



pageantry, yet in the midst of our celebrations, we regretfully discover that we have misplaced the truth of the Incarnation-- that you have come to be with us, that you have kept your promise to us even though we have failed to keep ours to you. Forgive us, we pray, and strengthen our resolve to keep our promises so that we may live in hope and more fully experience the joy of your salvation. Amen.

\*SILENT CONFESSION

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

\*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

The saying is true and worthy of full acceptance: Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. ...Friends believe the Good News!

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

*The preacher will motion for the congregation to stand.*

\*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

Having been reconciled to God through the grace of His Son, let us also be reconciled to one another and share Christ's peace. 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. Karen."

*The preacher 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 children leave, the liturgist will step to the lectern and say,*

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

**Be Seated.** . . . The offerings we bring to God fill empty stomachs with food, fill empty hearts with hope, and fill empty hands with purpose. This is our opportunity to share the grace we have received with others, so let us continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings.

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

THE OFFERTORY

"What Is This Lovely Fragrance?" - Paul Manz

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... God of promise, You who cause the branch of hope to bud and flower; we offer you the fruit of our labour and the sacrifice of our hearts. Bless this offering that we bring; and use it to break open possibilities for those who wait in quiet desperation. Bring light to their darkness and show us all the way to faithfulness, in the name of Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

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

SPECIAL MUSIC

"Creation Will Be at Peace" - Anna Laura Page

Joanna Smith, soprano

*After the Special Music the Minister will step to the microphone and say,*

"At this time I would invite the Phillips family & Steve Crane to come forward to the baptismal font."

*As they come forward the minister will begin speaking.*

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Hear the words of our Lord Jesus Christ:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”

“And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Hear also these words from Holy Scripture:

“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.”

“The promise is for you, for your children and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls.”

### **The Presentation and Promises**

*The minister continues:*

Obedying the word of our Lord Jesus, and confident of his promises, we baptize those whom God has called.

In baptism God claims us, and seals us to show that we belong to God.

God frees us from sin and death, uniting us with Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection.

By water and the Holy Spirit, we are made members of the church, the body of Christ, and joined to Christ's ministry of love, peace, and justice.

Let us remember with joy our own baptism, as we celebrate this sacrament.

**Elder:** On behalf of the session, I present Bowen Johnston Phillips, son of Katherine and Ryan Phillips, to receive the sacrament of Baptism.

*The minister then addresses parents presenting children for baptism:* Do you desire that Bowen be baptized?

***The parents respond: I do.***

*The minister continues:* Relying on God's grace, do you promise to live the Christian faith, and to teach that faith to your child?

***The parents respond: I do.***

*The minister addresses the family and sponsors:*

Do you promise, through prayer and example, to support and encourage Bowen to be a faithful Christian?

***The family and sponsors respond: I do.***

*The minister addresses the congregation:* Do you, as members of the church of Jesus Christ, promise to guide and nurture Bowen, by word and deed, with love and prayer, encouraging him to know and follow Christ and to be faithful members of his church?

***The people respond: We do.***

*The minister continues:* Through baptism we enter the covenant God has established. Within this covenant God gives us new life, guards us from evil, and nurtures us in love. In embracing that covenant, we choose whom we will serve, by turning from evil and turning to Jesus Christ.

*The minister then asks the following questions of the parents of children being presented for baptism.*

As God embraces you within the covenant, I ask you to reject sin, to profess your faith in Christ Jesus, and to confess the faith of the church, the faith in which we baptize.

Trusting in the gracious mercy of God, do you turn from the ways of sin and renounce evil and its power in the world?

**I do.**

Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Lord and Savior, trusting in his grace and love?

**I do.**

Will you be Christ's faithful disciple, obeying his Word and showing his love?

## **I will, with God's help.**

### **Profession of Faith**

*The minister continues:*

With the whole church, let us stand together and confess the faith of the church, the faith in which we baptize, using the traditional words of the Apostles' Creed as it is found on page 14 in our Hymnals. 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.

### **Thanksgiving over the Water**

Let us pray: We give you thanks, Eternal God, for you nourish and sustain all living things by the gift of water. In the beginning of time, your Spirit moved over the watery chaos, calling forth order and life. In the waters of Jordan Jesus was baptized by John and anointed with your Spirit. By the baptism of his own death and resurrection, Christ set us free from sin and death, and opened the way to eternal life.

We thank you, O God, for the water of baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. From it we are raised to share in his resurrection, Through it we are reborn by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Send your Spirit to move over this water that it may be a fountain of deliverance and rebirth. Wash away the sin of all who are cleansed by it. Raise him to new life, and graft him to the body of Christ. Pour out your Holy Spirit upon him, that he may have power to do your will, and continue forever in the risen life of Christ. Amen.

### **The Prayer of Dedication and Laying on of Hands**

*Calling each candidate by his or her Christian (given) name or names only, the minister shall pour or sprinkle water visibly and generously on the candidate's head, or immerse the candidate in the water, while saying:*

Bowen Johnston Phillips, child of the covenant, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*The minister lays hands on the head of each person baptized, while saying:*

O Lord, uphold Bowen by your Holy Spirit. Give her the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence, that he may continue yours forever. Amen.

Bowen, child of the covenant, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism, and marked as Christ's own forever. Amen.

### **The Welcome**

*The minister continues:*

Bowen Johnston Phillips has been received into the one holy catholic and apostolic church through baptism.

God has made him a member of the household of God, to share with us in the priesthood of Christ.

Let us welcome the newest member of Christ's family by remaining seated and singing the hymn, "I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry", #2051 in the *Sing the Faith* Hymnal Supplement."

HYMN OF WELCOME

"I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry"

*Sing the Faith* #2051

*The minister will take the baby through the congregation, starting with the choir. The rest of the family will return to their seats.*

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

*After the hymn and after the minister has returned to the Chancel, the liturgist will step to the lectern and say...*

Our Gospel lesson for this morning is taken from the twenty-first chapter of Luke, beginning with the twenty-fifth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #915 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

"And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

And he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees; as soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all has taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

"But take heed to yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a snare; for it will come upon all who dwell upon the face of the whole earth. But watch at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of man."

*The liturgist will take his/her seat. Or, if you prefer, you may return to the congregation to sit with your family or friends.*

*Thanks for your service.*

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*The preacher will then return to the pulpit and say...*

Our second reading this morning is taken from the Prophet Jeremiah, the thirty third chapter, beginning with the fourteenth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #683 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring forth for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'"

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

**People: Thanks be to God.**

## THE SERMON

"Promises"

This is the first Sunday of Advent. Advent is our time in the church year when we look forward, when we focus on the Promised Land, of the day when our lives will be lived in the full presence of God, with all the joy, and peace, and love that attend Him. Now is when we look at the Promises of God that have been kept, seeking the hope and faith that will sustain us until all of God's promises are fulfilled.

It's not hard to see that our world is full of promises, promises of things that will give meaning and purpose and value to your life. Promises that you don't have to feel what you're feeling. Promises that everything is going to be all right. Promises that tomorrow is going to be a better day. Promises

that you're better than that, that you're pretty and strong and smart and loved and liked. For a lot of us, it doesn't matter if they're true or not, but we want to believe them.

I suspect that most of us, and I know that I am, are real world Charlie Browns wanting to try one more time to kick the football while Lucy holds it for us. No matter how many times she breaks her promise to be true and steady and instead pulls the football away at the last possible second leaving us flat on my kiesters, we still find ourselves wanting to try again, willing to believe again, willing to risk humiliation and injury again-- just for the pleasure of kicking that ball, of making it soar skyward, of helping it to embrace it's utter "ballness".

We keep looking for a promise kept and we keep missing it.

It was that way for me until the Fall of 1980. I really wanted a strong faith, but I felt I had been let down too many times, disappointed once too often. My mother had been nagging me incessantly for almost a year since my daughters birth to take her and get her baptized, until at last I could stand it no longer. Debbie and I made an appointment to meet with the pastor to get the baptism on the church calendar. Problem was, he had more on his agenda than picking a date. He knew that I attended church sporadically at best-- at Christmas Eve, Easter, & Mother's Day. He pointed out that I was going to be making promises to raise my child as a Christian. **I**-- not my wife or the church or anybody else-- **ME**, was promising to read the bible, say prayers, at meals and at bedtime at the very least, with my children. I would be promising to take my child to Sunday School and church **every Sunday**, even when they didn't want to go-- which for most tweens and teens is most Sundays. And of course, taking them to Sunday School and church meant my coming to Sunday School and church.

He asked me if I understood the promises I would be making, and I answered with a confident, "Yes".

But then he paused and asked the really hard question, "And will you **KEEP** those promises?"

I was raised by a father who had more character flaws than you could shake a stick at, but he had one virtue that did shine through all his failings. How often had I heard him say, "A promise is a promise". Or "At the end of the day son, the only thing that any of us have that is worth anything, is our word. Break it and you've got nothing." Or "People with good intentions make promises. People with good character *keep* them."

I had to swallow hard, but I answered "Yes", knowing that it would be a change in how I lived. But, let's be honest, half of knowing what you want is knowing what you must give up before you get it. It's easy to make promises, but don't try to tell me that you are a parent and an adult and know how to make good decisions for your children if you don't keep the promises that you make. **You can pretend to care, but you can't pretend to show up.**

Things will get tough. It will, sooner or later, cost you much more than you bargained for to keep your promise. But for the sake of your souls, I beg you to keep it. Because until you do, you cannot begin to understand the determination of a God who has promised to be faithful to us-- and you cannot begin to rise above your difficulties on the wings of His promises to us. **Remember that planes and people take off against the wind and not with it!**

Just before our reading in Jeremiah this morning, God has instructed the prophet to take what money he has and buy a piece of land, just as the Babylonians are driving the Israelites from their homes into exile as slaves. It's a stupid pointless waste of money-- unless of course God keeps his promises to bring them back after they have learned their lesson, and before he brings his Messiah to reestablish the throne of David. Thus saith the Lord, "Behold, the days are coming when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah, when I will cause a righteous Branch to spring forth for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell securely."

The Christmas story is all about keeping promises. The Greatest Promise ever made, kept completely and at tremendous sacrifice to the One who made the Promise, even though it was made to

a people who were more focused on baubles, frocks, big boy toys, and even Dick Tracy Tommy guns, than keeping their promises.

All of us, in the deepest needs in our lives, and, finally, in everything, have only one final source of promises that will be wholly, true, reliable, life-giving, and everything that we need. A man came at Christmas, and will come again at the end of the world, who is going to make everything in the world right, and going to make you right as well. That is the big promise, and the one worth holding onto and celebrating above all others.

Profession golfer, Paul Azinger, a PGA champion and winner of ten tournaments, learned that lesson well. He was doing well and then he was diagnosed with cancer. He wrote, "A genuine feeling of fear came over me. I could **die** from cancer. Then another reality hit me even harder. I'm going to die eventually anyway, whether from cancer or something else. It's just a question of when. Everything I had accomplished in golf became meaningless to me. All I wanted to do was live."

Then he remembered something that Larry Moody, who teaches a Bible study on the tour, had said to him. "Zinger, we're not in the land of the living going to the land of the dying. We're in the land of the dying trying to get to the land of the living."

"Zinger" recovered from chemotherapy and returned to the PGA tour. He's done pretty well. But that bout with cancer changed him. He wrote, "I've made a lot of money since I've been on the tour, and I've won a lot of tournaments, but that happiness is always temporary. The only way you will ever have true contentment is in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I'm not saying that nothing ever bothers me and I don't have problems, but I feel like I've found the answer to the six-foot hole".

Advent is for those of us who have known the promise of God and made promises to God and allowed ourselves to get sidetracked by smaller, busy, promises of the season, of our jobs, of the world. In failing to keep our promises, we have also given up the expectation that anyone will keep theirs to us.

This season, remember how amazing, how glorious, how much there is to celebrate in the promise kept by God, this little child who saved our lives forever. Don't let anything distract your trust in that promise. And don't let anything keep you from keeping your promises to Him.

#### THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Eternal and unchanging God, all we see around us is transient and passing away, except for Your Word. Anchor our faith in Your Word incarnate, Jesus Christ, and guide us to so live as to be ready for his coming. Help us to look down the road, to keep this present moment with all its troubles and all its joys in context, to remember that Christ is coming again just as surely he came at first. May we forever look forward in hope and live in peace.

Whether Your kingdom is already here, coming soon, or coming in some distant time, may this time be one of true blessedness, a time in which we pray and share your love with others, a time in which we turn to your word and speak hope to those who despair, a time in which stand with heads high and our hands out to help others find meaning in a world gone mad Rather than seeking justice, let us be just; rather than waiting for his coming, let us be kingdom people now; rather than seeking faith, let us be faithful. In this way, we may be alert to all You have in store, through the Spirit of the One who is to come, and 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.

Let all of us who are able stand and join in one voice to sing our hymn of dedication, "Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus", #2 in our *Hymnals*.

\*HYMN OF DEDICATION

"Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus"

*The Hymnal #2*

THE BLESSING

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

\*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

“Go Now in Peace”

Go now in peace. Never be afraid.  
God will go with you each hour of everyday.  
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true.  
Know He will guide you in all you do.  
Go now in love, and show you believe.  
Reach out to others so all the world can see.  
God will be there, watching from above.  
Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.  
Amen, Amen, Amen.

\*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis