



# Advent Beyond Imagination

Advent calls us to reevaluate all that we think we know about strength and agency. We become honest about all of the fears and loves that beg us to choose our leaders, to allocate power to the cruel and callous. And we dare ourselves to choose another way.

*~ Cole Arthur Riley*

**HIGHLAND BAPTIST CHURCH**

**FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT**

**DECEMBER 24, 2023**

**10:00 A.M.**

Gathering Music

Claude D'Aquin

*Noel on the Flutes*

Invitation to Worship

Mary Alice Birdwhistell

Candelighter Processional

IL EST NÉ

*Light the Light, the Fire of Life*

*Light the light, the fire of life, let the candle reveal God's glory.  
Jesus Christ has come to earth and for us shall come again.*

*Light the candle of God's love, light the light of Bethlehem's stable,  
light the candle of God's love, light the light by which we see.*

The Lighting of the Advent Candle: Love

The Gordon Family

Opening Words

Angela Dennison

Advent is the glorious affirmation that God creates newness in the world - in your life and mine;

***That something new is coming to be born among us!***

As we light these Advent candles, may the Holy One kindle our hope, provoke us toward peace, fill us with joy, and ground us in love.

***Oh come, oh come Emmanuel!***

**LOVE DIVINE, ALL LOVES EXCELLING,  
JOY OF HEAVEN TO EARTH COME DOWN**

Processional Hymn (281) †

BEECHER

*Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*

Prayer of Expectancy †

Angela Dennison

**FIX IN US THY HUMBLE DWELLING,  
ALL THY FAITHFUL MERCES CROWN**

Anthem

Elaine Hagenberg

*O Love*

O Love, O Love, O Love, that will not let me go, O Love, I rest my weary soul in Thee; I give Thee back the life I owe, That in Thy ocean depths its flow may richer, fuller be. O Joy, O Joy, O Joy that seeks me through the pain. I cannot close my heart to Thee; I trace the rainbow through the rain, and feel the promise is not vain that morn shall tearless be.

Prayer of Confession

Renee Purtlebaugh

***Holy One, your love is nourishment when we are weary, peace when we are unsettled,  
and joy that searches and finds us. And yet, we struggle to receive, trust and allow your love  
to buoy us on the journey. Forgive us, and remind us again and again and again of your promise  
to never let us go. Amen.***

Words of Assurance— Romans 16:25-27

Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

Exchange of Love †

Paul Henderson

Hymn (114) †

TEMPUS ADEST FLORIDUM

*Gentle Mary Laid Her Child*

**LET US SEE THY GREAT SALVATION,  
PERFECTLY RESTORED IN THEE**

The Gospel Lesson †

Luke 1:26-38 (Pew Bible pages 55-56—NT)

Lauren Jones Mayfield

Sermon

*Here I Am. Here We Are.*



**THEE WE WOULD BE ALWAYS BLESSING,  
SERVE THEE AS THY HOSTS ABOVE**

Hymn (124) †

THE FIRST NOWELL

*The First Nowell*

Offertory Prayer †

Mark Sanders

Offertory

German carol, 15th c.

*Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*

News for the Community

Justin Sizemore

In response to your decision, ***we welcome you! We covenant to be the family of God for you in this place. We hope to learn from you, give to you, and receive from you, as we journey in faith together.***

For the ministries that shape the life of our community, ***thanks be to God.***

Doxology †

VENI EMMANUEL

***Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God, all creatures here below;  
Praise God for all that love has done; Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.***

Benediction †

Mary Alice Birdwhistell

Postlude

Plainsong melody, 13th c.

*Of the Father's Love Begotten*

† *For those who are able, we invite you to stand.*

## Today in Worship

Highland's deacons (wearing identification name tags) are available at various locations for prayer, questions or information. Deacons are lay ministers of the church who have been called to a ministry of service.

Phrases from today's processional hymn, *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*, will guide us toward images that embody segments of our worship service—praise, confession, proclamation and response.

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Listening Assist Devices are available. Please see our sound technician or an usher for assistance. Large print hymn sheets are also available upon request for visually impaired persons. An usher can provide a copy for you.

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## Notes and News for the Community of Faith

- **Join us again this evening for one of our Christmas Eve services!** We will gather for a more casual and family-friendly service at 4:00 PM. Lessons and Carols, an old English tradition, tells the Christmas story through scripture, carols, and music by the Sanctuary Choir at the 6:00 PM service. Both services end with candlelight to mark the joy of Christ's birth! Care provided for infants, toddlers and twos at 4:00 PM and for infants through pre-kindergarten children at 6:00 PM.
- **On Sunday, December 31, we will not have any in-person services or activities as a way to offer Sabbath rest to our staff, lay leaders, musicians, and volunteers who work so hard throughout the year, and particularly through the holiday season.** We will offer a virtual service on Highland's Facebook and YouTube accounts for you to worship from home at 10:00AM on New Year's Eve. We hope you will join us for in-person and online worship again on Sunday, January 7 at 8:45 or 11:15 AM. Bible study classes for all ages also meet at 10:00 AM.
- **Based on total ministry budget donations received last Sunday, December 17, \$322,000 in additional gifts are needed by the end of the year to meet our projected 2023 actual expenses.** While that number might be overwhelming to read, we are also bold enough to imagine that the goal of meeting our ministry expenses is entirely within reach! You are welcome to give in person during worship today or this evening. You may also give online at <https://hbclouisville.org/giving-1/> or by contacting our financial secretary, Kathleen Gordon, at [kathleen@hbclouisville.org](mailto:kathleen@hbclouisville.org) or at 502-451-3735. If you would like to hand-deliver a gift to the church office, we will be open December 27-29 from 9:00 AM—3:00 PM. As a reminder, any gifts for the 2023 budget year must be received or postmarked by December 31. Thank you for your generous giving which supports the ongoing ministry of Highland Baptist Church as we seek to live out the good news of Christmas, creating a world where justice and Love are abundant! We are grateful for the



### HIGHLAND BAPTIST CHURCH

*A thinking, feeling, healing  
community of faith*

*Our Mission...* God's Love compels us to cultivate a safe, welcoming community of faith where all are challenged to discover, grow, and serve, as together we boldly live out the worship that is our very lives.

**David Bannister**  
MINISTRY COUNCIL CHAIR

**Jerre and Frank Bassett**  
CUSTODIANS

**Mary Alice Birdwhistell**  
PASTOR

**Fred Bogert**  
MUSIC DIRECTOR  
TO FRIDAY CHURCH

**Don Burke**  
PASTOR EMERITUS

**Cheryl Davis**  
OFFICE MANAGER

**Megan Fuller**  
CHILDREN AND FAMILY  
MINISTRY ASSISTANT

**Kathleen Gordon**  
FINANCIAL SECRETARY

**Paul Henderson**  
ASSOCIATE PASTOR OF MUSIC  
AND WORSHIP

**Robert Lee**  
ORGANIST AND MUSIC ASSOCIATE

**Lauren Jones Mayfield**  
ASSOCIATE PASTOR FOR CARE  
AND JUSTICE

**Walter McWhorter**  
CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR

**Renee Purtlebaugh**  
ASSOCIATE PASTOR TO CHILDREN  
AND THEIR FAMILIES

**Justin Sizemore**  
ASSOCIATE PASTOR TO YOUTH  
AND YOUNG ADULTS

**Tyler Swim**  
DEACON CHAIR