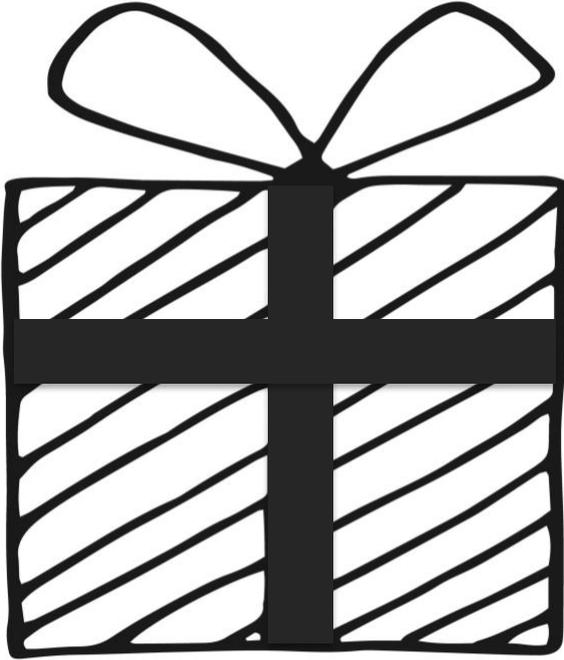




# METROCREST

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



*Responding to God's Inexpressible Gift*

**Morning Worship  
Fourth Sunday of Advent  
December 24, 2023**

**Welcome!**

To all who are spiritually weary and seek rest;  
To all who mourn and long for comfort;  
To all who struggle and desire victory;  
To all who sin and need a Savior;  
To all who are strangers and want fellowship;  
And to whoever will come –

*This church opens wide her doors and offers her welcome  
in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

# God Calls Us To Worship

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## Welcome

## Announcements

## Lighting of the Fourth Advent Candle

### Call to Worship - Psalm 105:1-3

Leader: Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon His name; make known His deeds among the peoples!

**Unison: Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; tell of all His wondrous works!**

Leader: Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice!

## We Respond To God's Call

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### Opening Hymn - "God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen"

God rest you merry, gentlemen,  
Let nothing you dismay,  
For Jesus Christ our Savior  
Was born upon this day,  
To save us all from Satan's pow'r  
When we were gone astray:

#### (Refrain)

O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy,  
O tidings of comfort and joy.

From God our heav'nly Father,  
A blessed angel came,  
And unto certain shepherds  
Brought tidings of the same,  
How that in Bethlehem was born  
The Son of God by name: **(Refrain)**

#### Men

The shepherds at those tidings  
Rejoiced much in mind,  
And left their flocks a-feeding,  
In tempest, storm and wind,  
And went to Bethlehem straightway  
This blessed babe to find: **(Refrain)**

## **Women**

But when to Bethlehem they came,  
Whereat this infant lay,  
They found Him in a manger,  
Where oxen feed on hay;  
His mother Mary kneeling,  
Unto the Lord did pray: **(Refrain)**

Now to the Lord sing praises,  
All you within this place,  
And with true love and brotherhood  
Each other now embrace;  
This holy tide of Christmas  
All others doth deface: **(Refrain)**

## **Acknowledging God's Presence**

### **Seasonal Theme - "Responding to God's Inexpressible Gift"**

#### **Theme Verse - 2 Corinthians 9:15**

Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift!

#### **Hymn - "Thou Who Wast Rich Beyond All Splendor"**

Trinity Hymnal #230

Thou who wast rich beyond all splendor,  
All for love's sake becamest poor;  
Thrones for a manger didst surrender,  
Sapphire-paved courts for stable floor.  
Thou who wast rich beyond all splendor,  
All for love's sake becamest poor.

Thou who art God beyond all praising,  
All for love's sake becamest man;  
Stooping so low, but sinners raising,  
Heav'nward by Thine eternal plan.  
Thou who art God beyond all praising,  
All for love's sake becamest man.

Thou who art love beyond all telling,  
Savior and King, we worship Thee.  
Emmanuel, within us dwelling,  
Make us what Thou wouldst have us be.  
Thou who art love beyond all telling,  
Savior and King, we worship Thee.

# We Confess Our Sins

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## **Call to Confession - 1 Corinthians 4:5b - Adapted**

When the Lord comes, He will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness, and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Therefore in the light of Christ, let us humbly confess our sins to Almighty God.

## **Prayer of Confession**

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of Your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in Your will, and walk in Your ways, to the glory of Your Name. Amen.

*Please take a moment for personal reflection and confession.*

## **Assurance of Pardon - 1 John 2:1-2 - Adapted**

**Leader:** If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

**Unison: Thanks be to God.**

## **Hymn - "The First Noel"**

The first Noel the angel did say  
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;  
In fields where they lay, keeping their sheep,  
On a cold winter's night that was so deep:

### **(Refrain)**

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel –  
Born is the King of Israel.

They looked up and saw a star,  
Shining in the east, beyond them far;  
And to the earth it gave great light,  
And so it continued both day and night: **(Refrain)**

And by the light of that same star,  
Three wise men came from country far;  
To seek for a King was their intent,  
And to follow the star wherever it went: **(Refrain)**

This star drew nigh to the northwest;  
O'er Bethlehem it took its rest,  
And there it did both stop and stay  
Right over the place where Jesus lay: **(Refrain)**

Then enter'd in those wise men three,  
Full rev'rently upon their knee,  
And offer'd there in His presence  
Their gold and myrrh and frankincense: **(Refrain)**

Then let us all with one accord  
Sing praises to our heav'nly Lord,  
That hath made heav'n and earth of naught,  
And with His blood mankind hath bought. **(Refrain)**

## We Profess Our Faith And Pray

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### **Affirmation of Faith - Apostles' Creed**

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; He descended to hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

### **Greeting**

#### **Hymn - "Who Would Have Dreamed"**

On a starlit hillside, shepherds watched their sheep  
Slowly, David's city drifted off to sleep  
But to this little town of no great renown  
The Lord had a promise to keep.

Prophets had foretold it, a mighty King would come  
Long awaited Ruler, God's Anointed One  
But the Sovereign of all looked helpless and small  
As God gave the world His own Son.

#### **(Refrain)**

And who would have dreamed or ever foreseen  
That we could hold God in our hands?  
The Giver of Life is born in the night  
Revealing God's glorious plan  
To save the world.

Wondrous gift of heaven, the Father sends the Son  
Planned from time eternal, moved by holy love  
He will carry our curse and death He'll reverse  
So we can be daughters and sons. **(Refrain)**

## **Lord's Prayer**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come,  
Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily  
bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is  
the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

## **Prayers of Intercession**

### **Prayer for Advent**

Sovereign Father, as You send Your Spirit to fill our hearts with  
gratitude for Your gift to us in the first coming of Your Son Jesus Christ,  
so make us prayerfully mindful of the promise of His coming again in  
great glory, that when He comes He will find us prepared to receive  
Him with joy; in His holy name, we pray. Amen.

## We Receive God's Word

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### **Reading God's Word - 2 Corinthians 9:6-15**

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

**Unison: Thanks be to God.**

### **Understanding and Applying God's Word**

Pastor Bill Lovell

**"The Cheerful Giver"**

Sermon Series - "Responding to God's Inexpressible Gift"

## We Respond To God's Grace

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### **Offertory Sentence - 1 Chronicles 16:29**

Ascribe to the Lord the honor due His name; bring an offering and  
come into His courts with praise.

### **Closing Hymn - "Angels We Have Heard on High"**

Trinity Hymnal #214

Angels we have heard on high,  
Sweetly singing o'er the plains,  
And the mountains in reply  
Echo back their joyous strains.

#### **(Refrain)**

Gloria in excelsis Deo!  
Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Shepherds, why this jubilee?  
Why your joyous strains prolong?  
Say what may the tidings be,  
Which inspire your heav'nly song? **(Refrain)**

Come to Bethlehem and see  
Him Whose birth the angels sing;  
Come, adore on bended knee  
Christ the Lord, the newborn King. **(Refrain)**

## God Sends Us Out With His Blessing

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### **Closing Blessing - 2 Corinthians 13:11,14**

Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full reconciliation, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**"God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen"** traditional English carol, arranged by David Willcocks, © 1961 Oxford University Press. **"Thou Who Wast Rich Beyond All Splendor"** Words by Frank Houghton, Music arr. by Charles H. Kitson – text © OMF International Ltd. **"The First Noel"** traditional English carol, arranged by David Willcocks, © 1961 Oxford University Press. **"Who Would Have Dreamed"** Words and music by Jason Hansen and Bob Kauflin. © 2014 Sovereign Grace Praise (BMI). Sovereign Grace Music, a division of Sovereign Grace Churches. All rights reserved. **"Angels We Have Heard on High"** Traditional French Carol, arr. By Edward S. Barnes. CCLI License #451603.

# Sermon Text

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## English Standard Version - 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

6 The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. 9 As it is written,

"He has distributed freely, He has given to the poor;  
His righteousness endures forever."

10 He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. 12 For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. 13 By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, 14 while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. 15 Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift!

## Greek New Testament - Προς Κορινθίους Β', 9.6-15

6 Τοῦτο δέ, ὁ σπείρων φειδομένως φειδομένως καὶ θερίσει, καὶ ὁ σπείρων ἐπ' εὐλογίαις ἐπ' εὐλογίαις καὶ θερίσει. 7 ἕκαστος καθὼς προήρηται τῇ καρδίᾳ, μὴ ἐκ λύπης ἢ ἐξ ἀνάγκης, ἰλαρὸν γὰρ δότην ἀγαπᾷ ὁ θεός. 8 δυνατεῖ δὲ ὁ θεὸς πᾶσαν χάριν περισσεύσαι εἰς ὑμᾶς, ἵνα ἐν παντὶ πάντοτε πᾶσαν αὐτάρκειαν ἔχοντες περισσεύητε εἰς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθόν, 9 καθὼς γέγραπται, Ἐσκόρπισεν, ἔδωκεν τοῖς πένησιν, ἡ δικαιοσύνη αὐτοῦ μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. 10 ὁ δὲ ἐπιχορηγῶν σπόρον τῷ σπείροντι καὶ ἄρτον εἰς βρώσιν χορηγήσει καὶ πληθυνεῖ τὸν σπόρον ὑμῶν καὶ αὐξήσει τὰ γενήματα τῆς δικαιοσύνης ὑμῶν. 11 ἐν παντὶ πλουτιζόμενοι εἰς πᾶσαν ἀπλότητα, ἥτις κατεργάζεται δι' ἡμῶν εὐχαριστίαν τῷ θεῷ 12 ὅτι ἡ διακονία τῆς λειτουργίας ταύτης οὐ μόνον ἐστὶν προσαναπληροῦσα τὰ ὑστερήματα τῶν ἁγίων, ἀλλὰ καὶ περισσεύουσα διὰ πολλῶν εὐχαριστιῶν τῷ θεῷ 13 διὰ τῆς δοκιμῆς τῆς διακονίας ταύτης δοξάζοντες τὸν θεὸν ἐπὶ τῇ ὑποταγῇ τῆς ὁμολογίας ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἀπλότητι τῆς κοινωνίας εἰς αὐτοὺς καὶ εἰς πάντας, 14 καὶ αὐτῶν δεήσει ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐπιποθούντων ὑμᾶς διὰ τὴν ὑπερβάλλουσαν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐφ' ὑμῖν. 15 χάρις τῷ θεῷ ἐπὶ τῇ ἀνεκδιηγῆτῳ αὐτοῦ δωρεᾷ.

# Sermon Notes

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## **2 Corinthians 9:6-15**

Pastor Bill Lovell

### **"The Cheerful Giver"**

The Cheerful Giver (vv 6-9)

The Circle of Giving (vv 10-14)

Responding to the Cheerful Giver (v 15)

*"The gift is unspeakable when we have spoken our very best, and so let this suffice. I bid you peer over the brink upon which I would set you. Look down into this abyss of love. Be you sure of this, that this depth is unfathomable. It is idle to attempt a definition of infinity, and therefore vain to hope to declare how wide, how high, how deep, how broad, is the wondrous gift of God to the sons of men. Theology can speak on many themes, and she hath much to say on this, but her voice fails to speak the whole." ~ Charles Spurgeon*

# Church Life Notes

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## Today - December 24, 2023

1. **Fourth Sunday of Advent:** This morning's worship service marks the end of Advent 2023.
2. **Christmas Eve Service:** Please join us tonight at 6:00pm as we gather in the church to celebrate Christ's birth.
3. **Serving Today:** This morning's scheduled Liturgy Leader is James Woods. Our scheduled Prayer Leader is Paul Hartgrove. The Metrocrest Advent Singers will lead us in singing today's first hymn. We are also blessed to be joined by numerous guest musicians.
4. **Giving Online:** To access our secure online giving portal, you may use the QR code on the back of the bulletin.
5. **MPC Youth Ministry:** MPC Youth will not meet tonight or next Sunday night.

## Upcoming Activities & Events

6. **Office Hours:** The church office will be closed Monday, December 25, and Monday, January 1.
7. **MPC Sunday School:** There will be no Sunday School Classes next Sunday for Children, Youth, or Adults.
8. **Upcoming Adult Class:** Please plan now to participate in our upcoming Adult Sunday School Class – "The Gospel According to Isaiah" – led by Will Grover, **beginning January 7**, at 9:00am.
9. **Annual Congregational Meeting:** We are set to meet on Sunday, January 28, following the 10:15am service, to elect new officers and reflect on God's faithfulness to us.

## News & Needs

10. **Officer Nominations:** We are inviting nominations for the Session, the Board of Deacons, and the Board of Trustees. Nomination Forms, including a list of eligible nominees who have said they are willing to serve, are in the Lobby. The deadline to submit nominations is next Sunday, December 31.
11. **Life Change** for December will support the PCA Ministerial Relief Fund, which assists needy, retired, and disabled pastors, missionaries, church lay workers, their widows, and children.
12. **Prayer Ministry:** Help us keep our prayer requests current and up-to-date by letting us know **via email** when we want to remove or revise requests on Realm and on the list in the Sunday bulletin. Thanksgivings for answered prayer may also be posted on Realm.
13. **End-of-Year Giving:** Please remember that donations to MPC must be postmarked or received in the church office by next Sunday, December 31, in order to be receipted for Tax Year 2023.

14. **MPC Care Groups:** Metrocrest has a network of small group Bible studies which we call Care Groups. We currently have three Care Groups and hope to start more within the next few weeks. In the new year, we are aiming to raise the profile of Care Groups and to encourage all members to join one! Watch for more information in January!

## High Fives & Thanks

15. **Welcome, Haniel and Emily Cuevas!** Please welcome MPC's two newest Communing Members, Haniel and Emily Cuevas. The Cuevases run a commercial cleaning business and manage several rental properties. They live just across the park, to the south of the church, in Oak Hills.
16. **Staff Gift:** Many thanks to everyone who pitched in for the Deacon-organized staff Christmas gift. Bill, Laura, Joseph, and Nick are very grateful for everyone's generosity and extend sincere thanks and best wishes for the holidays!

## Prayer Requests

17. **For The World:**
  - **Armed Conflicts** - For God's mercy on the suffering people in Israel, Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, and Yemen.
18. **For Our Church's Mission and Ministry:**
  - **Hearts Full of Praise** - For God to fill our hearts with praise and gratitude for all that He has graciously given us in Christ.
  - **Church Finances** - For God's gracious provision.
19. **For One Another:**
  - **Marriages** - For God's blessing on all those married or getting married.
  - **Health Issues** - For God's blessing on Yvonne Alford (Bill Lovell's friend), Connie Bielefeld (Margaret Marrs' grandmother), Kathy Carruth (Rick Carruth's mom), Steve Collinsworth, Krystal Hays (Bill & Shona Camp's neighbor), Maurane Huckaby, Jim Huckaby (Colton Huckaby's grandfather), Suzanne Larsen, Cherry Leslie, Marcia Livingston (David Wamsley's sister), Ashley Marble, Alana Marion, Jeannie Marion (Mike Marion's stepmom), Mike Marion, Tom Mayfield, Lauren Muckleroy (friend of Scott Marrs), Ryan & Dianna Muller (friends of Alana Marion), Kristen Novak (Steve & Liz Wallin's daughter), Larry Perry, Ron Revell, David Wamsley, Marlene Wamsley, Lori Winn, and Norm Winn; and also for God's blessing on Madeleine Esmond, expectant mommy due in January.

**Welcome to Metrocrest!** Please take a few moments to leave your contact information with Pastor Bill or a member of the Welcome Team. We would love to know that you worshipped with us today and share more information about our church.



**How can we pray for you?** MPC is a praying church! You can share your prayer requests with us by (1) using one of the cards found in the lobby; or (2) pointing your smartphone camera at this QR code to access a digital card. Please indicate whether your request is private or public. You may also request to pray with an Elder.

**Do you want to make a donation?** To fund MPC's mission and ministry, we depend on God's provision through you. If you'd like to make a donation this morning, you can do so by (1) placing it in the collection basket during the Offertory; or (2) pointing your smartphone camera at this QR code to access our secure online giving portal.



**Thank you for your financial support!** At MPC, we aim for financial transparency. Here's where we stand six months into this fiscal year (July-June): Last week's giving - \$9,562; our weekly giving goal - \$7,885; our actual giving to-date - \$168,460; and our projected giving to-date - \$197,115. We know these are difficult times for everyone. Please be as generous as you can in your personal stewardship, and please pray for God's faithful provision.



**Let's get connected!** MPC uses an app called Realm to allow you to update your personal information, communicate with groups and teams, follow church announcements, look up members, manage online giving, and join events. To get started, contact us through the church office at [info@metrocrestchurch.org](mailto:info@metrocrestchurch.org)!

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**Bill Lovell**  
**Laura Stites**  
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**The Session (Elders)**  
John Fowler  
Paul Hartgrove  
Larry Perry

**The Board of Deacons**  
Dalton Dallas  
Will Grover