

Worship Service, January 4th, 2015

PRELUDE

Ms. Sharon Ard

After the Prelude concludes, the liturgist will step to the lectern & say...

“Would you join me in reading responsively our call to worship, adapted from Isaiah 42 and printed in our bulletins.”

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Isaiah 42)

Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and gives breath to the people upon it.

I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness,

I have taken you by the hand and kept you;

I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations,

To open the eyes that are blind, to bring out from prison those who sit in darkness.

I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory I give to no other.

Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare;

Before they spring forth, I tell you of them.

Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise from the end of the earth!

Let the sea roar and all that fills it, the coastlands and their inhabitants!

Let them give glory to the Lord!

Let us declare his praise in the all the earth!

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

THE INVOCATION

Let us pray... Holy God, we come before you with awe, for you are great in love and power. You call us to carry out your mission of love to the world, yet we struggle to understand why you choose us. Speak to us through your Word. Assure us of your continuing presence, as we worship and as we share the risk and challenge of living our faith. Remind us that it was never your intent for us to live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from you. By your powerful Spirit, turn our fear to courage and our confusion to confidence, so that we may be faithful servants of the One in whose name we pray. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand and join in singing our opening hymn, “As with Gladness Men of Old”, #63 in our Hymnals.

The liturgist should step away from the microphone for the hymn.

*HYMN OF ADORATION

“As with Gladness Men of Old”

The Hymnal #63

After the hymn, the preacher will step into the pulpit and say...

*CALL TO CONFESSION

Let us come into God’s presence with the awareness that all of us are in need of His grace and forgiveness. God is holy and just, and we all fall short. But we also know that God is gracious to hear, and quick to forgive. Let us confess our sin before God and one another as we pray together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletin, pausing at its conclusion for a brief period of silent prayer and meditation... Let us pray....

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

(In Unison)

Gracious God, who provided manna in the wilderness and streams in the desert, who nourished a hungry crowd with loaves and fishes, and who gave your Son and Spirit to us so that our lives might have purpose and so that we might have life eternal, we admit that we find it difficult to trust your abundance. While we profess belief in your ability to provide for our every need, we carefully measure all that we share with others. We are happy to follow Christ only until we are challenged in our complacency by the demands of the Gospel. Forgive us, Lord, and help us to give ourselves as freely to you, as you gave yourself to us in Jesus Christ, our joy, our strength, and our Redeemer. Amen.

*SILENT CONFESSION

*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

The saying sure and worthy of full acceptance-- Jesus Christ came to save sinners. If we have died with Christ, then we shall also live with him. So you must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Friends believe the Good News!

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!

*GLORIA PATRI

The Hymnal #579

Glory be to the Father, & to the Son, & to the Holy Ghost;

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, World without end. Amen, Amen.

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

Our Lord has sworn to wipe every tear from our eyes, that Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the old things will pass away... and He will make all things new. In relying on His promises, we find peace that we can also share with one another. The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

Share the peace of Christ with others as you will.

After a few moments, the liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

God has richly provided all we need for life's journey. But how much of all that He has given us are we investing in the work we have been called to do? May what we share reveal a congregation dedicated to serving God and sharing in his work of redemption. Let us continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings.

Take a seat until after the Doxology.

THE OFFERTORY

Ms. Sharon Ard

*DOXOLOGY (In Unison)

The Hymnal #592

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;

Praise Him all creatures here below;

Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts;

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

After the Doxology, the liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

*OFFERTORY PRAYER

By your surprising grace, O God, our eyes are opened, our ears unstopped, our hearts attuned to the needs of others. May our offerings reflect confidence, not cowardice; and dedication rather than indifference. Accept and use our gifts to support the ministries of your church so that all the world may come to know your acceptance and forgiveness, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Let us remain standing and reaffirm our Christian faith as it is expressed in the traditional version of the Apostles' Creed printed in our bulletins. Let us say what we believe. . .

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.

The liturgist will invite the congregation to: "Be seated" and sit down.

SPECIAL MUSIC

Soprano soloist, Joanna Smith

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson this morning is taken from the second chapter of Matthew's Gospel, beginning at the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 835 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him."

When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it is written by the prophet:

And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will govern my people Israel."

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star appeared; and he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him bring me word, that I too may come and worship him."

When they had heard the king they went their way; and lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was.

When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; and going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

*The liturgist will return to his/her seat either on the chancel
or with his/her family or friends in the congregation.*

Thanks so much for your help!

When the liturgist finishes, the preacher will step into the pulpit & say...

Our second lesson this morning is taken from the Book of Acts, the second chapter, beginning at the forty-second verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #949 in your pew bibles.

Listen once more for the word of God...

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

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

People: Thanks be to God.

SERMON

Today's gospel lesson tells us of the visit of the wise men to the baby Jesus bearing gifts fit for a king. The gifts were costly, yes, but each of the wise men had also invested about 2 years of their time in delivering them. They even risked their lives in defying Herod's order to return and tell him where the new king was to be found. At some point in their lives they read the words from the prophets that foretold the birth of the Messiah and they believed. More importantly, each of them decided in his own heart, "I can give my all for that."

And then our lesson from Acts tells us what the early church was like after Pentecost. People shared what they had. They ate together, prayed together, worshiped together. They loved and cared for one another. And we look around us, and the hunger for what they had grows within us, and we think, "I could give my life for that."

Today, everybody in this room shares a uniting passion for Jesus and the church he started. There is nothing in the world like the Church. We forget this sometimes, sometimes because of the grind of all we have to do, the isolation of ministering in a rural setting; sometimes because we get beat up in the very process of trying to serve; sometimes because we're so aware of our own inadequacy or we try to compare ourselves to somebody else; sometimes because of criticism or opposition from inside the church or discouragement; or sin just wears us down.

But then we come back to Acts, chapter 2 and we know. We hear again what the church was like then, and we hang our heads and think, "God, I could give my life to be a part of that."

Anybody here ever read any of Garrison Keillor's Lake Wobegon stories? The only church in Lake Wobegon was pastored by Pastor Inkfist, who was critiqued by one of his members who said, "You know, he never just comes out and says it. He never pounds the pulpit when he preaches. It's a lot of, 'On the one hand this, and on the other hand that.' He never puts the hay down where the goats can get it."

I love that line, "Put the hay down where the goats can get it."

There are so many churches that know the goats, that are very clever about attracting the goats, that go after the goats real strongly, but they have no hay. What's worse, they don't even know they don't have any hay.

Then there are other ministries & churches, and they have wonderful hay. They have been thinking and reflecting and studying so deeply and so immensely. They have fabulous hay, but they're not reaching the goats. What's worse, they don't know they aren't reaching the goats. They're just living in denial. They don't really care they're not reaching the goats.

To be a church that has the good stuff, that has wonderful hay, that loves the hay, that knows the goats, that cares about the goats, that sacrifices for the goats, and that says, "We will give up our comfort, our convenience, the stuff that makes us feel at ease for the sake of reaching the goats," I think God wants that. I think God wants that.

We are stewards of an unspeakably precious legacy. I believe we have a song to sing. I believe our world needs to hear it. I believe the church in our country, in our time, in our world needs to hear it, needs to receive the gift we all have been given to pass on. It's not the only gift, but it's our gift to give.

I once had a friend in his 60's who used to be a great tennis player. He was telling me he now plays golf instead of tennis. I asked him, "How come? You were so good." He said, "It's because when I play golf, I'm getting better. When I play tennis, the best I can do is deteriorate more slowly." I don't think God's call for us is, "Let's deteriorate more slowly."

So let's just dream a while. Let's just dream a while, not asking *how*, just *what*. Imagine God were to launch a movement of Spirit-led, Jesus-centered churches where pastors and leaders took seriously the biblical injunction to become teachers of the nations so our world and culture could hear again that there is such a thing as moral and spiritual knowledge that can guide human lives. Imagine that the claims of Jesus were to receive a fresh hearing in our day because they were being expressed by Jesus' followers who had wrestled and studied and prayed and sought to follow Jesus with all of their hearts.

Imagine these churches were places where anybody could come, where people who read and had convictions and thoughts about science and culture and evolution and history, people who had doubts, people who suffer, could come and receive not glib Christian-lite formulas and empty clichés, not vaguely religious, kind of hopeless skepticism, but a clear, confident, humble expression of the wisdom of Jesus for our day.

Imagine a movement where church meetings and denominational meetings never wasted anybody's time. Imagine a movement that when leaders gather together, it is to learn, to receive vision, to mentor, to get equipped, to be accountable, to encourage one another, and to fire each other up. Imagine when leaders gather together they talk about things like, "How do you reach people who

don't know Jesus so they can get to know Jesus? How can you worship better? How do you make disciples? How do you do justice?"

Imagine a movement where when bright young people come out of school and want their lives to count for something and say, "I have to be a part of that. I can give my life to that."

If you were a visitor back in the first century and you could see on the one hand here is Jesus and 12 disciples and on the other hand here is the great, powerful Roman empire, who would you put your money on would still be around 2,000 years later? Yet here we are after two millennia. We give our children names like Mary and Peter and Paul, and we give our dogs names like Caesar and Nero.

When Jesus said, "*Who do you say I am?*" Peter said, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" Jesus said, "Blessed are you, Peter. Flesh and blood have not revealed this. There is something deeper, bigger going on. The Spirit is starting something. I say you are Peter the rock, and *on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.*"

Jesus says he is building his church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Our problem is hell, and hell is at work wherever the will of God is forgotten, ignored, or defied. Every time a child is left unloved, unfed, uneducated, unwanted; every time a marriage ends; every time racial differences divide a street or a city or a church or a nation; every time money gets worshiped or hoarded; every time sinful habits create a life of shame or a culture of shamelessness. Whenever faith gets undermined, hope gets lost, and people get trashed, hell is prevailing.

People will ask sometimes, "How is your church doing?", and we think, "OK, I guess." That's real important to think about-- *What does it mean for our church to be doing okay?* Our job is not to do okay. Our job is not to meet a budget or run a program or fill a building or maintain the status quo. Our job is not to do pretty good compared with other churches in the denomination.

Jesus did not say, "On this rock I will build my church, and it'll do pretty good compared to other churches in the denomination." He said, "I'm going to build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." Our job is to put hell out of business, and that's why Jesus went to the cross on a Friday, lay in a tomb on Saturday, and was raised to life on Sunday.

This is our day. Paul says, "*I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation. Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil.*" I wonder who here wants to be a part of a community that says, "We will give everything we have. We will not choose what we're giving our one and only life to based on how good the pension plan is and how nice the benefits are. We will give everything we have to realize the redemptive potential God has set before us."

I wonder who here would say, "I've been quiet and still for too long." Are there any who are grey haired who will say, "I may be old, but I can still get better, God is not through with me yet." Are there those who are younger who have suddenly realized that it is time for them to take the torch that is being passed from the greatest generation, to a generation that will be even greater, to pick up Elijah's mantle receive a double measure of grace and become a servant, a brother, a sister willing to give everything to roll back a tide of secularism and fear and doubt and cynicism"?

God has done it before; can God not do it again? Has the Holy Spirit lost his power? Or is there something in Christ and his church that you can give your life for? Wise men and women still bring him gifts. And the best gift you can offer is yourself.

PASTORAL PRAYER

Gracious God, as your word has ever been sent to call your chosen, so the hour strikes again when you summon a few of your children to serve your church as elders and deacons.

Accept now, we pray, the offering of those who have answered your call in this holy place. You know how they long to serve you unburdened by their sins and weaknesses. You know how they share with all of us the need of your forgiveness, the need of your love, the need of your power. Therefore we beseech you to do for them what we can never do: to separate their talents from their incapacities,

and to lead them to that point of labor where their strength guided by you can meet the the greatest of challenges set before them.

We pray for your church, that she may accept with gratitude your gift of them who will equip her for her ministry. Grant that she may fail them neither by demanding of them too much nor by expecting of them too little. Taught by them as they are taught by you, may your church discover in her heritage both the cause to be humble and the warrant to be brave.

Help us, through the meal of bread and wine that you set before us this day, to remember the sacrifice you made so long ago that we might be free from sin, and transformed into likenesses of our Lord Jesus. In receiving his presence, may we give of ourselves to others in his name, through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

(Sung by Congregation)

Malotte

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.

THE ORDINATION & INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

Within our common ministry, some members are chosen for particular work as ministers of the Word, as elders, or as deacons. In ordination, we recognize these special ministries, remembering that our Lord Jesus said:

Whoever among you wants to be great must first become the servant of all, and if he wants to be first among you, he must be the slave of all people-- just as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life to set others free.

The minister and shall ask those preparing to be ordained or installed to stand before the congregation and to answer the following questions:

At this time, I would ask for Martine Boumtje, Anita Moore, Ryan Phillips, Chris White, Kathy Cole, and Debbie Morgan to come forward...

Martine, Anita, Ryan, Chris, Kathy, and Debbie, God has called you by the voice of the people of the church to serve Jesus Christ in a special way. You know who we are and what we believe, and you understand, generally, the work for which you have been called.

- a. Do you trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through Him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?
- b. Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal, and God's Word to you?
- c. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?
- d. Will you fulfill your office in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, & be continually guided by our confessions?
- e. Will you be governed by our church's polity, and will you abide by its discipline? Will you be a friend among your colleagues in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God's Word and Spirit?
- f. Will you in your own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world?
- g. Do you promise to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church?

- h. Will you seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?
- i. Martine, Anita, Ryan, & Chris, will you be faithful elders, watching over the people, providing for their worship, nurture, and service? Will you share in government and discipline, serving in governing bodies of the church, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?
- j. Kathy & Debbie, will you be faithful deacons, teaching charity, urging concern, and directing the people's help to the friendless and those in need, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

The elders-elect having answered in the affirmative, the minister shall stand with them before the congregation and shall ask the congregation to answer the following questions:

- a. Do we, the members of the church, accept Martine Boumtje, Anita Moore, Ryan Phillips, and Chris White as elders, and Kathy Cole and Debbie Morgan as deacons, chosen by God through the voice of this congregation to lead us in the way of Jesus Christ?
- b. Do we agree to encourage them, to respect their decisions, and to follow as they guide us, serving Jesus Christ, who alone is Head of the Church?

The Laying on of Hands

Would you have not been ordained for the office to which you have been elected please kneel?

Invite any elders or ministers to come forward for the laying on of hands.

Let us pray...

Our Father, you sent your Son Jesus Christ, who came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.

We give you thanks for calling these faithful servants to lead your holy people in love; and for the grace that has allowed them to respond to your divine command. We ask you, O Lord, to richly bestow your Holy Spirit on these your servants. Endue them with heavenly wisdom. Grant them your grace, that they may be good people, full of faith, ruling in the fear of God. Give them that favor and influence with the people which comes from following Christ. Make them faithful unto death, and when the Great Shepherd shall appear, may they each receive a crown of glory that will never fade away.

Hear this our prayer through your beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who, with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns throughout eternity. Amen.

The moderator shall then say to those ordained and/or installed:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, & by the authority committed to me in His church, I hereby declare that you are now elders in the Church of Jesus Christ and for this congregation. I now charge you in the name of Jesus Christ, who is the head of the church, Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in His name, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. Amen.

I also charge you, the members of this congregation, to be faithful to these elders, whom you have chosen to rule over you in the Lord; and that you render them all due obedience, cooperation, and support, and follow them so far as ye see them follow Christ. And let the people say, Amen.

Then the members of the session, and others as may be appropriate, shall welcome the newly ordained and installed elders into their fellowship in ministry.

We give you the right hand of fellowship, to take part in this office with us.

The minister will then turn to the congregation and say:

I would invite all of you, following the service, to welcome your new officers, to greet them with love, and to pledge your personal support to them as they seek to serve this church and our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Invitation to the Lord's Table

Words of Institution

The Distribution of the Elements

Prayer after Receiving

Grant, O God, that the ears which have heard the voice of thy songs may be closed to the voice of clamor and dispute; that the eyes which have seen thy great love may also behold thy blessed hope; that the tongues which have sung thy praise may speak thy truth; that the feet which have walked thy courts may walk in the region of light; that the bodies which have partaken of thy living Body may be restored to newness of life, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION

“Here I Am, Lord”

The Hymnal #525

*BENEDICTION

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

“Go, My Children, Fed and Nourished”

Go, my children, fed and nourished, closer to me;

Grow in love and love by serving, joyful and free.

Here my Spirit’s power filled you,

Here His tender comfort stilled you;

Go, my children, fed and nourished, joyful and free.

*POSTLUDE

Ms. Sharon Ard