



Baptism of the Lord

Preparation for **Worship**

Holy God, you sent your Son to be baptized among sinners, to seek and save the lost. May we, who have been baptized in his name, never turn away from the world, but reach out in love to walk with the wayward, to comfort the afflicted, to remember the forgotten, and to submit ourselves to the guidance of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Gathering and Preparing for **God's Word**

Prelude Prelude on a Welsh Hymn Tune VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Welcome and Announcements

Leader: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

People: And also with you.

Call to Worship Psalm 29

Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

The voice of the Lord is over the waters;

the God of glory thunders, the Lord, over mighty waters.

May God give strength to God's people!

May God bless God's people with peace!

Hymn #361 "O Christ, the Great Foundation" AURELIA

Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Pardon

**Merciful God, in baptism you promise forgiveness and new life,
making us part of the body of Christ.**

**We confess that we remain preoccupied with ourselves,
separated from one another.**

**We cling to destructive habits, hold grudges,
and show reluctance to welcome the stranger.**

We allow the past to hold us hostage.

In your loving-kindness, have mercy on us, and free us from sin.

**Fulfill the promises of our baptism so that we may rise to new life,
and live together in grace. Amen.**

Hearing **God's Word**

Prayer for Illumination

Old Testament Lesson, *Isaiah 43:1-3a*

Gospel Lesson, *Mark 1:9-11*

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Sermon "Torn Apart"

Anthem "When You Pass Through the Waters" Weber

Responding to **God's Word**

Affirmation of Faith, *The Apostles' Creed*

**I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell;
the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Ghost;
the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body;
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

The Lord's Prayer

**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 debts
as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory forever. Amen.**

Hymn #482 "Baptized in Water" BUNESSAN

Charge and Benediction

Postlude Trumpet in Dialogue Clerembault

Leading Worship **this Morning**

Ben Dorr, *preaching*

Mary Kathleen Duncan, *liturgist*

Jennifer Howe, *lay reader*

Nancy Smith, *organist*

Lynne Robinson, *pianist*

Kelly Kemp, Emily Sweezey, Judy McKenney,

Hunter Ditsch, Mark Kemp, *vocalists*

WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Sallie White on the death of her mother, Anne Porcher Z. Perrin, in Spartanburg, SC - 1/2/2021.

OPEN MINDS

•Heritage Lecture Series

Join us Sunday, January 17, for a special presentation of the 2021 Heritage Lecture Series featuring Dr. Jonathan Lee Walton, Dean of the School of Divinity at Wake Forest University and nationally renowned speaker and author. Dean Walton is an ethicist with a focus on evangelical Christianity and its relationship to media and political culture. His most recent book, *A Lens of Love: Reading the Bible in Its World for Our World* blends academic scholarship with everyday living and explores how best our sacred Scripture can impact our lives. Dean Walton will preach in our pre-recorded 9:00a and 11:15a worship services on the 17th and will lead us in a lecture and discussion via Zoom at 10a. Watch for more information and links to join the Zoom meeting on the 17th in the newsletter and on our social media accounts. To learn more about Dean Walton, go to jonathanlwalton.com.

GIVING HEARTS •

Financial Update@WPC

2021 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

As of Monday, January 4, we have received \$2,178,251 in pledges toward our 2021 budget goal of \$2,513,715.

For your convenience, you may pledge via our website at wpc-online.org/pledge today, you may mail in your pledge, or send your pledge by email to the Church Financial Secretary, Sherri Owens, at sherri@wpc-online.org.

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING • JANUARY 31

The Session has called the annual meeting of the congregation for January 31. The purpose of the meeting is to elect twelve elders to the class of 2024, one trustee to fill an unexpired term for the class of 2025, to vote on the 2021 terms of call for the pastoral staff, and to receive the 2021 operating budget.

The names of the Session nominees are the following:

Hastings Blumer
 Jay Culclasure
 Ross Glidewell
 Jara Jones
 Meg McKnight
 Kate Weaver Patterson
 Toni Paylor
 Neil Shurley
 Keith Stevenson
 Lesley Usher
 LeAnne White
 Russ Williams

The nominee for trustee is Paul Grier.

If we have returned to in-person worship on January 31, the meeting will occur in phases, as it did on December 6. If we have not yet returned to in-person worship, the annual congregational meeting will take place entirely over Zoom at 1pm.

THE HARBINGER

Westminster Presbyterian Church
 2310 Augusta Street
 Greenville, South Carolina 29605
 (864) 232-2424
 www.wpc-online.org

THE HARBINGER: (USPS No. 764160)
 Published weekly by the Westminster Presbyterian Church, 2310 Augusta Street, Greenville SC 29605. Periodical postage paid at Greenville SC 29605.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 10 - 16, 2021

BAPTISM OF THE LORD DAY

No Sunday Morning Zoom Bible Study

9:00 a.m. Online Worship Service

11:15 a.m. Online Worship Service

WEDNESDAY

3:00 p.m. Zoom It's Elementary Meeting

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the
HARBINGER
 open minds open hearts

VOLUME LXXIII | JANUARY 10, 2021 | No. 35

From the Pews, Jim Gettys**Back to the Basics****Mark 1: 9–11**

The passage recommended for this Sunday is one from the first chapter of Mark and details the Baptism of the Lord. From what I can remember from Sunday school, Mark's Gospel is believed to be one of the earliest Gospels that was composed and collected the oral traditions of those who would begin to define the early Christian Church. It seems almost austere in its directness. There is little room for ambiguity in the terse composition style of the writer. I find this clipped style and clear language to be refreshing, especially after this year we have just closed. Clarity and open honesty seem to have been in short supply during this tumultuous year of economic, racial, political, and medical dialogue.

Our verses for today outline the day in which Jesus travels from his backwater home in Galilee to Jerusalem where he was to be baptized by John the Baptist in the river Jordan. Compared to other Gospels, Mark gives us almost no detail as to the relationship between John and Jesus on this day. There is no conversation documented between the two to give insight into the emotion of this moment. Mark simply states the facts, and in doing so leaves no room for misinterpretation of the momentous event which is occurring. Our Lord is immersed in the River, and immediately on arising, receives the Holy Spirit from sky which was rent asunder. Period.

I, for one, find the straightforward language of this passage to be more than refreshing... It is positively liberating! These verses in some ways take us "back to the basics" in a way that all of the lovely prose, and vaulted descriptions in Luke that we have enjoyed during the Christmas season cannot. The simplicity of these lines forces us to come back to the realization that there is Truth in the world; And that this Truth is grounded in the bodily form given to Jesus Christ into which the Holy Spirit "descended like a dove". Although this image provides a lovely metaphor for what actually occurred, I think we must remember that the reality is that something no less wonderful than the descent of the Father, the Living God, from Heaven into our mundane world has occurred.

I also believe that with unambiguous directives comes a demand for an equally open and transparent response. As Christians, the Grace offered us in the gift of the Holy Spirit and forgiveness of sins forces us to remain above and outside the contentious dialogue of our times. We are challenged to show God's Love to the world demonstrated through Christ without nuance, spin, or influencing agendas. I pray that we may all be given the strength to accomplish this goal.