**Worship Plan for Sunday, December 26, 2021**

First Sunday of Christmas

**Introduction to the day**

On the first Sunday of Christmas we find the boy Samuel and the boy Jesus, both in the temple, both growing in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and humankind. We too have returned to the house of God “to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God,” who has gifted us with a savior. As the festival continues, “let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.” It is Christmas, still.

**GOSPEL MESSAGE: Obedience and Praise**

The act of praising God fairly leaps off the page in today’s readings. And hand in hand with that joyful response is the practice of obedience. They can seem to be opposing actions; we tend to think of praise as a spontaneous eruption of joy, while obedience puts us in mind of rules and limits that dampen our fun. In God’s world, though, obedience and praise are naturally joined.

The boy Samuel is in the temple because of a vow his mother, Hannah, made to God. It is her obedience that places him in that sacred space. And each year, Eli the priest blesses Hannah and her husband, Elkanah, praying for the formerly barren couple to have children. And they do!

In the gospel reading from Luke, the boy Jesus can also be found in the temple, after a frantic search by his parents. Mary and Joseph do not understand why he would be in the temple, and Jesus does not understand why his parents did not think to look there first: he is, after all, in his Father’s house because of obedience to his life’s work. After the misunderstanding, though, Jesus “went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart” (Luke 2:51). Mary too is full of praise as she sees her son’s obedience to his call and identity from God.

Far from being the fun-spoiler, obedience leads us to praise. When we let our words and actions point toward God, we will find reasons for praise on every side. And Paul’s words to the Colossians bring home the startling realization that obedience is our glad foundation: “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful” (Colossians 3:15). It turns out our greatest joy comes from following God’s guidance.

**Gathering:** The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

**Greeting**

Welcome to our Lessons and Carols worship!

We are glad to have you with our Faith Lutheran Church community. I'm Pr. John Barton and I will be leading our service today. This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

**Announcements**

Out of an abundance of caution, we will continue to require masks while meeting at Faith Lutheran Church.

Monday: Council meets at 1:00 in person and on Zoom

Friday: Al-Anon meets at 10:30 in the Fellowship Hall

Other: As a step towards normalcy, Pastor's official office hours will resume as Monday and Wednesday 9:30- 5.

For more information and a complete monthly calendar, contact the church office. Thank you!

**And now please turn to page 267**

Please stand as you are willing and able.

**Gathering Song:*Joy to the World* (ELW 267)**

**Dialogue**

Jesus, the bright Morning Star, shines light in the world.

**By day and night he shines for all to see.**

Jesus was born in the midst of injustice and poverty

**that the world may see the justice and richness of God.**

God so loved the world that God sent Jesus,

**so that all who believe in him may not perish but have eternal life.**

Jesus is the light of the world.

**Jesus is the light of our lives.**

Sing to God a new song!

**A song of hope, joy, and peace around the world.**

**Opening Prayer**

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Let us pray. Gracious God of heaven and earth, you have thrown a lifeline to us in our darkness—a beam of light that shines through Jesus. Though born in a manger, he is the firstborn of all creation. Though crucified on a cross, he is the Lord of life.

Fill us with the wonder and joy of his presence in the world and in our hearts. **Amen.**

**Word:** God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

**LESSONS AND CAROLS**

**First Reading:** Genesis 1:1-5, 14-18 (Roderick Sinclair)

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

**Pastor’s Response**

**Carol: *Angels From the Realms of Glory* (ELW 275)**

**Second Reading:** Micah 5:2-5a (Deane Meckler)

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace. If the Assyrians come into our land and tread upon our soil, we will raise against them seven shepherds and eight installed as rulers.

**Pastor’s Response**

**Carol: *O Little Town of Bethlehem* (ELW 279)**

**Third Reading:** Luke 1:26-35, 38 (Amy Sinclair)

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

**Pastor’s Response**

**Carol: *Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming* (Listen)**

**Fourth Reading:** Matthew 1:18-25 (Amy Rae Meckler)

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

**Pastor’s Response**

**Carol: *What Child Is This?* (ELW 296)**

**Fifth Reading:** Luke 2:8-20 (Marlene Rosselli)

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth 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 heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

**Pastor’s Response**

**Carol: *Angels We Have Heard On High* (ELW 289)**

**Sixth Reading:** Matthew 2:1-11 (Alonna Lopez)

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: ‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.’” Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

**Pastor’s Response**

**Carol: *O Holy Night* (Listen)**

**Seventh Reading:** John 1:1-14 (Kally Homchick)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.

**Pastor’s Response**

**Carol: *The First Noël* (ELW 300)**

**Responsive Prayer**

It is you, loving God, who lights our path with truth.

**Your Word, Jesus, is truth.**

In his light, draw all to the manger

**to gather in wonder with the shepherds.**

In his light, draw all to the manger

**to kneel in reverence with the wise ones.**

In his light, draw all to the manger

**to sing for joy with the angels.**

In the brightness of his life

**cast away the darkness of injustice, poverty, and hunger in the world.**

It is you, loving God, who meets us on our way.

**In the light of Jesus, show the world the way of life. Amen.**

**And now please Listen or sing along as you are able**

**Hymn of the Day: *Mary Did You Know* by Peter Hollens (Listen or sing along)**

**Prayers of Intercession**

Joining our voices with the heavenly host and Christians throughout time and space, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

You come to us in gatherings of your church across the globe. Unite us with those who celebrate your birth even when they are weighed down by grief, loss, poverty, hunger, or injustice. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You come to us in the diverse splendor of the universe. Grant us the humility to trust our place in the network of creation, that we live in service to you and the natural world. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You come to us through relationships of many kinds: families, friendships, communities, and nations. Guide us in these relationships, that we recognize the Christ child in one another and show your love to those most vulnerable. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You come to us through people whom the world forgets. Poor shepherds and an imprisoned Paul announced your good news. Send your Spirit to all who are imprisoned, struggling with addiction, unwell, or in any need this day (especially). Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You come to us in acts of justice and forgiveness. Open our hearts to forgive one another, without permitting injustice. Supply us with the wisdom to be clothed with love, binding all things together in perfect harmony. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You come to us through those who have died yet live with you forever (especially). We give thanks for Stephen, deacon and martyr, who gave his life to tell the story of your love. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Rejoicing in your Word made flesh among us, we commend these prayers to you, confident of your grace and love made known to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior.

**Amen.**

**Prayer List**

Susan Aldrich; Gloria Anderson; Ken and Ellie Borchmann; Arnette Calkins; Luca Candela; Julie Chevraux; Robin Connelly; Daniel Conner; Christopher Cook; Vicki Crow; Sally Duncan; Roger and Carole Erickson; Joni Gray; Kally Homchick; Marlon Jay; Francis Key; Loni Knowles; Sandra Miller; Carol Morris; Pat Myers; Sheila Neal; Ron Neumen; Tina Peteroski and family; Andrew Quinn; Emily Rasmussen; the family of Edy Rose; JoAnne Schriock; Dee Seel; Sharon Seims; Jan Simon; Amy Sinclair; the Van Oort family; Earlean Wagner; Diana Ward; Bernie Weston; Mary Yturralde; the homebound; the Emergency responders; and those grieving and anticipating surgery/tests. We especially pray for those affected by COVID-19 and those who have lost loved ones.

At this time we also pray for those we name aloud or silently in our hearts.

If you would like your name added to our prayer list, please contact the church office.

**Peace:** The peace of Christ be with you always. **And also with you.**

**Offering**

At this time, we remember that the giving of our offering is an authentic part of worship.

This month we are highlighting the ministry of Altar Guild, a vital ministry whose members fly under the radar. Behind the scenes, Altar guild members set the table and the worship space. Every Saturday a team of two persons meet at the church to set the table and the worship space....

Your offering, gathered in praise of God, helps this ministry by...

Thank you so much for all the ways you give and help to make the ministries of this church possible!

**Offering Prayer**

Let us pray.

Good and loving God, we rejoice in the birth of Jesus, who came among the poor to bring the riches of your grace. As you have blessed us with your gifts, let them be blessing for others. With the trees of the field, with all earth and heaven, we shout for joy at the coming of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Meal:** God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

**Great Thanksgiving**

**Dialogue (ELW p. 152)**

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

**Preface (ELW p. 153)**

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, Holy, Holy (ELW p. 153)**

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, Lord God of pow’r and might: Heav’n and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

**INSTRUCTION FOR COMMUNION**

Now, I invite you to gather bread and drink for communion and share with anyone in your household.

As a note, it helps to take the wafer off first then the juice separately afterward.

Gathering at Christ's table, we trust in God's all-reaching power and grace to provide each one of us the complete and total sacrament in these extraordinary times.

**Thanksgiving at the Table (ELW p. 153)**

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

**Lord’s Prayer**

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

**Invitation to Communion:** Come to the banquet, for all is now ready.

**Communion**

The body of Christ, given for you. The blood of Christ, shed for you. Amen.

**Prayer after Communion**

Let us pray. Radiant God, with our eyes we have seen your salvation, and in this meal we have feasted on your grace. May your Word take flesh in us, that we may be your holy people, revealing your glory made known to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

**And now please turn to page 290**

Please stand as you are willing and able.

**Sending Song: *Go Tell It On the Mountain*** **(ELW 290)**

**Blessing**

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow!

**Praise God, all creatures here below!**

You are the shepherds telling the story.

**We tell it in the streets and across the land.**

You are the wise ones worshiping with thanksgiving.

**We worship with gifts of song and service, talents and treasures.**

You are the angels announcing peace.

**We live with joy and go now in peace.**

Almighty God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit,

bless you now and forever.

**Amen.**

**Dismissal**

Go in peace. Share the good news.

**Thanks be to God.**

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