

Sunday, January 6, 2019

The liturgist and pastor will meet in the hall outside the choir room a couple of minutes prior to the start of the service at 10:45am.

After a short prayer with the choir, the liturgist, choir, and organist will enter following the pastor and take their seats. The pastor will step into the pulpit, welcome everyone, and make announcements....

The preacher will then ask...

“Are there any other announcements or concerns of the church that need to be made known at this time?..... Thank you.”

The preacher will take a seat.

PRELUDE "How Brightly Shines the Morning Star" - Dietrich Buxtehude Dr. Elizabeth Davis

After the Prelude, the liturgist should step to the lectern and say,

“Would you join me in reading the responsive call to worship adapted from Isaiah 60 and printed in our bulletins?”

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Isaiah 60)

Arise, shine; for the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

For darkness shall cover the earth, & thick darkness the peoples;

But the Lord will arise upon you, & his glory will appear over you.

Nations shall come to your light, & kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms.

Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

They shall bring gold & frankincense, & shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

The Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended.

Your people shall be righteous; they shall possess the land forever.

They are the shoot that I planted, the work of my hands, so that I might be glorified.

The least of them shall become a clan, & the smallest one a mighty nation;

I am the Lord; in its time I will accomplish it quickly.

Let us worship God beginning with a short video revealing the experiences of one of the Wise Men from the East...

CHRISTMAS VIDEO

“The Wise Man”

PRAYER OF 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, even as 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 & 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, “We Three Kings of Orient Are”, #66 in our *Hymnals*.

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

*HYMN OF ADORATION

“We Three Kings of Orient Are”

The Hymnal #66

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. 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. Let us pray....

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Holy God, there is within us a deep desire to know you and to be filled with your wisdom. We rush

to meet you here, and then there, rarely stopping anywhere long enough to look for you. We become frantic in our searching-- hurried and harried, wanting and waiting. All the while, you have been with us all along, calling us, wooing us, guiding us. The voice we drowned out with the noise of our lives was you, but it is in worship that we are reminded to slow down, to be still and silent, and to listen. Forgive us for forgetting the reason for our creation-- to love and worship you. Thank you for this sacred time and space, and help us to use this time to reorient ourselves to you and your will for us. Make yourself known to us once more, for the sake of Him who came to earth and became one of us. Amen.

*SILENT CONFESSION *(Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.)*

*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 removed from us the burden of our sins. He is making all things new, including us, and us his peace to 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, liturgist will step into the lectern and say...

“At this time I want to invite all of our younger friends to come forward for a Word from the Lord brought to them by Ms. Kathy.”

The liturgist will take a seat.

CHILDREN’S SERMON

(All Singing)

Jesus friend so kind and gentle, little ones we bring to thee;

Grant to them thy dearest blessing. Let thine arms around them be;

Now enfold them in thy goodness, from all danger keep them free.

As the kids leave the chancel, the liturgist returns to the pulpit & says...

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

We are stewards of God’s limitless grace and riches. We are the channels through which His goodness is carried into the world. The treasures we bring honor Christ, so let us give with joy and worshipful devotion as we continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes & offerings....

The liturgist will sit down until the Doxology begins to play.

THE OFFERTORY "We Three Kings of Orient Are" - Fred Bock

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

*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

Let us pray. . . We offer these gifts to you in praise and thanksgiving, O God. We thank you for your generosity that allows even the poorest among us to have something to share. Unleash the potential in the gifts we embody, that we may be witnesses to your goodness and instruments of your grace throughout the world. May this offering accomplish among us, & far beyond us, the work we have been given to glorify our King. Amen.

THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

"The Apostle's Creed"

Let us remain standing and reaffirm our Christian faith using the traditional words 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.

Invite the congregation to... "Be seated," and take a seat.

SPECIAL MUSIC "The Virgin's Slumber Song" - Max Reger **Dalene Baer, Violin Soloist**

After the choir finishes, the Liturgist will return to the lectern & say....

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our Epistle lesson for this morning begins in the twenty-seventh verse of the twelfth chapter of Paul's Letter to the Corinthians. We will be reading through the 7 verse of the thirteenth Chapter. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #899 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

"Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

"If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

"Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

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

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

Our gospel 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 once more 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, & being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

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

People: Thanks be to God.

SERMON

“How Christmas Works”

Mike Morgan

Christmas is a fleeting moment of wonder, an interlude in which life is suddenly lovely and charming, peaceful and polite. But maybe there is more than sweetness to the story.

There’s more to it than shepherds & angels & wise men from the East.

You’re familiar with Joseph and Mary and the “little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.”... & our visions of them leave us with a warm and fuzzy feeling.

But maybe you suspect that there is more than sweetness to this story. Scratch the surface of any Christmas card image, and you’re going to uncover greed and passion, danger and death.

But **HOW** does Christmas **work**?

Actually, Christmas almost didn’t work-- it almost didn’t happen. Look beneath the peaceful picture of the baby Jesus in the manger, and you’ll be stunned by the danger and death that permeate the original Christmas story.

You don’t, for example, take your pregnant wife — nine months pregnant with God— put her on a mule, and pack her off on a long road trip.

Second, if you do, you arrange for lodging, and don’t just hope there will be a room in the inn.

Third, the child is born in a manger. Think about it. How do children survive these days? Answer is, back then, a lot of them didn’t. Jesus did. It wasn’t a sterile or suitable environment to bring a child into the world.

And then there are the wise men who hit a roadblock as they attempt to gain access to Jesus. Sure, the star in the sky is a big help as they make their way to Jerusalem, but once they arrive in the capital they run smack into King Herod, who’s already working on Plan B in case this new “king” isn’t found — and killed. To make sure, scores of male children are killed in what today is known as the “Slaughter of the Innocents.”

So Christmas almost didn’t come off then — and it often doesn’t come off at all for us now.

Of course, we go through the motions. The presents, the Christmas cards, the shopping, the food, the parties, and so on.

But that’s not Christmas. That’s the holidays.

Like the wise men, we have to take a detour around these dangers. If we are going to gain access to Jesus, we are challenged to find another way. The wise men protected Jesus by evading the expectations of Herod, & we should follow this same path. Our access to Jesus may require eliminating some of the Christmas expectations that can elevate our anxiety-- but even if we cancel our credit cards and downsize our decorations, we’re still going to face some dangers as we make our way through the season. Life has a way of shattering our serenity, even when we do our best to keep the chaos under control.

So how does Christmas work?

It works when we remember that Christmas now, as then, is a dangerous business. It is dangerous because it evokes dreams and hopes. There’s a scene in the movie, *The Shawshank Redemption*, where Andy says to his best friend, “Hope is a dangerous thing. The reality is that we’re in here, and hope is out there.”

Christmas is not easy, and in fact it can be costly, because it demands that we put “the hopes and fears of all the years” to work. It calls on us to give muscle to our aspirations and dreams. And that’s not easy. But if we do it, Christmas works.

Christmas works when we shatter the false gods of materialism, and the idols of ambition, and the demons of self-importance, and set up the Christ child as the promise and priority of our lives. When Christ is the center of our daily living, then the other demons will fade away.

Finally, we honor Christmas when we allow it to lead us to places not originally on our carefully planned life itinerary. The whole Christmas story tells us about the Shepherd’s leaving their flocks in the

field to seek the lamb of God in Bethlehem, the Magi's dangerous and difficult detour around Herod just to get home, and even flight of the holy family into Egypt. Following God's way often leads us into unknown territory. We find ourselves in uncharted waters. But that's what Christmas is about, letting Jesus take our hand and lead us along our journey.

Tony Campolo tells the story about the late Mike Yaconelli, who told the story about a deacon in his church who wasn't deaconing. He just didn't do what he was supposed to do as a deacon.

One day he said to the deacon, "I have a group of young people who go to the old folks home & put on a worship service once a month. Would you drive them to the old folks home & at least do that?" The deacon agreed.

The first Sunday the deacon was at the old folks home, he was in the back with his arms folded as the kids were doing their thing up front. All of a sudden, someone was tugging at his arm. He looked down, and there was this old man in a wheelchair. He took hold of the old man's hand and the old man held his hand all during the service. The next month that was repeated. The man in the wheelchair came and held the hand of the deacon.

And the next month, and the next, and the next.

Then the old man wasn't there. The deacon inquired and he was told, "Oh, he's down the hall, right hand side, third door. He's dying. He's unconscious, but if you want to go down and pray over his body that's all right."

The deacon went and there were tubes and wires hanging out all over the place. The deacon took the man's hand and prayed that God would receive the man, that God would bring this man from this life into the next and give him eternal blessings.

As soon as he finished the prayer, the old man squeezed the deacon's hand and the deacon knew that he had been heard. He was so moved by this that tears began to run down his cheeks.

He stumbled out of the room and as he did so he bumped into a woman. She said, "He's been waiting for you. He said that he didn't want to die until he had the chance to hold the hand of Jesus one more time."

The deacon was amazed at this. He said, "What do you mean?"

She said, "Well, my father would say that once a month Jesus came to this place. 'He would take my hand and he would hold my hand for a whole hour. I don't want to die until I have the chance to hold the hand of Jesus one more time.'"

Christmas works when we let Jesus take us into unfamiliar territory — a nursing home, a neighbor's home, or into something even more bizarre, like an attitude adjustment, a generous spirit, a helping hand. Whatever.

The point is that whenever and wherever we go, we are the hand of Jesus to others, and when that happens — Christmas works!

PASTORAL PRAYER

Gracious God, as your word has ever gone forth to call your chosen, the time has come again when you have summoned a few of your children to serve your church as elders and deacons.

Accept the offering of those who have answered your call. 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 beg you to do for them what we can never do: to separate their talents from their incapacities, and to lead them so that the grace you give will be sufficient to meet even the greatest of challenges ahead.

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 too little. Make these new leaders strong that they may offer strength; make them wise that they may communicate wisdom; make them good that we may do good; make them faithful that each of us may persevere in faith until Christ is glorified in all things.

For all that has come to us through your grace, for all that is, and all that is yet to be, we give thanks, in the strong name of Jesus, who taught us to pray saying...

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 minister will move to behind the kneeling bench.

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/installed to stand before the congregation and to answer the following questions:

At this time, I would ask for Lea West, James Redell, Mike McNeill, Alice Bartushock, and David DeSeguirant to come forward...

Lea, James, Mike, Alice, and David, 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. Lea, James, and Mike, 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. Alice and David, 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 officers-elect having answered in the affirmative, an elder shall stand with them before the congregation and shall ask the congregation to answer the following questions:

- a. Do you, the members of the church, accept Lea West, James Redell, and Mike McNeill as elders, and Alice Bartushock and David DeSeguirant as deacons, chosen by God through the voice of this congregation to lead us in the way of Jesus Christ?
- b. Do you agree to encourage them, to respect their decisions, & to follow as they guide us, serving Jesus Christ, who alone is Head of the Church?

The Laying on of Hands

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

Lea and David, since you have not previously been ordained for the office to which you have been elected, I would ask that you please kneel.

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 & the Holy Spirit, lives & 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 and deacons 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 officers, 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 in 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 join us in service to Christ.

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, & to pledge your personal support to them as they seek to serve this church & our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Prayer of Consecration

Our Father, through the ages you have give yourself We ask you now to pour out your Spirit upon the gifts of wine and bread, so that when they are offered to your people, they may truly be for us the blood and body of Christ. May we so receive his grace that each of us becomes a vessel of that grace for others.

The Invitation

At his last meal with his disciples, our Lord Jesus gave us a way to remember his sacrifice of love for each of us by using bread and wine to represent his body and blood. We who could never save ourselves, have been saved by the sacrifice of a sinless lamb, the Son of God. But we have been saved not because we are good, but because God can use us to extend his grace to others. Therefore, this is not a Presbyterian table. It is not the table of this congregation. It is the table of our Lord, who invites all who have need of his wisdom, his love, his strength, his forgiveness, or his healing to come and receive the meal of grace he has prepared for you.

The Words of Institution

On the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord took bread, & after he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples saying: "Take, eat. This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In like fashion after they had eaten, he took the cup. After he had given thanks, he gave it to his disciples saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, drink ye all of it."

These are the gifts of God for the people of God. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup

you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes again in final victory.

The Distribution of the Elements

Prayer after Receiving

Faithful God, you sent your Son into the world, and through him have adopted us as your children. We thank you that at this table, you have renewed your promises to us, empowered us all to witness and to serve, and now you send us out as disciples of our Lord. Grant that we, enlivened by the reading and preaching of your word, and refreshed by your sacraments, might rise and shine forth to his glory. May Christ be seen in us, worshiped by the world, and obeyed by all to the ends of the earth, now and forever. Amen.

Let all of us who are able, stand and join in one voice to sing our hymn of dedication, "As with Gladness Men of Old", hymn #63 in our *Hymnals*.

***HYMN OF DEDICATION**

"As with Gladness Men of Old"

The Hymnal #63

***BENEDICTION**

Now may the God of peace— who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep-- equip you with all you need to do His will. May He produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ, every good thing that is pleasing to Him. All glory to Him forever and ever! Amen.

***CHORAL RESPONSE**

"God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen"

Now to the Lord sing praises all you within this place,
And with true love & brotherhood each other now embrace;
This holy tide of Christmas all others doth deface.
O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy;
O tidings of comfort and joy.

***POSTLUDE**

Dr. Elizabeth Davis