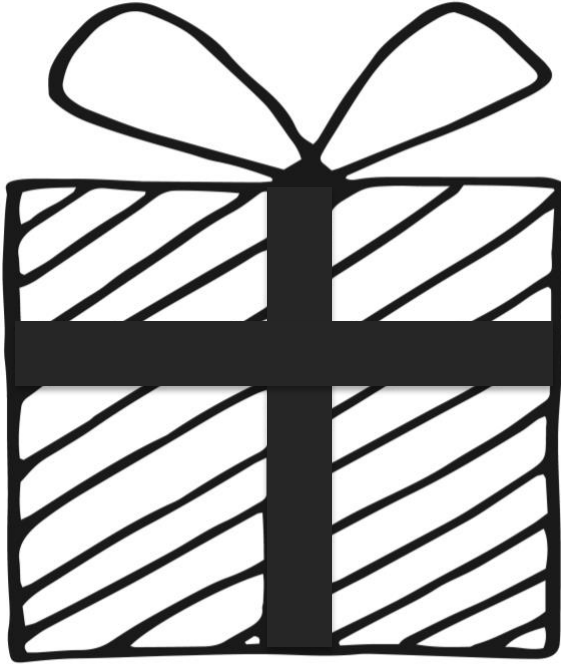




# METROCREST

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



*Responding to God's Inexpressible Gift*

**Morning Worship  
First Sunday of Advent  
December 3, 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

### Lighting of the First Advent Candle

#### Call to Worship - Psalm 27:13-14

Leader: I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living!

Unison: **Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!**

## We Respond To God's Call

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### Opening Hymn - " O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

Trinity Hymnal #194

O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here,  
Until the Son of God appear.

#### **(Refrain)**

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, O come, Thou Lord of might,  
Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height,  
In ancient times didst give the law  
In cloud and majesty and awe. **(Refrain)**

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free  
Thine Own from Satan's tyranny;  
From depths of hell Thy people save,  
And give them vict'ry o'er the grave. **(Refrain)**

O come, Thou Dayspring from on high,  
And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
And death's dark shadows put to flight. **(Refrain)**

O Come, Thou Key of David, come  
And open wide our heav'nly home;  
Make safe the way that leads on high,  
And close the path to misery. **(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 - "Tell Out, My Soul, the Greatness of the Lord"**

Trinity Hymnal #26

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord:  
Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice;  
Tender to me the promise of His word;  
In God my Savior shall my heart rejoice.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of His name:  
Make known His might, the deeds His arm has done;  
His mercy sure, from age to age the same;  
His holy name, the Lord, the Mighty One.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of His might:  
Pow'rs and dominions lay their glory by;  
Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight,  
The hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

Tell out, my soul, the glories of His word:  
Firm is His promise, and His mercy sure.  
Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord  
To children's children and forevermore.

## **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 - "Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus"**

Trinity Hymnal #196

Come, Thou long-expected Jesus,  
Born to set Thy people free;  
From our fears and sins release us;  
Let us find our rest in Thee.  
Israel's strength and consolation,  
Hope of all the earth Thou art;  
Dear desire of ev'ry nation,  
Joy of ev'ry longing heart.

Joy to those who long to see Thee;  
Dayspring from on high, appear;  
Come, Thou promised Rod of Jesse,  
Of Thy birth we long to hear!  
O'er the hills the angels singing  
News, glad tidings of a birth:  
"Go to Him, your praises bringing;  
Christ the Lord has come to earth."

Come to earth to taste our sadness,  
He whose glories knew no end;  
By His life He brings us gladness,  
Our Redeemer, Shepherd, Friend.  
Leaving riches without number,  
Born within a cattle stall;  
This is everlasting wonder,  
Christ was born the Lord of all.

Born Thy people to deliver,  
Born a child and yet a king,  
Born to reign in us forever,  
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.

By Thine own eternal Spirit  
Rule in all our hearts alone;  
By Thine all sufficient merit,  
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

# 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 - "Sing We the Song of Emmanuel"**

Sing we the song of Emmanuel;  
This the Christ who was long foretold.  
Lo in the shadows of Bethlehem,  
Promise of dawn now our eyes behold.

God Most High in a manger laid;  
Lift your voices and now proclaim:  
Great and glorious, Love has come to us;  
Join now with the hosts of heaven.

Come we to welcome Emmanuel;  
King who came with no crown or throne.  
Helpless He lay, the Invincible,  
Maker of Mary, now Mary's son.

O what wisdom to save us all,  
Shepherds, sages, before Him fall.  
Grace and majesty, what humility;  
Come on bended knee, adore Him.

Go spread the news of Emmanuel;  
Joy and peace for the weary heart.  
Lift up your heads, for your King has come;  
Sing for the Light overwhelms the dark.

Glory shining for all to see,  
Hope alive, let the gospel ring.  
God has made a way, He will have the praise;  
Tell the world His name is Jesus.

## **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**

### **Prayers for the Presbyterian Church in America**

Almighty Father, on this first Sunday of Advent, we at Metrocrest join other members of the PCA all across America in thanking You for Your faithfulness to us over fifty years. We thank You for delivering us through many challenges. We thank You for blessing our mission organizations, both here at home and around the world. We thank You for teaching us to love the Scriptures and to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. We thank You, above all, Father, for Your greatest gift in Jesus Christ Your Son Our Lord. Give grace, we pray, to the PCA, and to all Your people wherever they may be, to respond to all that You have done for us in Christ; fill our hearts with gratitude and praise; and, by Your Spirit, empower us to proclaim Christ's saving gospel to all peoples. For His sake. Amen.

## **We Receive God's Word**

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### **Reading God's Word - 2 Corinthians 8:1-15**

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

Unison: **Thanks be to God.**

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

Pastor Bill Lovell

**"Responding to God's Inexpressible Gift"**

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

## **We Respond To God's Grace**

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### **Closing Hymn - "Angels, from the Realms of Glory"**

Trinity Hymnal #218

Angels, from the realms of glory,  
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;  
Ye who sang creation's story,  
Now proclaim Messiah's birth:  
Come and worship, come and worship,  
Worship Christ, the newborn King.

Shepherds in the fields abiding,  
Watching o'er your flocks by night,  
God with man is now residing,  
Yonder shines the infant Light.  
Come and worship, come and worship,  
Worship Christ, the newborn King.

Sages, leave your contemplations,  
Brighter visions beam afar;  
Seek the great Desire of Nations;  
Ye have seen His natal star:  
Come and worship, come and worship,  
Worship Christ, the newborn King.

Saints before the altar bending,  
Watching long in hope and fear,  
Suddenly the Lord, descending,  
In His temple shall appear:  
Come and worship, come and worship,  
Worship Christ, the newborn King.

## 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.

**"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"** Translated by John Mason Neale, Music arr. by Thomas Helmore. **"Tell Out, My Soul, the Greatness of the Lord"** Words by Timothy Dudley-Smith, Music by Walter Greatorex, Text © 1962. Renewal 1990. Hope Publishing Co. All rights reserved. Used by permission. Tune by permission of Oxford University Press. **"Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus"** Words by Charles Wesley and Mark E. Hunt, Music by Rowland Hugh Pritchard, text of stanzas 2 & 3 © 1978 Intervarsity Christian Fellowship. **"Sing We the Song of Emmanuel"** Matt Boswell, Matt Papa and Stuart Townend Copyright © 2015 Messenger Hymns, Townend Songs, Love Your Enemies Publishing. **"Angels From the Realms of Glory"** Words by James Montgomery, Music by Henry Smart. CCLI License #451603.

# Sermon Text

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## **English Standard Version - 2 Corinthians 8:1-15**

1 We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, 2 for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. 3 For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, 4 begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— 5 and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. 6 Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. 7 But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also.

8 I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. 9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich. 10 And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. 11 So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. 12 For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. 13 For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness 14 your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. 15 As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack."



# Sermon Notes

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## **2 Corinthians 8:1-15**

Pastor Bill Lovell

### **"Responding to God's Inexpressible Gift"**

Introduction

God's inexpressible gift

Responding to God's inexpressible gift

*"O Love, ever burning, never quenched, O Charity, my God, set me on fire." ~ Augustine*

# Church Life Notes

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## Today - December 3, 2023

1. **First Sunday of Advent:** Advent is the first season of the church year, a time when we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ and His Second Coming in glory. This year our worship theme throughout Advent will be "Responding to God's Inexpressible Gift."
2. **Serving Today:** This morning's scheduled Liturgy Leader is Jay Marble. Our scheduled Prayer Leader is Paul Hartgrove. The Metrocrest Advent Choir will lead us in singing today's first hymn, and we are blessed to be joined by numerous guest musicians.
3. **Happy 50th Anniversary to the PCA:** Metrocrest is an active member of the Presbyterian Church in America. Today, we celebrate the PCA's 50th anniversary. Founded in 1973 as a denomination that seeks to be "Faithful to the Scriptures, True to the Reformed Faith, and Obedient to the Great Commission," the PCA is organized across 88 presbyteries, with 1,600 churches, 300 mission churches, 5,200 Teaching Elders, and a total membership of 390,000.
4. **MPC Finance Review:** Please join us right after today's service for a review of the church's finances.
5. **Giving Online:** To access our secure online giving portal, you may use the QR code on the back of the bulletin.
6. **MPC Youth Ministry:** Tonight, our large group meeting for middle and high school youth will meet from 6:00-8:00pm at the church. **Cross Training will continue this Sunday.** If any youth are interested in singing or playing an instrument in youth group, please join us at the church at 5:15pm.

## Upcoming Activities & Events

7. **Women's Ornament Exchange:** Please join us tomorrow at 6:30 pm at the home of Margaret Marrs for our annual Ladies Ornament Exchange. This is a great opportunity to invite your friends and neighbors for an evening of fellowship and fun. Please bring a wrapped ornament and finger food to share.
8. **Christmas at MPC:**
  - **Christmas Pageant & Party** - Sunday, December 10, 4:30pm
  - **Christmas Eve** - Sunday, December 24, 10:15am, 6:00pm
  - **Christmas Day** - Monday, December 25 - No Service
9. **MPC Sunday School:** In observance of Christmas and New Year's, there will be no Sunday School Classes for Children, Youth, or Adults on December 24 or January 1.
10. **Annual Congregational Meeting:** We are set to meet on Sunday, January 29, following the 10:15 service, to elect new officers and reflect on God's faithfulness to us.

## News & Needs

11. **Officer Nominations:** We will soon be inviting nominations for the Session, the Board of Deacons, and the Board of Trustees. Watch the Lobby for Nomination Forms.

## High Fives & Thanks

12. **College Students:** Congratulations to our undergraduates taking a break from college for the holidays, especially Nate Fowler, Sam Fowler, Katie Kizziar, Hannah McAnally, Brucie Patel, and Rohan Patel.
13. **Christmas Recital:** Huge thanks to Eric Rau, Rudy Polk, and Church pianist Caleb Esmond for an enjoyable and worshipful Christmas Recital yesterday afternoon. We were delighted to welcome a number of guests!
14. **Officer Recommendations:** Congratulations to the thirteen outstanding men who were recommended for officer training.

## Prayer Requests

15. **For The World:**
  - **Armed Conflicts** - For God's mercy on the suffering people in Israel, Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, and Yemen.
16. **For Our Church's Mission and Ministry:**
  - **Hearts Full of Praise** - For God to fill our hearts with praise and gratitude as we respond to His inexpressible gift in Christ.
  - **Upcoming Holiday Activities** - For God's blessing on next Sunday's Christmas Pageant & Party, and all the Advent and Christmas services, that through them God will draw many to Christ.
  - **Church Finances** - For God's gracious provision.
17. **For One Another:**
  - **Needy Neighbors** - For God's blessing on those in our neighborhood who need assistance.
  - **Health Issues** - For God's blessing on Yvonne Alford (Bill Lovell's friend), Connie Bielefeld (Margaret Marrs' grandmother), Steve Collinworth, Krystal Hays (Bill & Shona Camp's neighbor), Yvonne Hicks (Paul Hartgrove's cousin), Maurane Huckaby, Jim Huckaby (Colton Huckaby's grandfather), Suzanne Larsen, Cherry Leslie, Ashley Marble, Jeannie Marion (Mike Marion's stepmother), Lauren Muckleroy (friend of Scott Marrs), Kristen Novak (Steve & Liz Wallin's daughter), Larry Perry, Ron Revell, Laura Stein (Sharon Greisser's niece), 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 several months into this fiscal year (July-June): Last week's giving - \$4,654; our weekly giving goal - \$7,885; our actual giving to-date - \$141,522; and our projected giving to-date - \$173,462. 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**  
**Nick Rhodes**  
**Will Grover**  
**Joseph Marble**

*Pastor*  
*Administrative Assistant*  
*Music Director*  
*Treasurer*  
*Youth Director*

*bill@metrocrestchurch.org*  
*laura@metrocrestchurch.org*  
*nick@metrocrestchurch.org*  
*treasurer@metrocrestchurch.org*  
*joseph@metrocrestchurch.org*



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**The Session (Elders)**  
John Fowler  
Paul Hartgrove  
Larry Perry

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