



**1st Sunday after Christmas  
December 27th, 2020**

*Twin Towers United Methodist Church*

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*\*Worship words - including the call to worship, centering prayer, pastoral prayer, and Advent candle-lighting liturgy have been adapted from resources written by Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art LLC | [sanctifiedart.org](http://sanctifiedart.org).*

## **WORSHIP GUIDE**

*Before you begin your time of worship, find a comfortable place to be and gather whatever you might need: your Bible, your Advent candles, something to write on and with, your computer/connected device (if you intend to listen to music online), etc. Feel free to adapt this worship guide in any way that makes best sense to you and those you might be gathered with. (Consider inviting someone – a friend, a family member – to worship with you.) Commit to spending the next hour with God.*

**PRELUDE** - Listen and sing along to a song or hymn that blesses and centers your spirit!

### **WELCOME** -

Today is an auspicious day! We have just celebrated the birth of our Lord, Jesus, the Messiah. Jesus is the Messiah sent by God to bring God's dreams of healing and direction to His kingdom on earth. Today, we relax while we also begin the work of learning what God's dreams for us are—for us as His congregation and for each one of us individually. Today we begin the work of Christmas as we commit ourselves over the next several weeks to learning, and maybe becoming, and maybe even acting on God's dreams for us! To give us some perspective, I invite you to read aloud "The Work of Christmas" by Rev. Howard Thurman.

When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the kings and princes are home,  
When the shepherds are back with their flocks,  
The work of Christmas begins:  
To find the lost,  
To heal the broken,  
To feed the hungry,  
To release the prisoner,  
To rebuild the nations,  
To bring peace among brothers and sisters,  
To make music in the heart.  
Today the work of Christmas begins.  
Come, let us dream God's dream. Amen

### **CENTERING HYMN** - Breathe on Me

Watch and Listen here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yaWXpL7\\_UQA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yaWXpL7_UQA)

**CENTERING PRAYER** – *You are invited to take a deep breath as you pray:*

*Adapted from a prayer by A Sanctified Art LLC |*

Divine Voice,  
In the beginning,  
It was you who spoke over the water and brought forth creation.  
And then it was you who asked, “Cain, where is your brother?”  
It was you who spoke to Elijah in a still, small, voice.  
And it was you, through angels,  
Who spoke to Mary and Joseph and the shepherds.  
You have always been speaking—  
In words,  
    in memories,  
        in songs,  
            in visions,  
                in sensations,  
                    and in dreams.  
So today, as we prepare to hear your word read aloud,  
We ask that you would speak to us once again—as only you can—  
So that we might speak this same good news to others.  
Divine Voice, we are listening.  
And we are grateful. Amen.

**SCRIPTURE** - Isaiah 61:10-62:3, Luke 2:22-40 / CEV

Isaiah

<sup>10</sup> I celebrate and shout  
because of my Lord God.  
His saving power and justice  
are the very clothes I wear.  
They are more beautiful  
than the jewelry worn  
by a bride or a groom.  
<sup>11</sup> The Lord will bring about  
justice and praise  
in every nation on earth,  
like flowers blooming  
in a garden.

62 <sup>1</sup> Jerusalem, I will speak up  
for your good.  
I will never be silent  
till you are safe and secure,  
sparkling like a flame.  
<sup>2</sup> Your great victory will be seen  
by every nation and king;  
the Lord will even give you  
a new name.  
<sup>3</sup> You will be a glorious crown,  
a royal headband,  
for the Lord your God.

## Luke

<sup>22</sup> The time came for Mary and Joseph to do what the Law of Moses says a mother is supposed to do after her baby is born.

They took Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem and presented him to the Lord,<sup>23</sup> just as the Law of the Lord says, “Each first-born baby boy belongs to the Lord.”<sup>24</sup> The Law of the Lord also says that parents have to offer a sacrifice, giving at least a pair of doves or two young pigeons. So that is what Mary and Joseph did.

<sup>25</sup> At this time a man named Simeon was living in Jerusalem. Simeon was a good man. He loved God and was waiting for God to save the people of Israel. God’s Spirit came to him<sup>26</sup> and told him that he would not die until he had seen Christ the Lord.

<sup>27</sup> When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple to do what the Law of Moses says should be done for a new baby, the Spirit told Simeon to go into the temple.<sup>28</sup> Simeon took the baby Jesus in his arms and praised God,

<sup>29</sup> “Lord, I am your servant,  
and now I can die in peace,  
because you have kept  
your promise to me.

<sup>30</sup> With my own eyes I have seen  
what you have done  
to save your people,

<sup>31</sup> and foreign nations  
will also see this.

<sup>32</sup> Your mighty power is a light  
for all nations,  
and it will bring honor  
to your people Israel.”

<sup>33</sup> Jesus' parents were surprised at what Simeon had said.<sup>34</sup> Then he blessed them and told Mary, “This child of yours will cause many people in Israel to fall and others to stand. The child will be like a warning sign. Many people will reject him,<sup>35</sup> and you, Mary, will suffer as though you had been stabbed by a dagger. But all this will show what people are really thinking.”

<sup>36</sup> The prophet Anna was also there in the temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. In her youth she had been married for seven years, but her husband died.<sup>37</sup> And now she was eighty-four years old. Night and day she served God in the temple by praying and often going without eating.

<sup>38</sup> At that time Anna came in and praised God. She spoke about the child Jesus to everyone who hoped for Jerusalem to be set free.

<sup>39</sup> After Joseph and Mary had done everything that the Law of the Lord commands, they returned home to Nazareth in Galilee.<sup>40</sup> The child Jesus grew. He became strong and wise, and God blessed him.

This is the Word of God for the people of God. **Thanks be to God!**

**LISTEN** - Today's message was shared by our Lay Leader, **Jen Tellier**

Throughout out Advent, we have been challenged to be awake and alert to the coming of Jesus. Today I invite you to be alert to the signs of God. In our scripture, the prophet Isaiah communicated God's good news that "The Lord will bring about justice and praise in every nation on earth, like flowers blooming in a garden... You will be a glorious crown, a royal headband, for the Lord your God." As I digested these images—of flowers blooming and glorious crowns sparkling—it seemed clear to me that God's dreams for us are not plain ordinary dreams but are instead beautiful, grand and justice-filled dreams! God has high hopes for us!

Let us pray. God of vision, God of love, God of expansive dreams, God of unending hope, create in us today the willingness and desire to grow into your glorious dreams for us. Help us believe we are able. Open our ears to your gentle voice and to the cries of those in need of your love and mercy. Create in us a vision of flowering beauty and crown jewels as we see those who are suffering and are in need of help for they, too, are your jewels. Awaken our hearts to the cries for justice and help us speak and act upon your dreams. In the name of your precious gift to the world, Jesus, Amen.

In the scripture from Luke, we first hear of Mary—who we know was visited by an angel with the greeting, "You are truly blessed! The Lord is with you... Don't be afraid! God is pleased with you..." I wonder how many of you have experienced a calling from God or Jesus, and have wondered, "Me? Why me?" According to the scripture, Mary listens, asks a few questions, and accepts God's dream for her, saying, "I am the Lord's servant." My friends, as disciples of Jesus, we, too, are the Lord's servants. So if God is placing a dream in your heart or mind, be alert and listen, feel free to engage with God in a discussion and ask questions, then accept God's dream, and then grow into your faith that God's dream for you is likely greater than anything you would have imagined.

In today's scripture, we also heard about Simeon—an ordinary man—who was visited by God's Spirit and was directed to go and see the infant Jesus. The scripture suggests Simeon had learned of God's dream for him in the form of a promise from God. In fact, Simeon said, "Lord, I am your servant and now I can die in peace, because you have kept your promise to me." Though we don't know how Simeon learned of God's promise, we can surmise that

Simeon was alert and looking for signs of God’s work in the world as he said, “With my own eyes I have seen what you have done to save your people....”

My friends, when we are alert and awake, our eyes are likely wide open—open to seeing those who are in need, hungry, broken, lost, imprisoned, and worn. However, seeing is not enough. When we see—like Simeon, we are meant to act. If Simeon had just seen—but said nothing and done nothing, he would not have fulfilled God’s calling nor would he have experienced God’s promise. We are blessed when God has a dream for us. And we experience the fullness of his promise when we not only hear or see—but act—on his dream.

Similarly with the prophet Anna—who seems to have been deeply devoted to God—the scripture says, “Night and day she served God in the temple by praying and often going without eating.” It seems after seeing Jesus, Anna knew it was time for her to speak up and act out God’s dream for her as “She spoke about the child Jesus to everyone who hoped for Jerusalem to be set free.”

Through the reading of God’s word today, we know that God shares his dreams for us in a variety of ways. Sometimes it is through the reading of his word and what it says to us on that very day. Sometimes it is through others such as angels or prophets like Isaiah and Anna or ordinary people like Simeon. Sometimes it is through promises or challenges. Sometimes it is through the ways we grow, blossom and become fruitful, sparkle and shine. Dine and Connect or Imani and Milo.

When we pay attention to God’s dreams for us and do our best to fulfill His dreams, we are blessed, we don’t need to be afraid, and we feel God’s pleasure with us.

Please pray with me. All knowing God of love and power, as we breathe in the very breath you have given us, let us with each breath expand our understanding of your dream for us. Just breathe. ... Thank you God for planting your seeds of blossoming dreams in each of us today.

**PRAYERS of the PEOPLE** – *Spend time in prayer. What did you hear for yourself through today’s scripture and reflection? Talk to God about it. Then lift up the joys and*

*concerns that are in your heart. You might write them down, speak them aloud, or pray them in silence.*

*I would be honored to pray with you and for you.*

*Please send a note via text, mail, or email or give me a call if I can do so.*

**SHARING OUR GIFTS**— *How might you offer yourself and all that you have to God this week? How are you being invited to practice generosity? Spend a moment listening for God’s direction.*

*You are invited to contribute financially towards the purpose and ministry of TTUMC. We are a congregation committed to being conduits of God’s healing in our neighborhood and beyond, and in so doing, impact the last and the least. You can contribute by mailing in a check, dropping off cash, or giving online via PayPal (visit [www.twintowersumc.org](http://www.twintowersumc.org)). Take a moment and do that now. Please also be sure to return your Stewardship Response Card via mail or online [here](#) today!*

**CLOSING HYMN** - “I Give Myself Away”

Watch and Listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0dwB29pYR40>

**BENEDICTION** -

May the birth of Jesus be renewed in our lives.

May the Spirit of Jesus guide our words and thoughts.

May the life of Jesus inspire us to follow in the way of hope.

**NOW GO AND PASS CHRIST’S PEACE!**

**SCRIPTURE** for Jan 3rd, 2021: Isaiah 60:1-6 and Matthew 2:1-12

**PRAYER INVITES:**

- For our deep listening to God’s dreams for us individually and as a church.
- **Ruth B.** is scheduled for surgery on Jan. 7th. **P. Bob** is scheduled for surgery on Jan. 11th.
- The will to work together in Congress for the good of the people.