

relationships matter

GOD • ONE ANOTHER • WORLD



# Spring Branch Presbyterian Church

## Who's Who:

Minister: All Members of the Church  
Pastor: Rev. Mark Plunkett  
Administrator: Jorida Vakiari  
Ministries Coordinator: C. Miguel Carlin  
Administrative Assistant: Ethan Mitchell  
Music Director: Gabriel Perez  
Accompanist: Jonathan Craft  
AV Director: Ethan Mitchell  
AV Technician: Ben Dethloff  
Academy Director: Renee Henry

## Ministry Teams:

Administration Leader: Jacquie Ballesteros  
Congregation Leader: Kay Craig  
Faith Development Leader: Kathryn Dethloff  
Mission Leader:  
Worship Leader: Donald McDaniel  
Treasurer: Neal Dikeman

## The Session

Clerk: Elizabeth Powell

Moderator: Rev. Mark Plunkett

## Class of 2024

Charles Fairchild  
Glenn Lanan  
Donald McDaniel  
Jennifer Miller

## Class of 2025

Jacquie Ballesteros  
Kathryn Dethloff  
Stephen Earnest

## Class of 2026

Kay Craig  
Sarah Dikeman  
Ethan Mitchell

## Academy Board

Laurie Mitchell  
Jani Shepard

Jim Kunkel  
Web Trevathan

Neal Dikeman  
Ashley Powell

## Serving today in Worship:

**Liturgist:** Web Trevathan  
**Children's Moment:** Pastor Mark  
**Usher Captain:** Donald McDaniel  
**PowerPoint:** Ethan Mitchell

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*“Voices From Bethlehem:  
The Angel Gabriel Witnesses”*

December 24, 2023

## 4th Sunday of Advent

December 24, 2023

10:50 AM

*\*Those who are able please stand*

### Gathering in God's Name

#### WELCOME

*(Please sign the Friendship Book located in the pew rack next to the center aisle.)*

#### PRELUDE

#### THE LIGHT OF CHRIST ENTERS THE SANCTUARY

#### \*CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: In the midst of darkness, God brings a new light.

**People: Thanks be to the God of light.**

Leader: In the midst of confusion and fear, God brings peace.

**People: Thanks be to the God of peace.**

Leader: In the midst of loss and loneliness, God brings hope.

**People: Thanks be to the God of hope.**

Leader: In the midst of strife and hatred, God brings love.

**ALL: Let us praise God, who truly loves us and brings us new life. Amen.**

#### \*HYMN

*"O Come, All Ye Faithful" (v. 1, 2)*

GTG, No. 133

### Preparing for the Word

#### THE CANDLE OF LOVE

Jan & Gerald Fitts

*"Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah" (v. 4)*

GTG, No. 85

*Light four candles to watch for Messiah: let the light banish darkness.  
He is coming; tell the glad tidings. Let your lights be shining.*

#### INVITATION TO CONFESSION

Leader: In this season of waiting, in this time of preparation, we long to draw closer to God, as a comfort and as our Savior. Often, we get in our own way; we make choices that trip us up as we move toward God. So then, let us make our confession:

#### PRAYER OF CONFESSION *(unison)*

**Lord, we confess that we are rushing headlong into Christmas. It's happening, and we still have so much to do. Our preparations are far from complete, and we are exhausted. Forgive our shortcomings and our short-sightedness.**

# Calendar of Events

[www.springbranchpres.org/church-calendar](http://www.springbranchpres.org/church-calendar)

#### December 24 — 4th Sunday of Advent

10:00 am Brunch (FH)

10:50 am Worship (S)

5:30 pm Refreshments (Breezeway)

6:00 pm Candlelight Communion Worship



#### December 25— Monday Church & Academy Closed



#### December 26 — Tuesday Church & Academy Closed

#### December 27 — Wednesday

#### December 28 — Thursday

#### December 29 — Friday

#### December 30 — Saturday

6:00 pm CENTI Church Service\* (GP)

#### December 31 — Sunday

9:15 am Church Nursery

9:30 am Sunday School

9:45 am Choir Practice (Choir Room)

10:50 am Worship

#### January 1 — Monday Church & Academy Closed



#### January 2 — Tuesday

10:00 am Flexercise (GP)

6:00 pm PW Unwind: Kasra Persian Grill

6:00 pm Basketball (GP)

6:00 pm Cub Scouts: Wolf (GP 1 & 2)

#### January 3 — Wednesday

9:30 am PW Moderator (CR)

10:15 am PW Board Meeting (CR)

3:30 pm WOW (S)

#### January 4 — Thursday

10:00 am Flexercise (GP)

6:00 pm Fairbees Square Dance\* (GP)

#### January 5 — Friday

7:00 pm CENTI Youth Program\* (YR)

#### January 6 — Saturday

6:00 pm CENTI Church Service\* (GP)



*Portions of today's worship service are taken from ministrymatters.com.*

\*Outside SBPC Reservations & Events  
(CR) Conference Room  
(FH) Fellowship Hall  
(GP) Gathering Place  
(L) Library  
(P) Parlor  
(S) Sanctuary

## Announcements & Events:

**The Flowers** for this morning are given by Stephen and Bunnie Lezon, to the Glory of God, and are in remembrance of Stephen's mother, Gloria Lezon, whose birthday is Christmas Day. Gloria passed away in 2009, and had been a member of the church since 1958.

**You are invited to join us tonight for the Candlelight Communion Christmas Eve Service!** Hot Chocolate and Cookies will be served at 5:30 PM. The service will begin at 6:00 PM in the Sanctuary.

**The Christmas Joy Offering continues this week.** When you give, you are faithfully supporting current and retired church workers through assistance in their time of need, and cultivating racial ethnic education and leadership development. Please use the offering envelopes in your Bulletin this week, and make checks payable to "SBPC" and write "Christmas Joy Offering" in the memo line.

One of our long-time Missions in December is the **PCHAS Ornament Tree**. During Advent time, we hang ornaments on a Christmas tree. Each of the ornaments has a PCHAS tag attached with a suggested donation amount. You take the ornament home with you and leave the donation in the basket provided. *(If you pay by check, please make checks payable to SBPC and put "PCHAS Ornament Tree" in the memo line.)*

**Copies our Advent Devotional for this year, "The Light of Grace: Welcoming God's Amazing Gift of Christ"** are available for pickup from the Narthex, Parlor, and Church Office. *"In honor of the 250th anniversary of the hymn 'Amazing Grace,' these devotions enlighten the heart, mind, and soul with the good news that the Light of the World graces us with his presence every day of our lives."*

**The 2024 Offering Envelope Books** are now available in the Narthex. Please sign your name by the number that corresponds to your book number. If you already have a book of offering envelopes, you can continue to use it since it doesn't correspond to specific dates. Thank you for your continued commitment!

Would you like to beautify the Sanctuary on Sunday mornings while honoring a loved one or commemorating a special occasion? **The 2024 Flower Sign-Up Calendar is located in the Narthex!** The cost per arrangement is \$65.00. Checks should be written to SBPC and mailed to the Church Office or placed in the offering plate on Sunday mornings.

**Please don't forget to turn in your Pledge Card and Time & Talent Pledge.** You can find blank copies in the Narthex, Church Office, or Parlor. There is a box in the Narthex for submitting cards. Cards can also be mailed to the Church Office, to the attention of Jorida. Thank you for your continued commitment!

**Un-Decorating the Sanctuary:** The Worship Team is seeking volunteers to help remove the Greens from the Sanctuary on January 7, 2024, immediately after the Worship Service. As usual, many hands make for light work. Pizza will be provided for volunteers before work is started. So that lunch can be planned, please contact Donald McDaniel at [dmcdan77007@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dmcdan77007@sbcglobal.net) or 713-294-4005 to sign up.

**The Unwind Dinner Group will meet in the New Year on Tuesday, January 2nd, at 6:00 PM at Kasra Persian Grill** (9741 Westheimer, 77042). Please note that this is a Tuesday evening, not a Monday, due to the New Year's Holiday. As usual, please respond only if you are attending to Jacquie Ballesteros at 713-305-1114. This restaurant has been highly recommended by several church members. We hope you can join us!

**Wednesday Night Supper will resume on Wednesday, January 10th, at 6:00 PM in the Fellowship Hall.** We hope you can join us then!

**You have poured upon us blessing after blessing, daily reminding us of your love and presence; yet we have chosen to jump into Christmas without giving pause to its true meaning. Give us patience. Slow us down. Remind us of the ways in which you are present with us--not in the wrapped packages, the abundance of food, but in the love and compassion that is brought to all. Forgive us, we pray. Make us truly ready to receive your love and the gift of the Christ Child. Amen.**

### SILENT CONFESSION

### ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Leader: Friends in Christ, hear the Good News! As the angels told the shepherds, as the shepherds told all of Bethlehem, the Christ child is born. Go and tell the world! Alleluia! Amen.

### \*PASSING OF THE PEACE

**\*GLORIA** "Angels We Have Heard on High" (v. 1) GTG, No. 113

*Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains,  
And the mountains in reply echoing their joyous strains.  
Glo-ri-a in excelsis Deo! Glo-ri-a in excelsis Deo!*

### God's People Are Empowered

### CHILDREN'S MOMENT

Pastor Mark

### PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION *(unison)*

**Blessed Spirit, come into our hearts, and increase our love for one another by the reading and hearing of your sacred Word. Amen.**

### FIRST SCRIPTURE LESSON

Isaiah 7:14

Red Pew Bible OT 636

### ANTHEM

"Mary's Slumber Song"

Rachael & Rebecca Castillo

### SECOND SCRIPTURE LESSON

Luke 1:26-38

Red Pew Bible NT 56

### SERMON

**"Voices From Bethlehem: The Angel Gabriel Witnesses"**  
Rev. Mark Plunkett

### Responding to the Word

### \*HYMN

"No Wind at the Window"

GTG, No. 101



**\*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH** *(unison)* *(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.**

## **INVITATION TO DISCIPLESHIP**

## **PRESENTATION OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS**

## **OFFERTORY**

**\*RESPONSE** *"God's Love Made Visible"* LUYH, No. 140

*God's love made visible! Incomprehensible! He is invincible! His love shall reign!  
From love so bountiful, blessings uncountable, make death surmountable! His love shall reign!  
Joyfully pray for peace and good will. All of our yearning he will fulfill.  
Live in a loving way. Praise him for ev'ry day. Open your hearts and pray. His love shall reign!*

## **\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION** *(unison)*

**Let the promise of that sacred night in Bethlehem so long ago, fill us today with hope and purpose. As we wait for your plan to unfold in your good time, give us the patience we need. Remind us of the peace we can access whenever we stop to consider all that you have promised us. Strengthen us for the work ahead, and help us to dedicate ourselves to serving you. Amen!**

## **SHARING OF PRAYER CONCERNS**

## **PASTORAL PRAYER AND 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.**

### **Departing to Serve**

**\*HYMN** *"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"* GTG, No. 119

## **\*BENEDICTION**

## **\*THE LIGHT OF CHRIST GOES OUT INTO THE WORLD**

## **\*POSTLUDE**

### ***Welcome Visitors***

You are joyfully welcomed as you worship with us today. In the worship bulletin, you will see an asterisk (\*) which invites you to stand as you are able throughout today's service. If you have any questions about Spring Branch Presbyterian Church's ministries and programs, you are invited to speak with Pastor Mark, an elder, an usher, or any other member of our church family. Also, the ushers have additional information for you as you leave today. We hope you will come back and that you consider Spring Branch as your church home.

### ***Worship 10:50 am***

**Worship:** Spring Branch Presbyterian Church welcomes families of all ages and sizes. For families with young children, relax! God put the wiggle in all children (and adults), we understand. You are invited to sit closer to the front so your children can hear, see, and experience worship with those around them. Remember, children and youth learn through what they observe. Participate and engage yourselves fully.

**Nursery:** Infants six weeks through Pre-K are welcomed in the nursery during worship. Kindergarten and older children will attend worship with their parents. The Church Nursery is available from 9:15 AM through shortly after Worship in the Bears classroom, Room 126, which is in the north hallway of the Education Building.

### ***Sunday Morning Offerings at 9:30 am***

**Saints Under Construction:** This class meets in the Sanctuary in the Garden Room. This discussion-oriented class focuses on what each of us can learn from the weekly Bible scriptures to build upon in strengthening our faith. Patti Nanney leads the class.

**The Explorers:** This class meets in the Conference Room in the Education Building. The class studies the Bible, book-by-book, using different translations which help the lively and thought-provoking discussions. Linda Crawford leads the class.

**Children's Sunday School Class:** This class meets in the Children's classroom in The Gathering Place on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays of each month to learn more about the stories in the Bible by having crafts, stories, games, and other fun activities. The class is designed for elementary-age children, ages 5 to 10, but all are welcomed.

**Children's Chime Choir:** The Chime Choir meets in the Sanctuary on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of each month. This is a chance for elementary aged children to get to ring chimes as part of Worship. We are excited to continue this new adventure! Megan Hogg leads the Chime Choir.

**Other Faith Development Opportunities:** Watch the monthly PresPress, weekly church-wide emails, and the worship bulletin for other opportunities throughout the year. It may be a short-term Special Topic or book discussions on Sunday mornings, a week night book study, or retreat.



*SBPC offers the option to give a gift to the church using your laptop or any mobile device. Please see the "Giving" card in your pew for details and information on how to support the missions and ministries of SBPC from anywhere at anytime, or visit [www.springbranchpres.org/give](http://www.springbranchpres.org/give).*