

# *The First Presbyterian Church* *in the City of New York*

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## SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

*Service for the Lord's Day*

December 6, 2020 | 11:00 a.m.

*The Session and members of First Church extend a sincere welcome to all persons regardless of race, nationality, gender, or sexual orientation. This includes an open invitation to membership, the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, marriage, funerals, memorial services, and service as an officer of the church.*

### GATHERING

*The peace candle represents our prayers for peace in a broken world. The congregation is asked to offer prayers of intercession for one another and for those who lead in these times of remote worship.*

PRELUDE                    “Partita on ‘On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry”                    Bruce Neswick  
*Chorale, Meditation, Bicinium, and Aria*

WELCOME

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

HYMN 96                    “On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry”                    WINCHESTER NEW

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**We confess to each other and to you, our creator,  
that we fall short of being what we have been created to be,  
what we have committed ourselves to be,  
disciples of the kingdom.  
Hear us, forgive us,  
renew our resolve to build the kingdom of peace.**

**We often seek out the easiest paths;  
paths of least involvement in places where we might be uncomfortable,  
or paths of self-centeredness.  
Forgive us for getting so caught up in false messages of hope  
that we lose sight of the hope of the kingdom,  
which brings healing and peace to a world in turmoil.**

**Hear us, have mercy on us, forgive us,  
and renew our resolve to build the kingdom of peace.  
Amen.**

## ASSURANCE OF PARDON

### CHILDREN'S PRAYER AND 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.**

## HEARING THE WORD

### FIRST LESSON

Isaiah 40:1-11

Comfort, O comfort my people,  
says your God.  
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and cry to her  
that she has served her term,  
that her penalty is paid,  
that she has received from the Lord's hand  
double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.  
Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.  
Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,  
and all people shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

A voice says, "Cry out!"

And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All people are grass,  
their constancy is like the flower of the field.  
The grass withers, the flower fades,  
when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;  
surely the people are grass.  
The grass withers, the flower fades;  
but the word of our God will stand forever.  
Get you up to a high mountain,  
O Zion, herald of good tidings;  
lift up your voice with strength,  
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,  
lift it up, do not fear;  
say to the cities of Judah,  
"Here is your God!"

See, the Lord God comes with might,  
and his arm rules for him;  
his reward is with him,  
and his recompense before him.  
He will feed his flock like a shepherd;  
he will gather the lambs in his arms,  
and carry them in his bosom,  
and gently lead the mother sheep.

## ANTHEM

John Ferguson, arr.  
“Comfort, comfort now my people; tell of peace!” So says our God. “Comfort those who sit in darkness mourning under sorrow’s load. To my people now proclaim that my pardon waits for them! Tell them that their sins I cover, and their warfare now is over.” For the herald’s voice is crying in the desert far and near, calling us to true repentance, since the reign of God is here. O, that warning cry obey! Now prepare for God a way. Let the valleys rise in meeting and the hills bow down in greeting. Straight shall be what long was crooked, and the rougher places plain. Let your hearts be true and humble, as befits God’s holy reign. For the glory of the Lord now on earth is shed abroad, and all flesh shall see the token that God’s word is never broken.

–Johannes Olearius; trans. Catherine Winkworth, alt.

Samantha Noonan, Hannah Nacheman, Arri Lawton Simon, and Andrew Martens

## SECOND LESSON

2 Peter 3:8-15a

But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

## SERMON

“What the World Needs Now: PEACE”

Rev. Greg Stovell

## RESPONDING TO THE WORD

### SHARING SIGNS OF PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you.

**And also with you.**

## OFFERTORY

Michael Praetorius, arr.

Lo, how a rose e'er blooming from tender stem hath sprung, of Jesse's lineage coming, by faithful prophets sung. It came, a floweret bright, amid the cold of winter, when half spent was the night. Isaiah 'twas foretold it, the rose I have in mind; with Mary we behold it, the virgin mother kind. To show God's love aright she bore for us a Savior, when half spent was the night.

-German carol; Theodore Baker, trans.

## PRAYER OF DEDICATION

## SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Invitation

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Affirmation of Faith

Nicene Creed

**We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.**

**And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.**

**And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And we believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. And we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Words of the Institution

Sharing of the Elements

Prayer after Communion

HYMN 106

"Prepare the Way, O Zion"

BEREDEN VÄG FÖR HERRAN

## SENDING

BENEDICTION

CHORAL RESPONSE

POSTLUDE

"Partita on 'On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry'"

Bruce Neswick

*Toccata*

*The congregation is invited to continue worshiping through the postlude, which is offered as a thanksgiving to God.*

**MUSIC NOTES** Bruce Neswick is the Canon for Cathedral Music at Trinity Cathedral, Portland, Oregon. Neswick holds degrees from Pacific Lutheran University and Yale University (where he studied with former First Church Director of Music, Robert Baker), and holds an honorary doctorate from the University of the South. He is the winner of three organ improvisation competitions, and performs and teaches extensively throughout the United States. In his “Partita on ‘On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry,’” the hymn tune receives a different treatment in each movement – a hymn-like *Chorale*, chant inspired *Meditation*, jaunty two-voice *Bicinium*, meditative *Aria*, and a joyous *Toccata*. • A 17th-century German paraphrase of Isaiah 40:1-5, “Comfort, Comfort” was one of the texts translated as part of the 19th-century British interest in German religious poetry. It is set to one of the most popular Genevan psalter tunes, probably derived from an earlier French folksong. • Although the early copies of “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming” – a 15th-century German text – include many more stanzas than sung here, this simpler, shorter form has much to commend it. This early 17th-century harmonization of the traditional chorale melody invites and rewards singing in parts. –Michael Shake, with notes adapted from *Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal*

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