



## THE WORSHIP OF GOD

Is it all sewn up – my life?  
Is it at this point so predictable,  
    so orderly,  
        so neat,  
            so arranged,  
                so right,  
    that I don't have time or space  
        for listening for the rustle of angels' wings  
        or running to stables to see a baby?  
Could this be what he meant when he said  
    Listen, those who have ears to hear . . .  
    Look, those who have eyes to see?  
O God, give me the humbleness of those shepherds  
    who saw in the cold December darkness  
    the Coming of Light  
    the Advent of Love!

—Ann Weems  
    from *Kneeling in Bethlehem*

**THE ACT OF WORSHIP**  
**The Fourth Sunday of Advent**  
December 21, 2025  
Ten-thirty o'clock

**LIGHT COMING INTO DARKNESS**

The worship of God begins this morning as you enter the sanctuary. You are encouraged to use these moments for meditation, reflection, and prayer. Following the service, please enjoy a time of fellowship with those around you.

The Meditation of Preparation

God of growth and love, may the little seed that you have planted in me bear much fruit. May the people I encounter come to know you by the words and actions of my love – a love that I first came to know by your words and actions. Prepare my soul for your coming, and continue to have me serve you as an instrument of your love.

—Adapted from a prayer  
by Father John Mudd

The Prelude	“Prepare the Way, O Zion”	Wood
The Call to Worship	“Dona Nobis Pacem”	Traditional
	<i>Dona nobis pacem</i> — Grant us peace	

**THE COMING OF THE LIGHT**

*The Lighting of the Candle of Love		Rhodes Massey
*The Advent Banner		Sid Dickison
*The Processional Hymn No. 135		<i>HYFRYDOL</i>
	“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”	
*The Advent Litany		Sterling Massey
Leader:	The love of Christ be with you.	
<b>People:</b>	<b>And also with you.</b>	
Leader:	God is making the final preparations for an amazing thing! Now is the Advent of the long-awaited Messiah, our bringer of hope, our Prince of Peace, our instrument of joy, our leader of love.	

**People:** We wait, we prepare, we make straight the way. We are a people of hope, a people of peace, a people of joy, and a people of love.

**Leader:** Today we light the candle of love. No other word so adequately captures the spirit and goal of our faith. No other word so completely describes what we know of our God.

**People:** For God so loved the world that a child was given. A savior was made in the form of Love Incarnate. We gather, then, in Christian Love.

**All:** We give thanks for a love that passes understanding, and we await the dawning of God's pervasive and enduring love once more.

—Roger D. Straw  
adapted from *Flames of the Spirit*

\*The Gloria Patri

MEINEKE

**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.**

\*The Prayer of Invocation

Sterling Massey

The Greeting

Lesley Ratcliff

The Lessons

Isaiah 7:10-16  
Romans 1:1-7

Lesley Ratcliff

**Leader:** This is the Word of the Lord.

**People:** Thanks be to God.

## **THE CONFESSION OF DARKNESS AND THE ASSURANCE OF LIGHT**

The Meditation of Confession

God of the loving heart, we confess before you those places in our hearts where we have refused you entrance: people we have refused to love; habits we never get around to changing; good things we have left undone; and ways in which we hurt you, ourselves, and others. Come to us in the light of your Christ. Shine on those places we have hidden from you. Show us new ways to live. Sweep clean the rooms of our hearts, that Christ may find a home among us. Be known among us now and forever!

—Ruth C. Duck  
from *Touch Holiness*

The Silent Prayer

The Assurance of Pardon

Marty Harper

The Morning Prayer and Lord's Prayer

Marty Harper

**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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever. Amen.**

### GRATITUDE FOR THE LIGHT

\*The Offertory Hymn

Great Carols of Our Faith  
(sing verses 1 and 2)

No. 185 "We Three Kings"

No. 169 "Infant Holy, Infant Lowly"

No. 164 "Silent Night"

\*The Offertory Prayer

Sterling Massey

The Offertory

"Lo! How a Rose E'er Blooming"

Brahms

\*The Doxology

*LASST UNS ERFREUEN*

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Christ, all creatures here below. Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Praise Holy Spirit evermore;  
Praise loving God, whom we adore. Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

### PROCLAIMING THE LIGHT

The Gospel

Matthew 1:18-25

Scott Dickison

Leader: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

The Anthem

"A Christmas Carol"  
Youth Ensemble

Coker

Little star of Bethlehem!  
Do we see Thee now?  
Do we see Thee shining  
O'er the tall trees?

Little Child of Bethlehem!  
Do we hear Thee in our hearts?  
Hear the angels singing:  
Peace on earth, good will to all!  
Noel!

O'er the cradle of a King,  
Hear the angels sing:  
In Excelsis Gloria, Gloria!  
From his Father's home on high,  
Lo! For us He came to die.  
Hear the angels sing:  
Venite adoremus Dominum.

The Sermon

“The Other Parent”

Scott Dickison

### TIME OF RESPONSE

Chances are, if we don't enjoy the process of getting ready, we won't enjoy the event we are getting ready for. If we become so consumed by getting Christmas right – the right present, the right cards mailed to the right people at the right time, the right dishes for Christmas dinner – we risk missing the surprising ways that God prepares us in this season. As we open to God's guiding in these final Advent days, we may discover that the space being prepared for the coming birth lies within our own selves.

—Jan L. Richardson  
from *Night Visions*

\*The Recessional Hymn No. 171

MENDELSSOHN

“Hark! the Herald Angels Sing”

\*The Benediction

Scott Dickison

\*The Postlude “O Hail This Brightest Day of Days”

Bach

*\*The congregation will please stand.*

The scriptures for today are found on  
the following pages in the pew Bible:

Isaiah 7:10-16, page 554  
Romans 1:1-7, pages 913-914  
Matthew 1:18-25, page 783

**Today is the Fourth Sunday of Advent**, the beginning season of the Christian year. Advent is a time of spiritual preparation for the coming of Christ and of anticipation of the fullness of the kingdom of God. The color purple reflects the Advent themes of preparation and restoration.

**The Advent Wreath** marks the four Sundays of Advent with the candles of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love surrounding the Christ candle. The ever-green wreath symbolizes the never-ending love of God, and the flickering candlelight dispels the darkness as we are reminded that Jesus is the Light of the World.

**The Advent Banner, *Highway Through the Desert***, marks the beginning of the season. The shapes remind us of the unfolding of new life and the flowing of God's spirit among God's people. It is a visual symbol of Emmanuel's coming to earth as told in the book of Isaiah. The prophet foretold the birth of a leader who would cause great changes. On the horizon is a dawning. The banner reminds us of Isaiah 40:3-5:

A voice is calling, "Clear the way of the Lord in the wilderness. Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. Let every valley be lifted up and every mountain and hill made low; and the crooked straight, and the rough places plain. Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all flesh will see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

The banner was designed and made by a Northminster member.

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## CAREGIVING CONCERNS

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CARE CARDS may be found in the pew racks, if you would like to write anyone. Place your cards in the offering plate. Cards will be mailed from the church office on Monday morning.

### ONGOING CAREGIVING CONCERNS

Gorman Schaffer  
Carla Holt

Virginia Hamilton  
Sue Edwards

Libby McGee

The Caregiving Committee considers it a privilege to pray for each concern that affects our church family. Recognizing the power of prayer, we meet each Monday at 8:30 a.m. in the church conference room for a brief, informal prayer-time and invite all who can to join us. If you have prayer concerns, please call the church office or a member of the Caregiving Committee.

## **Pastoral Care Number**

To alert the ministers of a pastoral care need,  
please call 601-980-1002.

## **Brumfield House**

December 25: Jeff Wilson

## **Meals on Wheels**

Monday, December 22

Cooks:	Drivers:
Gail England	Rt. 1: TBA
Ann Calhoon	Rt. 2: TBA
Kelly Hicks	

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## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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### **Merry Mahjong**

Today, 3:00—5:00 p.m. in the Great Hall

The highest scorer at each table will take home a mahjong ornament. This event will be for folks who have learned the basics. If you haven't yet, please reach out to Lesley about a time to learn. If you would like to attend, please let Lesley know immediately following worship.

### **Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service**

Wednesday, December 24, 5:30 p.m.  
Pre-service music begins at 5:00 p.m.  
Childcare will be available.

### **Holiday Hours**

The church office will close  
Wednesday, December 24 at 12:00 p.m.

The church office will be closed  
Thursday, December 25  
Friday, December 26  
Thursday, January 1

Sunday school classes will not meet December 28.

## **New Year's Eve Reflection and Communion**

Wednesday, December 31  
6:00-7:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary

The sanctuary will be open for one hour on New Year's Eve for a time of quiet reflection and guided meditation. Communion will be served to those who wish to partake.

## **Baptism of the Lord Vespers Service**

Each year Baptism of the Lord Sunday offers an opportunity to be baptized in an evening vespers service. The next Baptism of the Lord Sunday will be January 11, 2026. If you are interested in receiving baptism at this service, please reach out to one of the pastors.

## **Northminster Essentials**

Sunday, January 18 through Sunday, March 1  
9:15 a.m.—10:15 a.m.  
Library (room opposite the main office)

If you are seeking to better understand the history and practices of the family of faith called Northminster, this is the course for you.

For questions or to sign up, please call the church office at 601-982-4703 or email Lesley at [lesley@northminsterbaptist.org](mailto:lesley@northminsterbaptist.org).

## **Lunch and Learn with Katie Blount**

January 20, 2026  
12:00—1:00 p.m. in the Great Hall

Katie Blount is director of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, a position she has held since 2015. Katie will talk with us about her work at the department that oversees the Two Mississippi Museums and other historic sites across the state.

The cost will be \$10 per person. Please RSVP by January 15 by emailing Lesley Ratcliff at [lesley@northminsterbaptist.org](mailto:lesley@northminsterbaptist.org) or calling the church office.

## **Northminster Women's Retreat**

Saturday, February 28—Sunday, March 1  
Eagle Ridge Conference Center, Raymond, MS

## **In-Home Communion**

In the spirit of Thanksgiving and Advent, Northminster is offering in-home communion. If you or your loved one is not able to attend our worship service, please contact us to arrange a time when we can bring communion to you. If you are interested in sharing communion where you reside, contact Marty Harper by emailing [marty@northminsterbaptist.org](mailto:marty@northminsterbaptist.org) or by calling 601-954-4348.

## **Stewpot Clothes Closet**

Stewpot is in need of men's clothing size 40 or lower, especially pants, shoes and belts. You can drop them off at Stewpot or bring them to the church office. Please contact Julie Wooley at [jjwooley12@gmail.com](mailto:jjwooley12@gmail.com) or Leslie Ward at [lward@northminsterbaptist.org](mailto:lward@northminsterbaptist.org) with any questions.

## ———— YOUTH NEWS ————

### **Youth Sunday School**

Join us at 9:15 a.m. for donuts and good conversation.

### **Youth Sunday Nights**

5:00—6:30 p.m.

will resume January 11, 2026

### **Youth Sunday & Dessert Auction**

February 8, 2026

## ———— CHILDREN'S NEWS ————

### **Children's Worship Volunteer Schedule**

- December 21: Firecrackers—Anne & Parker Snow  
Sparklers—Kelly & Josh Guyton
- December 28: Firecrackers—Sarah & Nick Newcomb  
Sparklers—Jennifer & Drew Rymer
- January 4: Firecrackers—Krysten & Jay Jernigan  
Sparklers—Mary Hastings & Gray Samson

## **The Living Nativity**

The final rehearsal will be December 24 at 4:30 p.m. in the Great Hall.

## **Parents' Night Out**

Friday, January 9, 6:00-10:00 p.m.

You can make a reservation for your children (infant-sixth grade) by calling the church office, 601-982-4703, by Wednesday, January 7. Please remember to feed your children before they arrive, or provide a brown-bag supper.

## **Atrium & Four5Six**

will resume at 5:00 p.m. on Sunday, January 11, 2026.

**POINSETTIAS**  
*Lovingly given by*

Cindy and Jeff Wilson in memory of Inez and Dudley Wilson  
Cindy and Jeff Wilson in memory of Dorothy and Kinton Polk  
David and Cheryl Allen in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Neville G. Allen  
David and Cheryl Allen in memory of William Jesse DuBard  
Ann and Rick Calhoon in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Chesley Pruet  
Ann and Rick Calhoon in memory of Mr. and Mrs. O.J. Calhoon  
Gray Jackson and Dabbs Massey in memory of Gray and Eda Jackson  
Gray Jackson in memory of Jo Ann Ratliff  
Gray Jackson and Dabbs Massey in memory of Wayne and Zeita Parker  
Gray Jackson and Dabbs Massey in memory of Barbara Stribling Davis  
Gray Jackson in memory of Carolyn Aden  
Mike Peters in memory of Anne Peters  
Mike Peters in memory of Jim and Sue Peters  
Sherry and Amanda Milam in memory of Dr. John B. Milam  
Sherry and Amanda Milam in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Jim Edwards  
Sherry and Amanda Milam in memory of Dr. and Mrs. John T. Milam  
Sherry and Amanda Milam in memory of Lynn Milam Granberry  
Tim and Cheryl Coker in memory of Grover and Irene Coker and Louise  
Coker  
Tim and Cheryl Coker in memory of Francis and Ozelle Wilgar  
Buddy and Carolyn McIntyre in memory of Elizabeth and W.R. Newman  
Buddy and Carolyn McIntyre in memory of Anne McIntyre Black and  
John S. McIntyre  
Jeanne Wells Cook and Steven D. Cook in memory of Ellen Shirley  
Weems  
Jeanne Wells Cook and Steven D. Cook in memory of Sarah Irvine  
Jeanne Wells Cook and Steven D. Cook in memory of Jamie and Bessie  
Wells  
Eddie, Barrie, Cole, Andrew and Nicholas Mahaffey in memory of  
Barry and Carolyn Aden  
Eddie, Barrie, Cole, Andrew and Nicholas Mahaffey in memory of  
Robert J. Mahaffey  
Donna and Jim and the Barksdale family in memory of Fred and Lois  
Kennedy  
Billy and Annette Trotter in memory of Jack McDaniel  
Billy and Annette Trotter in memory of Tom and Maurice Gregory  
Billy and Annette Trotter in memory of Rosemary Harrison  
Randy and Brenda Smith in memory of Lawrence and Merle Crumpton  
and Sandra Gayle Crumpton  
Randy and Brenda Smith in memory of Louis and Dorothy Smith  
Randy and Brenda Smith in memory of Felicita and Jason Smith  
Kyle, Kim, George and Wesley Watson in memory of J. Clifford and  
Martha Watson  
Kyle, Kim, George and Wesley Watson in memory of Kyra Robertson  
Watson

Kyle, Kim, George and Wesley Watson in memory of Mr. and Mrs.  
Eugene H. Behm

Kyle, Kim, George and Wesley Watson in memory of Mr. and Mrs.  
Eugene P. Cohen

Kyle, Kim, George and Wesley Watson in memory of Mr. and Mrs.  
W.C. Robertson

Kyle, Kim, George and Wesley Watson in memory of Tracey R. Cohen

Kyle, Kim, George and Wesley Watson in memory of Janice Tyre

Northminster friends in memory of Charles Bacon

Doug, Crisler, Will and Sam Boone in memory of William R. Boone

George Smith, Stephen Smith, Jennifer Rymer and Sarah Newcomb in  
memory of Emily Lewis Smith

George Smith, Stephen Smith, Jennifer Rymer and Sarah Newcomb in  
memory of Jane Causey Lewis

John and Gail England in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Jim England

Cathy and Jeff Davis in memory of A.C. and Rebecca Pilgreen

Sam Sanders and Shirley Foster in memory of Jim Sanders

Sam Sanders and Shirley Foster in memory of Bill Sanders

Sam Sanders and Shirley Foster in memory of David Sanders

Sam Sanders and Shirley Foster in memory of June Clement

Sam Sanders and Shirley Foster in memory of Sheila Sanders

Leesa Crim McCharen in memory of Silas Wood McCharen

Leesa Crim McCharen in memory of Sallie Lloyd Crim

Leesa Crim McCharen in memory of William Lee Crim

Becky and Guy Parker in memory of Barbara Sloan Stribling Davis

The Thames, Tucker and Shaul families in memory of Lillian Norene  
Shaul

Monica Daniels in memory of Callie Amanda Ivy Daniels-Bryant

Monica Daniels in memory of Linda Rogers McGehee

Monica Daniels in memory of Virgil Brawley

Mary Elizabeth Smith in memory of J. George Smith

Jo Ann Welch in memory of W. Scott Welch III

Lori Quarles in memory of John Quarles

The O'Beirne family in memory of Tommy O'Beirne

The O'Beirne family in memory of Charlie Shields

Luke and Chris Dove in memory of Marlane C. Dove

Ann Arrington, Carter, Cruise, Ramsey and Brian Long in memory of  
Ann Arrington Cruise

Ann Arrington, Carter, Cruise, Ramsey and Brian Long in memory of  
Sonny Marvin Long

Ann Arrington, Carter, Cruise, Ramsey and Brian Long in memory of  
Douglas Lamar Cruise

## POINSETTIAS

*Lovingly given by*

David and Cheryl Allen in honor of Courtney, Josh and Kennedy Crump

David and Cheryl Allen in honor of Camille, Drew and Jeb Snyder

Gray Jackson and Dabbs Massey in honor of Gerry and Ann Lauman

Gray Jackson and Dabbs Massey in honor of Suzanne Boone

Gray Jackson in honor of Susie Friou

Gray Jackson and Dabbs Massey in honor of Mark and Rebecca Wiggs

Gray Jackson in honor of The Northminster Choir

Mike Peters in honor of Mitch, Ceejaye, Anna Mitchell, Elizabeth and  
Eleanor Peters

Mike Peters in honor of Sam, Courtney, Savannah, Marshall and Milton  
Peters

Becky and Guy Parker in honor of Judy and Guy Parker

Becky and Guy Parker in honor of Anne and Bob Blackmon

Becky and Guy Parker in honor of Shari and Mark Culver

Becky and Guy Parker in honor of Katherine and Keith Davis

Becky and Guy Parker in honor of Anne McCaslin, Parker, Phinn, Sayle  
and Eloise Snow

Becky and Guy Parker in honor of Rollins Parker

Becky and Guy Parker in honor of Becca, Jake and Wilkes Fugett

Becky and Guy Parker in honor of Mary Lynn and Julia Parker

Becky and Guy Parker in honor of Suzan and Tommy Thames

Tim and Cheryl Coker in honor of Maren Hrivnak

Tim and Cheryl Coker in honor of John Hrivnak

Tim and Cheryl Coker in honor of Kimberly Blount

Tim and Cheryl Coker in honor of Bailey Blount

Tim and Cheryl Coker in honor of The Northminster Choir

Eddie, Barrie, Cole, Andrew and Nicholas Mahaffey in honor of  
Dean Mahaffey

Tim and Becky Frame in honor of Gayla and John Purvis

Tim and Becky Frame in honor of Anna, Andy, Sybil and Davis Frame

Lee and Kathryn Sams in honor of Farren and Lawson Sams

Lee and Kathryn Sams in honor of James, Cooper and Elsie Weyrens

Lee and Kathryn Sams in honor of Bryan, Iva Kathryn and Helen Sams

Northminster Choir in honor of Tam and Nora Etheridge

Northminster Choir in honor of Larry and Sara Cox

Northminster Choir in honor of Jo Ann Welch

Northminster Choir in honor of Tim Coker and Sheila Hess

Northminster Choir in honor of Mary Jane Moak

Kyle, Kim, George and Wesley Watson in honor of Richard and Marilyn  
Joiner

Doug, Crisler, Will and Sam Boone in honor of Suzanne Boone

Crisler and Doug Boone in honor of Will and Sam Boone

Crisler, Will, Sam and Doug Boone in honor of Helen and Red Moffat

John and Gail England in honor of Elizabeth Triplett  
John and Gail England in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Crosthwait  
Amy Finkelberg in honor of The Mary Foose Sunday School class  
Sam Sanders and Shirley Foster in honor of Bobbie Jean Sanders  
M'lee Williams in honor of Kelley Williams, Jr  
M'lee and Kelley Williams in honor of Jake, Zach and Luke Williams  
M'lee and Kelley Williams in honor of Anna Kate and Patrick Boyd  
Becky and Guy Parker in honor of Mike Peters and Kelley Williams  
Sunday School Class  
Monica Daniels in honor of Rose Waverly Daniels  
Monica Daniels in honor of Andrew Parker Bryant  
Lori Quarles in honor of Martha Quarles  
The O'Beirne family in honor of Pokey O'Beirne  
The O'Beirne family in honor of Frances Shields

## THE CHURCH IN SERVICE

### **Sunday, December 21**

8:30 a.m. Chapel Communion

9:00 a.m. Living Nativity Practice

9:15 a.m. Christmas Breakfast, GH

10:30 a.m. Worship Service

3:00 p.m. Mahjong, GH

### **Monday, December 15**

10:00 a.m. Meals on Wheels

### **Wednesday, December 24**

4:30 p.m. Living Nativity Practice, GH

5:00 p.m. Pre-Service Music

5:30 p.m. Christmas Eve Service

### **Thursday, December 25**

Church office is closed

### **Friday, December 26**

Church office is closed

### **Sunday, December 28**

8:30 a.m. Chapel Communion

10:30 a.m. Worship Service

**MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH**  
**Every member a minister**

The Deacon of the Week is Will Walker.  
The Caregiving Chair for December is Annette Hitt.  
The Caregiving Coordinators for December are Annette Hitt,  
Susan O'Mara, Sarah Reynolds and Sunny Fowler.  
The Caregiver of the Week is Annette Hitt.  
The Liturgist for December is Gray Jackson.  
The flowers for December are provided by Lisa Kelly  
and Kandy Sims.  
The Usher Captain for December is Keith Davis.

Every member of Northminster Baptist Church, like every disciple of Christ, is commissioned to participate in Christian ministry. The following persons have been called by this congregation to serve as enablers in such ministry.

Senior Pastor	Scott Dickison
Associate Pastor for Children and Adults	Lesley Ratcliff
Associate Pastor for Students	Geoff Davidson
Associate Pastor for Senior Adults	Marty Harper
Minister of Music	Tim Coker
Organist	Sheila Hess
Organist Emeritus	Billy Trotter
Office Manager	Leslie Ward
Financial Secretary	Sam South
Receptionist/Secretary	Jan Wilson/Neely Grimsley
Sexton	Lamenais Simeon

Northminster Baptist Church  
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