



**December 24, 2024**

**7:00 PM**

***Christmas Eve***

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF FREEHOLD**

118 WEST MAIN STREET

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Rev. Dr. Alan Olson, Pastor

Pastor's Office Hours: Mon-Thur. 9:30am-12pm

Director of Music: John Cavicchio

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\*Please stand if you are able

**Chiming of the Hour**

**Prelude** *Huron Carol* Matthew DeMarco, soloist

*Bring a Torch* Bell Quartet

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Call to Worship**

**Leader:** Creator of the stars of night, Your people's everlasting light, O Christ, Redeemer of us all,  
We pray you hear us when we call.

**People:** **In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and set lights in the sky — sun  
and moon and stars. By these stars, our ancestors charted their journeys. By these stars,  
they knew God was with them.**

**In the beginning, too, was the Word. And the Word, too, has come down from heaven to  
earth. By the Word made flesh, Christ our Savior, we know that God is with us.**

Jean/Marie: Tonight we light five candles to bring the fire of the stars down from heaven to earth, to nestle among the greens.

Jean/Marie: We name this candle Hope. (*Light the first candle.*) We name this candle Peace. (*Light the second candle.*) We name this candle Joy. (*Light the third candle.*) We name this candle Love. (*Light the fourth candle.*) We name this candle Christ. (*Light the center candle.*)

**People:** **Our lives are a journey, and we do not always know the way. But we chart our path by the star of Christ. Even when faith burns low and its promises seem too good to be true, we set our face steadily towards the light.**

Leader: Listen to ancient words come true anew this night: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” (*Isaiah 9:2, 6*)

**People:** **Lord Jesus, as we search for signs of Christ’s presence this week, help us to *become* the signs of Christ’s presence that others are searching for. As these candles are but a glimpse of the light of the heavens, help us to be a glimpse of heaven on earth. Help us to shine like stars in the world. Amen.**

### **\*Hymn #134 Joy to the World**

#### **Call to Confession** (*Spoken by worship leader*)

Today we celebrate that Jesus, our Lord, came to earth as a human, just like us but without sin. He came so that we who sin may be freed from sin. With the peace that comes from knowing Jesus came, let us confess our sins and be forgiven.

#### **Prayer of Confession** (*unison*)

God, forgive me when I get sentimental about the Christmas story. Correct me when I turn the poverty of Christ’s birth into a scene of softly-lit serenity. Have mercy on me when I tell myself that the grinding poverty of the world’s poor simply can’t be helped. Forgive me and send me into the fray. I pray in Christ’s name. Amen.

*(Please take a moment for silent confession.)*

#### **Assurance of Pardon**

When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

**All: Thanks be to God. Amen.**

#### **\*Gloria Patri**

*Glory be to the Father,  
and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;  
as it was in the beginning,  
is now and ever shall be,  
world without end. Amen, amen.*

#### **\*Passing of the Peace**

#### **Anthem** *O Holy Night*

#### **Prayer for Illumination** (*unison*)

Mighty God, the shepherds of old were full of your praises, saying that all they had heard and seen was mirrored by what they had been told. Move among us now with your Holy Spirit, that we too might hear and experience the wonder and joy of the living Word as we seek to welcome the written Word into our lives. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 52:7-10 (*Old Testament pg. 683*)

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:1-20 (*New Testament pg. 58*)

Sermon *Nobody Important* Pastor Alan Olson

\*Hymn #113 *Angels We Have Heard on High*

Responding to the Word

Offering *Away in a Manger*

\*Doxology

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Him all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

\*Prayer of Thanksgiving (*unison*)

We give our thanks through our talents, our time, and our treasure. Thanks be to God; whose love creates us! Thanks be to God; whose mercy redeems us! Thanks be to God; whose grace leads us into the future! Amen.

Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

\*Hymn #122 *Silent Night, Holy Night!*



Benediction

Postlude *Christmas Postlude*

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### ANNOUNCEMENTS



**The church office will be closed** on Wednesday, December 25<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday, January 1<sup>st</sup>. Church staff will be working remotely December 26<sup>th</sup> & December 27<sup>th</sup> and December 30<sup>th</sup> & December 31<sup>st</sup>. The best way to contact the church office during this time is via email.

**Sunday, December 29<sup>th</sup>:** There will be an informal worship service in the CE Auditorium at 10:00 AM. There will be no Sunday School classes held that day.

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Today's sermon and Prayer of Confession are taken from the book: *Season's Greetings: Christmas Letters from Those Who Were There*, by Ruth L. Boling. Ruth is a writer and Presbyterian minister who has served churches in Ohio, New Hampshire, and New Jersey for more than three decades. *Season's Greetings* began as a labor of love for her congregation in Bloomfield, NJ, and grew into a book during her Doctoral program at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, where Ruth and Pastor Alan were classmates.

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<b>LITURGIST</b>	Linda Zaveta
<b>CANDLERS</b>	Jean Pennett & Marie Schlechtweg
<b>USHERS</b>	Bill Canning Samantha Daesener Peggy Guttormsen Barbara Lloyd Vera & Bob Musser
<b>OPENER</b>	Property Commission
<b>CLOSER</b>	Property Commission
<b>COUNTER</b>	Finance Commission

**Today's Guest Musicians:**

*Matthew DeMarco, Soloist*

*and*

*Bell Quartet:*

*Susan Croft, Kay Hatch, Melissa Dill, Bridget O'Beirn*

