

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP:

*The shepherds returned,
glorifying and praising God
for all the things they had heard and seen,
which were just as they had been told.*
Let us worship God.

(Luke 2.20)

HYMN: What Child is this?

PRAYER OF APPROACH AND CONFESSION:

Eternal, almighty, and loving God:

We continue today our celebration of your coming into the world in Jesus Christ. We thank you for coming among us in human form in him, to be truly “with” us human beings.

We confess, however, how easy it is for us to forget about Jesus in all the busyness of Christmas. We confess too how easy it is for us to think of him only as the baby he once was, and not also as the adult he became. We are tempted to seek joy in the fleeting festivity of Christmas, rather than in the message that, through Jesus’ coming into the world, you acted to bridge the distance between us and yourself.

Forgive us, gracious God, if we have missed the point of Christmas. Now that the busyness leading up to Christmas is past, help us to reflect more intentionally on what Jesus’ coming into the world means for us.

We pray in his name; and we pray together, now, as he taught us:

THE LORD’S PRAYER

(Matthew 6.9-13, KJV)

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS:

Hear this good news from the scriptures:

*This is a trustworthy saying,
which deserves full acceptance:*

“Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners”.

(1 Timothy 1.15)

*In him we have redemption, through his blood —
the forgiveness of sins —*

in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.

(Ephesians 1.7)

So, if we have confessed our sin to God sincerely,
let us be assured that God will forgive us.

HYMN: Angels we have heard on high

SCRIPTURE READINGS:

- **Old Testament Reading:** 1 Samuel 2.18-21, 26 - Samuel in the temple

This is a story from the childhood of Samuel, who grew up to be a prophet. In addition to Samuel himself, the characters in the story are his parents — Elkanah and Hannah — and a priest named Eli.

The story takes place at the temple in Shiloh. This was many years before the temple in Jerusalem was built.

- **Psalm:** Psalm 148 - “Praise the LORD from the heavens!”

Psalm 148 is a psalm of praise.

It calls on every being and every *thing* — in heaven and on earth — to praise God.

The psalm is made up of 2 parts. The first begins with the words “Praise the LORD from the heavens”; and the second begins with “Praise the LORD from the earth”. Both parts also give *reasons* for praising God.

Notice that the psalm begins and ends with the words “Praise the LORD!”, which in Hebrew is “Hallelu Yah!”

- **Letter Reading:** Colossians 3.12-17 - Various exhortations

This reading is part of a larger passage in which Paul teaches his readers that, as Christians, they have, in a sense, “died” and “been raised” with Jesus; and he explains to them how this should affect the way they live.

In the verses leading up to this reading, Paul has listed behaviors that his readers should avoid; and *in* this reading, he talks about behaviors they should put into practice.

- **Gospel Reading:** Luke 2.41-52 - Jesus (age 12) stays behind in the temple

This is a story from the childhood of Jesus. At the age of 12, he accompanies his parents to Jerusalem for the annual Passover festival, at the end of which he stays behind in the temple.

SOLO: Mary, did you know?

- Margaret McN-R

SERMON: “Mary, Did You Know?”

- Charlie [see separate document]

HYMN: O little town of Bethlehem ...

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

- Charlie [see separate document]

OFFERING

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION:

God of grace and generosity:

We give you thanks and praise for everything that Christmas means to us — for kindness and generosity, for opportunities to get together with family members and friends, and most of all, for your coming into the world in Jesus, in order to reveal yourself to us more fully, and to draw us into relationship with you.

In gratitude, we now present to you our sacrifice of thanksgiving, and dedicate it to the work that your church does for you — in our community, across the country, and around the world.

May that work help you accomplish your loving and saving purpose.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

HYMN: Joy to the world!

COMMISSIONING AND BLESSING:

Sisters and brothers in Christ:

Go into the week ahead, now,
 in peace,

and in the strength of the Holy Spirit,
 to continue growing in faith and discipleship.

*Whatever you do, in word or deed,
 do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus,
 giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

(Colossians 3.17)

And may God bless you:

May he continue to provide for your needs,
 and give you his peace and joy;

in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.