraculous actions mentioned, the news did not include "release of the captives" (Luke 4:18-19). With this message, John would know that he was not going to be freed, and so, the number of dancers would remain one short of seven. As we know all too well, God's work isn't completed in Jesus' time. We are still woefully short of realizing the fullness of God's desire for all of creation, and the work is ours to see through. Until then, let us keep our eyes peeled for the glimmers of hope dancing all around us and work toward a day when all can join in that dance of wholeness.

Sermon Series

This year's Advent theme is *What Do You Fear? Insisting on Hope this Advent*. We'll enjoy art, poetry, reflections, and more from A Sanctified Art. The series looks closely at the fear and terror looming in the background during the time of King Herod and invites us to consider the fears we hold now. Fear can divide and paralyze us, and even be used as a tool for oppression. But what if we formed a different relationship with fear? Can we acknowledge fear without letting it rule us? Might we catalyze our fears into love and action? What if naming our fears helps us see more clearly how God is breaking in and where God is at work? This series gently invites us to identify where fear is present—both in the Advent story and in our lives—while also finding our way toward hope, with the angels' voices in our ears.



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 | Community Notes
- 4 | Announcements
- 6 | Order of Worship
- 8 | 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, transcripts of the sermon, and large print bulletins are available at the back of the sanctuary.



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

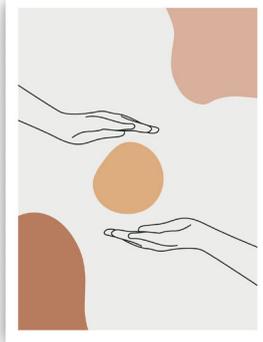
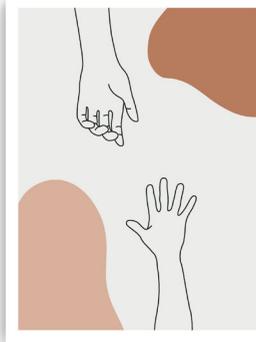
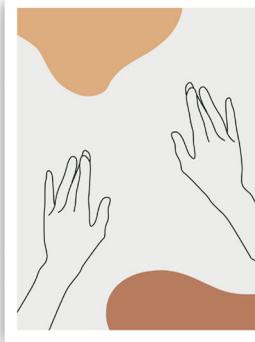
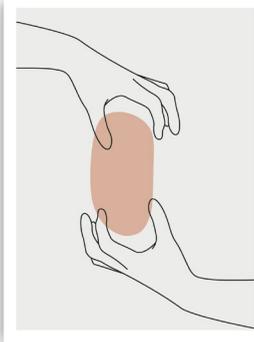


[greenwoodforestcary](https://www.facebook.com/greenwoodforestcary)



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

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.

Bess Averre
Jo Brooks
Carrie
Mac Graham
Ken Prillaman (Susan Beck's Brother)
Steven (friend of GFBC)
Nancy Walters (Susan Beck's mother-in-law)
Kathleen Wicker
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.



Scan to Give
Online Today!

Announcements | Church Events and Updates

Backpack Buddies Update

Our numbers are increasing and we are running out of plastic bags! We urgently need your double bagged, flat stacked plastic bags. If you'd like to be notified of opportunities to pack bags email judyvaccaro@gmail.com.

Newcomers Reception

All those new to GFBC are invited to a reception after worship on December 14! Join us in the narthex (the entrance/foyer area to the sanctuary) to get more information about this community, make connections, and find your place here at GFBC.

Teaching Series:

The Bible and Reproductive Justice

November 30-December 14

Accompanying Podcast Recommendation: Liberty Lost

What does it look like in our post-Roe v. Wade world to fight alongside our sisters for justice and freedom? In this series, we will first return to scripture and wade through the lies and proof-texting of the religious right to come to a truer understanding of what our biblical mandate is when it comes to abortion, adoption, and other issues of reproductive justice.

We'll then place that biblical mandate in context, hearing the stories and testimonies of women who will give us powerful insights and awaken our undeniable calling to do justice.

HVAC Update

Things are moving forward with our HVAC campaign and we need your help! We have approved Piedmont to begin **Phase Two of the Boiler Project**- replacing our boilers!

If you have not yet contributed to the project and are able to do so, prayerfully consider making a donation today. **We still need to raise an additional \$25,000 to move into Phase Two of the project.**

If you have not yet fulfilled your pledge, please do so today or let us know when you will be able to do so. **We are still waiting for \$7,800 in unfulfilled pledges.**

We are truly grateful to everyone who has donated to our HVAC campaign already. Thank you for helping us keep GFBC a safe, warm, and inclusive space of worship and community.

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 Andy Jarrell. 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 Sunday, Dec. 21. Thank you for your generosity!

Advent and Christmas

at Greenwood Forest Baptist Church

November 30

First Sunday of Advent (11am)

December 7

Second Sunday of Advent (11am)

December 14

Third Sunday of Advent (11am)

Youth Advent Party (5pm)

December 17

Service of Lament (6pm)

December 21

Christmas Breakfast (9:45am)

Lessons and Carols (11am)

December 24

Children's Christmas Eve (11am)

Candlelight Christmas Eve (8pm)

December 28

First Sunday of Christmas (11am)

January 4

Epiphany Sunday (11am)

Service of Lament

This service is a time for grieving losses this holiday season. Whether you're experiencing loss or not, we invite you to join us in this time of remembrance, grief, and support.

Children's Christmas Eve

This service is designed for children and their needs. It's a multi-sensory service where all noisemakers, wanderers, and curious minds are welcome!

Candlelight Christmas Eve

This service is our traditional Christmas service where you can experience songs, ritual, prayer, and candlelight as we welcome the Christ child together.



Order of Worship | Second Week of 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

† **Processional Hymn** | Comfort, Comfort Ye My People (pg. 8)

Welcome to Worship | Rev. Wesley Spears-Newsome

Leader: The Lord be with you!

People: And also with you!

Passing of the Peace 📖

Lighting of the Peace Candle | Travis Stanley and Emily Mason

Preparation for Worship

Call to Worship 📖

Family of faith, God is at work!

God is healing and creating,
redeeming and dreaming,
calling and sending,
listening and loving.

Yes, indeed, God is at work!

So may we worship our God who never gives up.

May we worship our God who holds onto hope.

Amen.

Invocation | Diana McGahan

† **Hymn** | Looking Out a Prison Window (pg. 9)

Offertory Prayer | Jazzmoné Sutton

Offertory

† **Doxology** | Tune: CRANHAM

What can I give him, poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;

If I was 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 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. 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 debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Reading | Matthew 11:1-11 & Isaiah 43:19-21 | Rev. Spears-Newsome

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

Thanks be to God.

Anthem | Prepare Ye the Way | Cameron Aiken

Prepare ye the way of the Lord.

Get thee up to a high mountain, O Zion.

Say to the cities of Judah, "Behold, here is your God."

He will feed his flock like a shepherd.

He will carry the lamb in his arms.

Sermon | When We're Running Out of Hope | Rev. Dr. Stephen Stacks

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 | Put Peace into Each Other's Hands (pg. 10)

Benediction | Rev. Dr. Stacks

Postlude

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.

* = In the Lord's Prayer, you may say any name for God (e.g., Mother/Father/Parent).

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.

Thank you!

Thank you to our wonderful guest musicians Orion and David!

Comfort, Comfort Ye My People

1. Com - fort, com - fort ye my peo - ple, speak ye peace, thus saith our God;
2. Hark, the voice of one that cri - eth in the des - ert far and near,
3. Make ye straight what long was crook - ed, make the rough - er plac - es plain;

com - fort those who sit in dark - ness, mourn - ing 'neath their sor - rows' load.
bid - ding all to true re - pent - ance since the king - dom now is here.
let your hearts be true and hum - ble, as be - fits His ho - ly reign.

Speak ye to Je - ru - sa - lem of the peace that waits for them;
O that warn - ing cry o - bey! Now pre - pare for God a way;
For the glo - ry of the Lord now o'er earth is shed a - broad;

tell her that her sins I cov - er, and her war - fare now is o - ver.
let the val - leys rise to meet Him, and the hills bow down to greet Him.
and all flesh shall see the to - ken that His word is nev - er bro - ken.

Looking out a Prison Window

Look - ing out a pri - son win - dow, who can see the flow - ers bloom?
All the things that keep us cap - tive shrink our op - ti - mis - tic faith
To our sib - lings still im - pris - oned be - hind bars of steel or fear
We are called to li - ber - a - tion, to be freed and to set free

6

Hope dis - solves like dreams at day - break leav - ing us an emp - ty room
We must prac - tice hope on pur - pose e - ven when our spi - rits break
Bring the mes - sage from our Sav - ior: hope is real and dawn - ing near
Break - ing chains of world - ly pow - ers who would claim our li - ber - ty

10

Still be - yond what we can see God is al - ways plant - ing seeds
'Til at last our free - dom comes And we fin - ally see the sun
Tell the gos - pel all a - round New life springs up from the ground
Bo - dy, spi - rit, mind and heart Li - ber - ate each cap - tive part

Put Peace into Each Other's Hands

1. Put peace in - to each oth - er's hands and like a
 2. Put peace in - to each oth - er's hands with lov - ing
 3. Put peace in - to each oth - er's hands, like bread we
 4. As at com - mun - ion, shape your hands in - to a
 5. Put Christ in - to each oth - er's hands, He is love's

trea - sure hold it; pro - tect it like a
 ex - pec - ta - tion; be gen - tle in your
 break for shar - ing; look peo - ple warm - ly
 wait - ing cra - dle; the gift of Christ re -
 deep - est meas - ure; in love make peace, give

can - dle flame, with ten - der - ness en - fold it.
 words and ways, in touch with God's cre - a - tion.
 in the eye: our life is meant for car - ing.
 ceive, re - vere, u - nit - ed round the ta - ble.
 peace a chance and share it like a treas - ure.



Connect

110 SE Maynard Road Cary, NC 27511

919-467-0481

info@gbccary.org

 gbccary.org

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

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

Leadership

Rev. Lauren Hayes, Senior Pastor

lauren.hayes@gbccary.org

Rev. Wesley Spears-Newsome, Associate Pastor

wesley.spears-newsome@gbccary.org

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

stephen.stacks@gbccary.org

Helen Bishop, Organist

Cameron Aiken, Choir Director

Alex Filby, Director of Administration and Facilities

alex.filby@gbccary.org

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.