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## Welcome, we're glad you joined us!

We welcome you to join us on a transformative journey.

**Seeking God**, we strive to know God and love God.

**Serving others**, we follow our Servant Savior to help bring fullness of life to others.

**Sharing Christ's love with all**, we proclaim the unconditional love of Christ filled with joy and hope.



**Connect with us** by signing the friendship pads found at the end of the pew and passing them to your neighbors. Visitors, please scan the QR code.

Large print bulletins and hearing assistance devices are available from ushers.

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\* **Please rise in body or spirit**

Sue Wilson, liturgist

### WE GATHER IN GOD'S NAME

#### WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS

**PRELUDE** – "Of the Father's Love Begotten"

arr. Richard Lind

\* **CALL to WORSHIP**

One: We are seeking -

**All: Deeper faith, a place to belong,  
The feeling that God is here in this room.**

We are seeking -

**Love that abides in the darkest times,  
The luminous light of the Holy Spirit.**

We are seeking and here in this space,  
**We are found.**

Take a deep breath. (here we take a pause)  
This is your sanctuary.

**Emmanuel is here and we worship the Living God!**

\* **HYMN** – "My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout" #100

\* **PRAYER of CONFESSION**

**God of sanctuary, we wish we were more like Mary,  
Who in the face of great change,  
Went and sought help.  
She did not wait for help to find her;  
She walked to the shelter she needed.**

**Holy Spirit of sanctuary,  
We wish we were more like Elizabeth,  
Who greeted Mary with laughter and contagious joy.  
How many people have crossed our doorstep  
And how many times have we failed to see them?**

**Forgive us Loving God,  
Give us the courage of Mary  
And the grace of Elizabeth, amen.**

\* **ASSURANCE of FORGIVENESS & GREETING of PEACE**

Faith family,  
Let us believe that when we come before Christ  
With the truth of our lives,  
God meets us like Elizabeth meets Mary.  
**The door is thrown open. There is laughter.  
There is hope and peace. There is embracing—  
And it is holy.**

So trust this; *believe this:*

**We are claimed. We are loved.**

**We are forgiven.**

**And we are sent to serve.**

**Let us find joy and love in this truth.**

**Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Amen!**

**A TIME with YOUNG DISCIPLES  
& LIGHTING the ADVENT CANDLE**

The Walter Family

In a weary and worn world, how do we begin again?  
Where do we start?

**Let us begin with tenderness.**

**Let us begin from a place of vulnerability and hope.**

**Let us begin with love.**

Yes, let us start with love.

Today we light the candles of hope, peace, joy, and love.

**May the warmth of these lights be our cornerstone.**

**May the truth in these lights help us begin again.**

**May it be so! Amen.**

(The candles of Faith, Hope, Joy and Love are lit. Led by our young disciples, the congregation is invited to engage the Scottish liturgical practice of 'Cloth for the Cradle.' In this practice, all who are able are invited to take the strips of cloth you were given as you entered. With a prayer, place your strip in the manger and together we will weave a blanket for Emmanuel. In doing so, we create room to welcome the Christ Child into our hearts.)

### WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

**UNISON PRAYER for ILLUMINATION**

**Holy God, we come to your Scripture today  
Hoping that it will feel a bit like an open door,  
Like Elizabeth welcoming Mary, like coming home.**

**Open the door to our hearts  
So that we might find sanctuary in your words.  
Gratefully we pray, amen.**

**SCRIPTURE by HEART** – Luke 1:39-45

Holy wisdom, holy word.  
**Thanks be to God.**

**SERMON** – "Love Knows Your Name"

Pastor Lawrence

### WE GIVE THANKS TO GOD

\* **HYMN** – "O Lord, How Shall I Meet You?"

#104

\* **AFFIRMATION of FAITH**

**We believe in a blessing God who calls us Beloved.  
We believe that this blessing  
Showed up in the life of Mary,  
The children and the crowds,  
The Jews and the Gentiles,  
The faithful and the doubting.**

**We believe that Jesus' love changes the world.  
We believe that God uses ordinary people,  
Like an unwed teenage mother,  
For extraordinary good.  
And we believe that each of us ordinary people  
Is called to make a difference.  
This is our song and this we believe. Amen.**

**MUSIC for OUR OFFERING** – "Thou Shalt Know Him"

Michael Larkin

(Scan the QR code to the right or go to  
<https://onrealm.org/oxfordpresbychurch/-/give/now>  
to give online)



\* **DOXOLOGY** – "Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow"

#607

\* **PRAYER of DEDICATION**

\* **HYMN** – "Now the Heavens Start to Whisper"

#94

\* **BLESSING**

As you leave this place,  
May you have the wisdom to lean on one other.  
May you have the courage to hold onto hope,  
The compassion to do the good that is yours to do,  
and the confidence to trust that God sees you as a blessing.

**For in a world full of dead ends,  
Advent invites us to begin again.  
So we start here. We start again now.  
We start with love and begin again.  
In the name of Christ, our new beginning,  
We go in peace.**

**POSTLUDE** – "Joy to the World"

arr. Douglas E. Wagner

### WE DEPART to SERVE

(Liturgy adapted from a prayer by Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | [sanctifiedart.org](http://sanctifiedart.org).)

**Congregational Concerns**

Jim Baer, Fred & Mary Jane Brower, Steve Dana, Sandy Douglass, Amber McClelland, Peggi Stitt. Email congregational concerns to the church office ([office@oxfordpresbychurch.org](mailto:office@oxfordpresbychurch.org)).

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**MINISTRY NEWS**

**Christmas Joy Offering**

Received on Christmas Eve, the Christmas Joy Offering has been a cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s.

This offering distributes gifts equally to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges that provide education and leadership development to communities of color, a Presbyterian commitment for nearly 140 years.

Out of gratitude for the gift we first received in Jesus, we invite you to give generously to the Christmas Joy offering.

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**OPC - Office Holiday Hours**

**Regular hours of operation:**

December 23-24, 27, 30-31 (8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)

**- Closed December 25 & December 26**

**- Closed January 1 & January 2**

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**An Ancient Flame - a Symbol of Peace and Hope**

Feeling a deep need for peace and relationships in these challenging times, we bring the Peace Light to Oxford once again this year.

The Peace Light will be part of our Christmas Eve Candlelight Lessons and Carols. If you wish to carry the Peace Light home with you after the worship service, please bring a candle/candle holder with you. We do offer a limited number of candles/candle holders for those who may need one.

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**A Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols**

Come one and come all! Our Advent journey reaches a finale on Christmas Eve with our arrival at the manger where we behold Emmanuel, God-with-us.

To celebrate this good news of great joy, the Oxford Presbyterian Church family invites all to join us in a traditional Candlelight Christmas Eve Service of Lessons and Carols.

This beloved time of worship on Christmas Eve features the Christmas story according to Luke's Gospel with carols and anthems from around the world sung in response to the spoken word. Christmas Eve culminates in the singing of "Silent Night" illuminated by candlelight.

We hope you will join us as we gather around the telling of the birth of the Word made flesh, and sing again the joyous songs of Christmas!

**Sunday School News**

There will be no Sunday School on Sunday, December 29. Please note the nursery for preschool and younger children will be staffed.

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**Creating a Healthy Community**

Community blood drive

Friday, January 3.

**Appointments preferred, walk-ins welcome.**



Scan the QR Code or call 937-461-3220 to schedule your appointment.

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**Caring for Creation Cookbook**

Following our successful series of meetings on "Sowing the Seeds of Plant-Based Eating," we are now collecting your favorite recipes. Please send recipe copies of your favorite vegetarian dishes to the OPC office and we will compile them into a small cookbook to share.

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**Sermons on the Go**

At Oxford Presbyterian Church, we celebrate the centrality of hearing God's word in Scripture and preaching.

Each week, we bring you an opportunity to listen to Sunday's sermon. If you would like to listen to the message again, or hear it for the first time, our media ministry is making these available on [Apple podcast](#) and [Spotify](#).

Share this good news on the go with family and friends, neighbors and colleagues.

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**WEEKLY CALENDAR of MINISTRY**

24 <sup>th</sup>	A Candlelight Service of Lessons & Carols	7:00 p.m. (Memorial church - Sanctuary)
25 <sup>th</sup> - 26 <sup>th</sup>	Merry Christmas	OPC Offices Closed

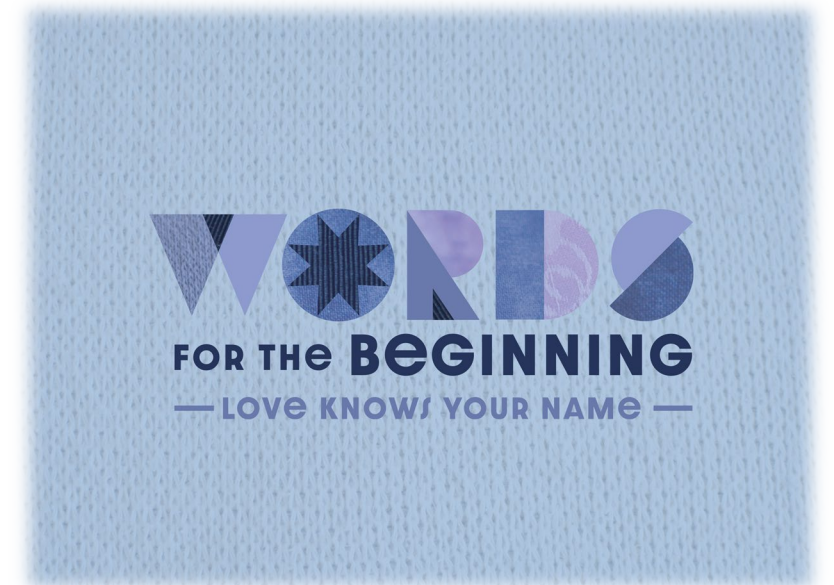
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**Oxford Presbyterian Church**  
**for a full ministry calendar, please visit:**

<https://oxfordpresbychurch.org/calendar/>

**Lawrence Bartel, Pastor**  
**Marc van Bulck, Associate Pastor**  
**Kent Peterson, Music Director**  
**Lynn Jacobs, Organist**

# Fourth Sunday of Advent



**December 22, 2024**



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**[oxfordpresbychurch.org](http://oxfordpresbychurch.org)**

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