

"Mary's Yes" by Lisle Gwynn Garrity  
Inspired by Luke 1:26-39

... In this image, we see the angel greeting Mary in the form of dappled light. Mary's back is turned to the angel, but we see her in the process of pivoting toward the warmth of the cascading light. I imagine this is the moment after the angel responds to her initial question, "How can this be?" After hearing the angel's response, Mary closes her eyes, imagining her cousin Elizabeth and perhaps her many ancestors holding her up as she prepares to step forward. The wrap around her head carries the angel's good news, anointing her with the promise that fear won't stop her. Embroidered along her neckline is Mary's willing response: "Here I am." Her lantern earring is a sign to each of us, to anyone who is fearful. It's as if Mary herself becomes a lantern, emanating courage in the face of a fearful calling, lighting a way forward. — Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity



*The mission of GPPC is to embody God's love  
by cultivating community, practicing hope, repairing harm, and doing justice as Jesus did.*

December 14, 2025

Third Sunday of Advent

11:00am

+ indicates you are invited to stand

**Bold print** indicates congregation in unison

*We are grateful to be gathered here in the Almond Creek-James River watershed, which we share with a diversity of plants and creatures, including the Virginia pine, winterberry, striped bass, northern cardinal, and red fox.*

*We acknowledge that this land is the traditional territory of the Powhatan Confederacy. May we nurture our relationship with all our neighbors, and our shared responsibilities to this watershed where we gather today.*

### GATHERING

*The act of assembling in Jesus' name bears witness to the Church's identity and mission as Christ's body in the world. Gather your thoughts and feelings. Entrust yourself to God's saving grace.*

Prelude Song Ned Rorem

### Greeting and Announcements

Introit Doug Brown

*Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word. Luke 1:38*

### + Call to Worship & Lighting of the Third Advent Candle

One: In a world full of fear, where do you see glimmers of joy?

**All: We see glimmers of joy in birthday candles and thoughtful messages.**

**We see joy in the laughter of children and the wagging tails of dogs.**

**We see joy in meals shared and the singing of Christmas songs.**

One: You are right. Even in a fearful world, joy is all around us.

Today we light the candle of joy as a reminder of this good news.

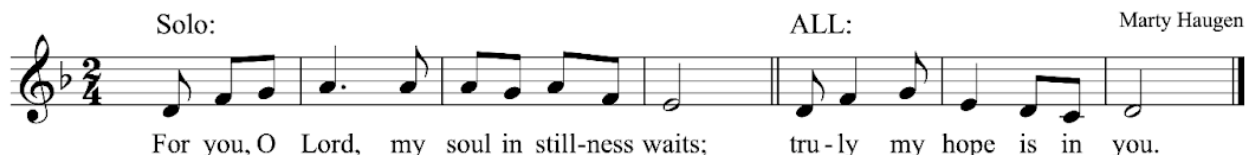
May this flicker of light help us remember that even in a fearful world, joy is here.

Joy is real. We only have to look for it.

**All: Thanks be to God for that good news! Amen.**

+ Hymn 104 O Lord, How Shall I Meet You

### Confession of Sin and Pain



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**Courageous God, you invite us to live into our call as disciples of Christ. You invite us to act, to serve, and to trust. Instead of responding with a resounding “yes,” we often shrink back. We dig our heels in. We look for someone else to volunteer.**

**Spark courage in us. Remind us that every person is capable of making a difference. Remind us that even when we’re scared, we are not alone. You invite us forward. Send your Spirit to help us follow you.**

*Silence*

### Assurance of Forgiveness and Healing

Family of faith, no matter where your path has led you in the past, today is a new day.

So join me in declaring this good news:

**We are known. We are forgiven! We are sent to serve.**

**May we step forward in faith, always moving closer to God's call. Amen.**

+ Gloria (Hymn 117, verse 6) from *While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks*

**All glory be to God on high, and to the earth be peace;**

**Good will to all from highest heaven begin and never cease!**

### WORD

*Where the scriptures are read and proclaimed, Jesus Christ, the living Word, is present by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

*God's Spirit also evokes our response. Through singing, affirmation, and prayer, with the help of God's Spirit,  
we discern Jesus Christ, receive Christ's grace, and resolve to follow Christ's way*

### Prayer for Illumination

#### Scripture

Luke 1:26-39

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country ....

Luke 1:46b-55

One: My soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

**All: Your have looked with favor on the lowly state of your servant.  
Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed,**

One: for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is this name;  
Indeed, your mercy is for those who fear you from generation to generation.

**All: has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.  
You have brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly;**

One: You have filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.  
You have come to the aid of your child Israel, in remembrance of your mercy,

**All: according to the promise you made to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to your descendants forever.**

Matthew 1:18-25

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

"Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son,  
and they shall name him Emmanuel,"  
which means, "God is with us."

When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

One: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

Sermon

Carla Pratt Keyes

+ Hymn 94    *Now the Heavens Start to Whisper*

+ Affirmation of Faith

[A New Creed from the United Church of Canada]

**We are not alone; we live in God's world.**

**We believe in God:**

**who has created and is creating,  
who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh, to reconcile and make new,  
who works in us and others by the Spirit.**

**We trust in God.**

**We are called to be the Church:**

**to celebrate God's presence,  
to live with respect in Creation,  
to love and serve others,  
to seek justice and resist evil,  
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope.**

**In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us.**

**We are not alone.**

**Thanks be to God.**

+ Somos Uno (Hymn 322)

**We are one in Christ Jesus, all one body, all one spirit, all together.**

**Somos uno en Cristo, somos uno, somos uno, uno solo.**

**We share one God, one mighty Lord, one abiding faith, one binding love,  
One single baptism, one Holy Comforter, the Holy Spirit, uniting all.**

Prayers of the People

### EUCHARIST

*Though we are not sharing the bread and cup today, we remember with thanksgiving (eukharistia) the grace (kharis) with which Jesus welcomes us to sit at his table, eat what will satisfy our deepest hungers, and feed others as we've been fed. We offer ourselves in response to Christ's wonderful offering of love.*

Offering



*Everyone is invited to place tithes, offerings, visitor cards,  
or any other communications to the Pastor or staff  
in the designated wall boxes beside each door at the back of the Sanctuary  
or signal an usher to bring you the offering plate.*

*Monetary gifts and pledges to GPPC may also be given online at  
<https://www.ginterparkpc.org/giving>, or by using the QR Code to the left.*

Offertory

Magnificat

Herbert Brewer

*My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.  
For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden.  
For behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.  
For he that is mighty hath magnified me, and holy is his Name.  
And his mercy is on them that fear him throughout all generations.  
He hath showed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.  
He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek.  
He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away.*

*He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel, as he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed for ever.*

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.* - Luke 1:46b-55

+ Doxology (Hymn 607)

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise Christ, all people here below;  
praise Holy Spirit evermore; praise Triune God, whom we adore.***

+ Prayer of Thanksgiving and 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; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

SENDING

*Our worship and service do not end with the postlude; we go forth to love and serve God in our daily lives.*

+ Hymn 100 *My Soul Cries out with a Joyful Shout*

+ Charge and Blessing

+ The Peace

One: The peace of Christ be with you.

**All: And also with you.**

+ Postlude

Magnificat

Ned Rorem

ABOUT WORSHIP

WORSHIP LEADERS: GPPC's Director of Music is Doug Brown, and our Pastor is Carla Pratt Keyes. Today's liturgist is the Rev. Lauren Ramseur (co-pastor of Voices of Jubilee), and our lector is Claire Lindbloom. The livestream operator is Wesley Neumann. Scott Carswell is lead usher.

HEARING ASSISTANCE DEVICES AND LARGE PRINT HYMNS are available from an usher in the Narthex.

PLEASE TAKE THE PAPER BULLETIN YOU HAVE USED home for reference and/or recycling. Thank you!

ANNOUNCEMENTS about events in the life of GPPC are available through a weekly e-newsletter. If you would like to be added to the distribution, please contact Karen Mitscherlich at [ginterparkpc@gmail.com](mailto:ginterparkpc@gmail.com).

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**Join us through the Christmas season -**

**Sunday, December 21, 2025, 6:30pm - Moravian Love Feast featuring the music of Richard Smallwood**

The GPPC choir will be singing alongside ten of Richmond's most wonderful Black Gospel singers, accompanied by a small instrumental ensemble. Smallwood's work occupies a very special place in the Black Gospel repertoire. Songs the choir will sing range from nostalgia-tinged depictions of stars and shepherds to powerful outpourings of emotion. As always, we'll share the Christmas story with carols, readings, hot chocolate, Moravian treats, and candles. **Note, this is an evening service, and there is no morning worship!**

*(Children are encouraged to come to this service; no nursery available.)*

**Wednesday, December 24, 2025 - Christmas Eve Worship (two services)**

**5:30pm - Family Christmas Service**

This year - for the first time ever! - our littlest members will be leading GPPC in worship, telling the story of Christmas through song. We invite you to bring gifts of non-perishable food to this service. We'll share those with the neighborhood food pantry, as a way of sharing with others some of the gifts we find in Jesus.

*(This service is designed for children; no nursery available.)*

***(continued on back)***



**9:00pm - Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion**

A traditional service of scripture, hymns & prayers, culminating with the Lord's Supper and singing by candlelight.  
(Children are very welcome at the service; no nursery available.)

**Sunday, December 28, 2025 - 11:00am - Brunch Church**

We will be meeting in the Fellowship Hall for worship, which will include hymn singing, Bible study, prayer, and the eucharist - all shared over brunch! We hope this will be a meaningful way for you to encounter Emmanuel - God with us - as you also encounter one another around the table. We will be providing bread, gluten free crackers, orange and grape juice, and baby quiches (or something similar). To bring additional food or to assist otherwise with the brunch, please sign up at using the link in the newsletter online or at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C48ABAF23A2F4C52-christmas1>. Thank you!

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**CHRISTMAS 2025 POINSETTIAS**

*In memory of Debbie Carter  
by Erica Angert*

*In memory of Guadalupe Mejía, Rubén Arjona, & Pablo Avila  
In memory of Noemí, Esther, Susana & Mirna Arjona  
by Sara Avila and Rubén Arjona (5)*

*In memory of our parents and grandparents  
by Fran and Clyde Davis*

*In memory of my husband Bob  
by Judy Harr*

*In memory of Robert and Joanna Knox  
by Ann and Bob Knox*

*In memory of Carol and Del Lohuis  
by Ardyth Lohuis*

*In memory of Helen's mother Mary Lou Wyatt  
In memory of Bob's parents Marcus and Rose Roybark  
In honor of Bob and Helen's 35th wedding anniversary  
by Helen and Bob Roybark (3)*

*In memory of my daughter, Alice Cathryn McIver Ross  
by David Ross*

*In memory of our parents, Dave and Susie Ross, and William and Jimmie Middlebrooks  
by Laura Middlebrooks and David Ross*

*In memory of my parents Herbert Swofford and Mary Beaty Hicks  
by April Swofford (2)*

*In memory of parents Bill and Betty James, Howard and Carol Webb, and  
Kathy's brother Richard James.  
by Kathy and Chuck Webb (2)*

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