

## Worship Service from First Presbyterian Church of Magnolia

Sunday, December 20, 2015

*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. The liturgist will enter followed by the pastor. 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 "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" - Robert A. Hobby 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 Psalm 96 and printed in our bulletins?”

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

(adapted from Psalm 96)

O sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth.

**Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.**

Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples.

**For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods.**

For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the Lord made the heavens.

**Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.**

Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

**Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts.**

Worship the Lord in holy splendor; tremble before him, all the earth.

**Say among the nations, “The Lord is king! He will judge the peoples with equity.”**

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it;

**Let the field exult, and all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord;**

For he is coming to judge the earth.

**He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth.**

Let us worship God, beginning with a short video explaining the meaning of the fourth Advent candle, “Love” ...

**ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING**

“Love”

**A Video**

*After the video, the liturgist will return to the lectern and say...*

**PRAYER OF INVOCATION**

Let us pray... Out of life’s deep shadows, we are attracted to your brightness, O Lord. From the trauma of life’s daily struggles we are drawn by the peace that you alone can provide. You call us away from our profane and worldly passions and invite us to again center our lives in you. Come Lord, by your Word and Spirit to reign among us. Bring the joy we cannot know apart from you. Lead us in the ways of justice and righteousness and establish among us your marvelous works so that we might declare them to a waiting world. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “Angels, From the Realms of Glory”, number 22 in our *Hymnals*.

*The liturgist should step back from the microphone for the hymn.*

**\*HYMN OF PRAISE**

**“Angels, From the Realms of Glory”**

**The Hymnal #22**

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

**\*CALL TO CONFESSION**

The arrival of a baby recalls to us the preciousness of life. Yet our own helplessness and vulnerability are mirrored in the newborn. And before the purity of the child, our sins are exposed. Let us kneel before the manger and confess our sins before God and one another as we pray together the

prayer of confession as it is printed in our bulletins, pausing at its conclusion for a moment of silent prayer. Let us pray...

**\*PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

O God, we are anxious and ashamed. Too often we are shaped by our fears rather than our faith. We have focused so much upon our failures of the past and our wishes for the future, that we have failed to live and serve faithfully in the present. Therefore we are filled with anxiety, discontent, and a craving for the things of earth. Forgive us for not trusting you to provide for our needs and to guide our steps. Set us on fire with the Good News of Christ so that we may be inspired to bear fruit as befits those whom you have created and redeemed. Amen.

**\*SILENT CONFESSION**

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

**\*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

God engaged the destructive powers of this world through the birth of Jesus. And God defeated them forever through Christ's cross and empty tomb. Sin and death have been forever rendered powerless over all who confess, repent, and believe. . . 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...*

"Let of of us who are able, stand and join in singing our next hymn, "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear", number 38 in the *Hymnal*.

**HYMN OF PREPARATION**

"It Came Upon the Midnight Clear"

*The Hymnal#38*

*After the hymn, the liturgist will return to the lectern and say...*

**THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING**

**Be Seated.** . . . The gift in the manger-- unexpected, and generous beyond all our deserving-- fills us with the desire to respond. Let us respond to the goodness and loving kindness of our God by continuing our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings....

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

**THE OFFERTORY**

"What Child Is This?" - Robert A. Hobby

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 compassion, your presence made known in Jesus gives hope to the despairing, comfort to the sorrowing, and bread to the hungry. As we bow in adoration before the manger, and in wonder before the cross, we commit ourselves to establishing the new creation Christ heralds, where mercy and kindness, justice and peace reign among all people. Receive and bless the gifts we bring to the glory of the King who was born in Bethlehem. 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**

**"Christmas Medley"**

**The Handbell Choir**

*After the Special Music, the Liturgist will return to the lectern & say...*

**SCRIPTURE READINGS**

Our first lesson for this morning is taken from the ninth chapter of the Prophet Isaiah beginning at the 2nd verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #593 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.

Thou hast multiplied the nation; thou hast increased its joy.

They rejoice before thee as with joy at the harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, thou hast broken as on the day of Mid'ian. For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and for evermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

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

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

Our second reading this morning is taken from the gospel of Luke, the second chapter, beginning with the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #889 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirin'i-us was governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!"

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child; and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.

But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

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

**People: Thanks be to God.**

THE CHRISTMAS STORY IN WORDS AND MUSIC

The Children's Choir

"Song of the Angels"

"The Shepherds Knew a Secret"

"Mary Was Wondering"

"Happy Birthday, Baby Jesus"

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Once again, Holy God, we turn our steps toward Bethlehem to seek the gift of Your Messiah, and find that our hearts are not ready to receive him. Grant, blessed God, that it is not too late for us to find him, and finding him to acknowledge him as Lord, and surrender to His leading.

Others of us have been so distracted by good things-- the joy of Christmas fellowship, of giving gifts, of celebrations-- that we have lost sight of the one best thing-- Jesus the Christ. So guard our fickle and undiscerning hearts, and grant that we will not miss his true and eternal light amid the glint of tinsel and the transience of seasonal lights. Make light our burdens along the way. Quiet our fears. Kindle our hopes. Lift us up on wings of expectancy that we we may see and understand without confusion, and that having seen we may be filled with songs of joy that never end, through Christ our Lord, 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 & join in one voice to sing our hymn of dedication, "O Little Town of Bethlehem", number 44 in our *Hymnal*.

\*HYMN OF DEDICATION

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"

*The Hymnal #44*

\*THE BENEDICTORY PRAYER

Almighty God, by whom the meek are guided in judgment, and light rises up in darkness for the godly: Grant us, in our doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what You would have us to do; that the Spirit of wisdom may save us from all false choices. Grant us grace to contend always for what is true and right, and to be ready if need be to suffer for it. Give us not over to fearfulness of soul, but lift us into that love which casts out fear, so that we may glorify and enjoy You forever. In all our works begun, continued, and ended in You, may we glorify Your holy name, and finally, by Your mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*.

\*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

"God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen"

God rest you merry, gentlemen, Let nothing you dismay.

Remember Christ our Savior was born on Christmas Day,

To save us all from Satan's power when we were gone astray.

O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy; O tidings of comfort and joy.

\*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis