# January 23, 2022 + 10:30 A.M. Third Sunday after the Epiphany

# We Join in Worship

**PRELUDE** O Master, Let Me Walk With Thee

Smith/arr. Johnson

WELCOME

#### **CHORAL INTROIT**

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### \*THE PEACE OF CHRIST

Christ's peace is with us always, no matter where we may be. And so, Christ's peace is with each and every one of us in this moment. Let us take it in. Let us really feel it. If able, please stand where you are, look around, and make signs of Christ's peace to each other. If you are at home, give somebody a call after the service to share Christ's peace!

# \* CALL TO WORSHIP (Adapted from *Psalm* 107)

Leader: O give thanks to the LORD, for the LORD is good; the LORD'S steadfast love endures

forever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, those redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.

ALL: Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to an inhabited town; hungry and

thirsty, their soul fainted within them. Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,

and the LORD delivered them from their distress.

Leader: O give thanks to the LORD, for the LORD is good; the LORD's steadfast love endures

forever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, those redeemed from trouble and gathered

in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.

ALL: Let us thank the LORD for steadfast love, for the LORD'S wonderful works to

humankind. For the LORD satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.

Leader: O give thanks to the LORD, for the LORD is good; the LORD's steadfast love endures

forever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, those redeemed from trouble and gathered

in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.

ALL: The LORD turns a desert into pools of water, a parched land into springs of water.

And there the LORD lets the hungry live, and they establish a town to live in; they sow fields, and plant vineyards, and get a fruitful yield. Let us worship the LORD!

\*OPENING HYMN (Gentle singing): "There's a Sweet, Sweet Spirit" (398)

#### INVITATION TO CONFESSION:

Leader: In his letter to the Galatians, Paul urges the faithful to be led by the Spirit rather than to be

subject to the law. Together let us confess how we resist the movement of the Spirit in our lives.

# PRAYER OF CONFESSION (unison)

God of grace and mercy, we pray to you with confession on our lips and repentance in our hearts. Help us to repair what we have broken with our transgressions and so to reconcile with each other and with you. We confess that we often go about our lives caught up in our drudgery and burdens. We spend so much time doing thing we don't enjoy simply because we feel like we're supposed to do them. We make enjoyment the dessert rather than the main course. And yet, we know that your Spirit calls us to taste the sweetness of life, to love the lives that we live, and so to revel in the pleasure of your Creation. Forgive us for allowing ourselves to be consumed by the bitter things of life. Help us to taste that sweetness once more. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

#### **KYRIE** (Gentle singing)

Lord, have mercy upon us. Christ, have mercy upon us. Lord, have mercy upon us.

#### ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Leader:

Friends, hear the good news! The LORD says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love;

therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you." That faithfulness was made manifest

in Jesus Christ, who forgives us of our sins.

ALL:

Hallelujah! Thanks be to God!

### **GLORIA PATRI (Gentle Singing)**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

#### **STATEMENT OF FAITH** (from *The Confession of 1967*)

In Jesus Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself. Jesus Christ is God with humanity. He is the eternal Son of the Father, who became human and lived among us to fulfill the work of reconciliation. He is present in the church by the power of the Holy Spirit to continue and complete his mission. This work of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is the foundation of all confessional statements about God, humanity, and the world. Therefore the church calls people to be reconciled to God and to one another. In Jesus of Nazareth true humanity was realized once for all. Jesus, a Palestinian Jew, lived among his own people and shared their needs, temptations, joys, and sorrows. He expressed the love of God in word and deed and became a brother to all kinds of sinful people.

# We Hear God's Word

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION: (Unison)

Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit, that as the Scriptures are read and your Word is proclaimed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen.

**HEBREW BIBLE LESSON:** 

Jeremiah 31:1-9

**EPISTLE LESSON:** 

Galatians 5:16-26

**GOSPEL LESSON:** 

John 2:1-11

**SERMON:** 

Taste the Sweetness of Life

#### **CHORAL ANTHEM:**

# We Respond in Faith

#### PASTORAL PRAYER

#### LORD'S PRAYER

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.

#### CHORAL RESPONSE

#### **OFFERING INVITATION:**

Leader:

Today we have been blessed with the miracle of the sweetness of life. Let us give our tithes and offerings so that we can continue to bring that sweetness to the world. If you did not do so as you entered, please place your offering in the plate as you leave. If you are worshiping from home, please mail in your checks or use our online giving option on the website.

**OFFERTORY** 

The Fruit of the Spirit

Dale Groetenhuis

# \* DOXOLOGY (Gentle Singing):

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise God, all creatures here below; Praise God, above, ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

#### **PRAYER OF DEDICATION:** (Unison)

O God, we dedicate these gifts to you with gratitude for the joy with which you fill us up. Guide us as we seek to use them to share that joy. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

# We Go Into the World

\* CLOSING HYMN (Gentle Singing):

"Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine!" (341)

#### BENEDICTION

#### **CHORAL BENEDICTION**

**POSTLUDE** 

Take My Life, and Let It Be

Cesar Malan

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#### Life of the Church

#### Announcements

- FPCH's ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING 1/30 AFTER WORSHIP Mark your calendars for this important event in the life of our congregation! We'll be reviewing the annual report, taking a look at the budget for 2022, and voting on the pastor's terms of call.
- <u>ADULT CONNECTIONS CLASS SUNDAY MORNINGS AT 9AM.</u> We are starting a new study, "Animate: Faith." This study will help us imaginatively explore central topics of Christianity through short videos and group discussion. All are welcome regardless of whether or not you've joined before!
- BRING YOUR OWN BIBLE Our weekly virtual Bible study takes place on Zoom each Wednesday at 7:00 PM. Keep an eye out for an email with the link to join. It is a fresh topic each week, so you're more than welcome to join if you haven't been with us before.
- <u>CONFIRMATION CLASS</u> will meet today Sunday, January 23, after worship. If you are a youth and have not yet been through a Confirmation class, please let Pastor Tyler know if you would like to join.
- YOUTH CONNECTIONS will meet next today, January 23, after worship. Join us for fellowship and fun!
- READ THROUGH THE BIBLE IN A YEAR TOGETHER! The Faith Development ministry is offering a challenge of reading the entire Bible in 2022! We've found a reading plan that breaks up the Scriptures into smaller pieces. Each day has a reading from the Old and New Testaments, and some days also include a Psalm. You can read along at your own pace, and if you don't keep up with what the reading plan says each day, that's ok. We want to encourage everyone to make the Bible a regular part of your daily life no matter when or how much reading you do. The reading plan is published in the Larger View newsletter each month, and can be found on our church's website (www.fpchighland.org). If you would like the reading plan emailed to you as a separate document, contact Heather at hcasiano@fpchighland.org. May this year in the Bible be a blessing to you!
- **PRAYGROUND** If you need extra space for a wheelchair or walker or if you have young children with you, please feel free to make use of the extra space we have across the aisle from the sound booth.

# Opportunities to serve as the HEART, HANDS, and FEET of Jesus Christ:

- <u>BLESSING BOX</u> Our Blessing Box has gained even more importance in this pandemic. Economic impacts are dire, and the most vulnerable in our midst are the most harmed. Please continue to place items in the Blessing Box and take items if you are a person in need! Items most commonly donated: Canned goods with pull tabs, socks, toilet paper, non-perishable foods, small snacks, toiletries, baby wipes and diapers. Please check expiration dates on food items before donating them.
- GOT SNEAKERS FUNDRAISER We are collecting pairs of gently worn, used and new sneakers to help earn money for our projects and programs here at FPCH and help the environment at the same time! Can we count on you? Blue bins for the shoes will be located in the sanctuary narthex, inside door D by the office, and outside the church building by door D. <u>Please note that we can only use sneakers/tennis shoes!</u>

# **Prayer List**

Anthony Avery Mike Bennett George Nelson Brady Vanes Sonny Buono Danielle

Dave George Griner Guy Hendricks

Bill and Anettia Holmes

Daniel Litwicki

Frank

David Markley Pat and David Kingen

Garry Sknerski Carmelo

Diana and Ray Mendoza Jamie and Janet Orem

Linda

Claudia Szymasczak

John Mullen Jeanne Nestor Lester Schmock

Cindy Waltz and Sister

Andrew Bobalik Paige Szulewski Gale Snyder Yvonne Suroviak U. Chong Rodney Calvin Scott Steve & Melinda Gary Studer

Matt Hanft

Richard Terpstra Laura Buono Domsic Kevin Windstrup Ruth Dekker

Rick Parker Barbara Morton

The loved ones of Elwyn Studer

Linda Kubiak Robert Lestina Laura Wisner Cary Pearson Bob Dignam Carol Finley Huilin

Holly Letnich Jan Oprea Lily Renfro

Marla and Jerry Renfro Mary Ellen Edeus Shirley McKnight Jaden Mendez

# Jeremiah 31:1-9

31 At that time, says the LORD, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.

<sup>2</sup> Thus says the LORD:

The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness;

when Israel sought for rest,

the LORD appeared to him from far away.

I have loved you with an everlasting love;

therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.

<sup>4</sup> Again I will build you, and you shall be built,

O virgin Israel!

Again you shall take your tambourines,

and go forth in the dance of the merrymakers.

<sup>5</sup> Again you shall plant vineyards on the mountains of Samaria;

the planters shall plant,

and shall enjoy the fruit.

<sup>6</sup> For there shall be a day when sentinels will call in the hill country of Ephraim: "Come, let us go up to Zion, to the LORD our God." <sup>7</sup> For thus says the LORD: Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and raise shouts for the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, "Save, O LORD, your people, the remnant of Israel." <sup>8</sup> See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north, and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, those with child and those in labor, together: a great company, they shall return here. <sup>9</sup> With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back. I will let them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble; for I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.

become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.

# Galatians 5:16-26

the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. <sup>18</sup> But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. <sup>19</sup> Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, <sup>21</sup> envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>22</sup> By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. <sup>24</sup> And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup> If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. <sup>26</sup> Let us not

#### John 2:1-11

2 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. <sup>2</sup> Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. <sup>3</sup> When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." <sup>4</sup> And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." <sup>5</sup> His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." <sup>6</sup> Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. <sup>7</sup> Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. <sup>8</sup> He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. <sup>9</sup> When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom <sup>10</sup> and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." <sup>11</sup> Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

#### Taste the Sweetness of Life!

Jeremiah 31:1-9; Galatians 5:16-26; John 2:1-11

Now, I must confess that I wrote this sermon while gazing out upon the Caribbean Sea and feeling a delicious breeze in 80-degree weather in January on the little island of Vieques in Puerto Rico. So, the sweetness of life is front and center for all of my senses! And wow! God is good! And God has good news. So let's get to that gospel.

In the book of *John*, when John was doing his baptism thing, he didn't hold back when it came to his vocation of preparing the way of the messiah. Any chance he got, he would proclaim the nature of his cousin brother. Before Jesus presented himself for baptism, many thought that John might be the messiah because of his charisma and his message. But, just as he was making straight the paths in the wilderness for the Lord, he was setting straight the misguided identification of the people. "I baptize with water. Someone greater stands among you, whom you don't recognize. He comes after me, but I am not worthy to even untie the thong of his sandals." And then, when Jesus finally arrived alongside of the Jordan River, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one about whom I said, 'He who comes after me is really greater than me because he existed before me.' Even I didn't recognize him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'The one on whom you see the Spirit coming down and resting is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and testified that this one is God's son." And John the Baptist didn't stop there. From then on, he made it his mission to tell everybody he could just who the messiah was and, this is important, how divine the messiah was. He kept calling Jesus "God's son" and "the Lamb of God."

And so it came to pass, according to the gospel of *John*, that the day after Jesus' baptism, John the Baptist turned to two of his own disciples when Jesus was walking by and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God!" So powerful was John's word to his disciples that they left him and started following the one whom he had identified. Thus began a fascinating word of mouth campaign from brother to brother and friend to friend. "Hey! We have found the messiah! Come and see!" "Hey! We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law and the Prophets: Jesus, Joseph's son, from Nazareth. Come and see!" And just like that, five of the original twelve disciples joined Jesus within the span of a few days, all based on the word of their former teacher. And that is exactly what they called Jesus as well: "Teacher." "Rabbi." That is how they understood the messiah at that point—intellectually. Their minds could logically make sense of the words that John used to describe him, and their minds could logically make sense of Jesus' teachings once he became their rabbi. But that early on you couldn't quite say that they fully believed. For, there is so much more to belief than the intellect. In addition to logical understanding, they still needed to feel who this messiah was in their emotions and they still needed to experience who this messiah was with their senses.

And so we get to today's remarkable story—a story that, like the Epiphany, only occurs in one of the gospels. As one of our astute Bring Your Own Bible participants pointed out in our study last week, perhaps that means we should pay even more attention to it! For, what one of the gospel writers chose to *include*, the three other gospel writers chose to *exclude* for some reason. And in this case, I would venture to guess that it has to do with a little bit of misguided moral uptightness from their context—a context that tended to separate the soul from the senses and so to call the pleasures of the body bad things. Perhaps they were stuck on the beginning of Paul's treatise on the fruit of the Spirit—"For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want"—all the while forgetting that the image of fruit is used because fruit can be touched, smelled, and, best of all, tasted! So, my hunch is that Matthew, Mark, and Luke left the story of Jesus' first miracle out because it was a miracle that prioritized what the flesh *and* the spirit *both* wanted: a raucous party, a scrumptious feast, delicious wine, and, dare I say it, a bit of drunkenness. In this case, at least, John understood, felt, and experienced the divine truth that body, mind, and spirit form a holistic whole, and so John included the story of the Wedding at Cana

Now, to be fair to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus himself was reluctant when it came to enacting the miracle of turning water into wine. But thankfully his blessed mother was there to set him on the right path. We

have talked before about how we do not really see much of Mary in the scriptures about Jesus as an adult, so the fact that she shows up here with such force means that we ought to pay attention! To set the scene, Jesus and his disciples are at a wedding that they have been invited to in the village of Cana in the region of Galilee, where so much of Jesus' life and ministry would go on to take place. And lo and behold, Mary is there as well. As is the case in so many places across the world where community is enacted in truth, a wedding is one of those events to which the whole town is invited. Well, maybe not exactly invited, but the whole town shows up! I mean, there's drink, food, and fun. I've been to weddings like this in India, with giant vats of food and people lined up not just out the door but down the street as well. Scarcity is not in the vocabulary of community! Yes, this is the type of celebration I imagine for the Wedding at Cana.

And of course, they have run out of wine. Remember, Mary had been treasuring in her heart all of the special things about her son since the beginning of it all, when he was foretold to her and conceived by her. She had been prophesying and planning and preparing. And here was an entire town of people gathered, with people there from other parts of Galilee in addition, like these Nazarenes and the disciples. Mary was not part of the elite political or priestly class of the Israelites. She was not a Sadducee or Pharisee or scribe or teacher of the law. She was not an empress or queen or governor or mayor. She was one of the community, married to a carpenter and living in the village. And she understood that it was in community that Jesus' ministry, mission, and Kingdom would thrive. He could hold his own in debates with the religious establishment at the temple and when facing down the agents of the empire, but it was the farmers and fishers, the butchers and bakers and candlestick makers, the carpenters and fulltime mothers, the unemployed and homeless, the widows and orphans whom he needed to talk to, whom he needed to heal, whom he needed to inspire, whom he needed to empower, whom he needed to love...AND whom he needed for his own inspiration, his own empowerment, his own feeling of wholeness, his own support, his own love.

In her brilliance, when Mary heard about the situation of the depletion of the wine at the wedding, she looked out upon the entire community of people gathered there and understood that this was the perfect moment for Jesus to come out, to make himself known, to begin his public ministry. And because she was one of the people, one of the community, she understood that a very particular miracle was in order—not one meant to fulfill prophecy and convince the priests, but rather one to bring joy to the people, to remind the people that no matter how hard things were under yet another occupation by yet another empire, there was still sweetness in a life created and watched over by their loving God. The people, including Jesus' recently recruited disciples, didn't just need knowledge from the logic of scriptural fulfillment in order to fully know and believe. They needed to see and taste and smell and feel and experience.

So, Mary comes up to Jesus and points out the situation before them: "They have no wine." Now, this whole interaction fascinates me. Clearly there is some other conversation happening without words. Mary must be doing a little winking and nodding and nudging, because Jesus' response makes it clear that he knows she is telling him to do something miraculous to make the wine flow once more. His response is the response of a young adult who has just about had it with the planning and winking and nodding and nudging and meddling of a helicopter mom. With clear exasperation, he says: "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." And of course, Mary's response to that is the age-old response of Wisdom: "Mama knows best." She ignores her son's exasperation and proceeds with the plan. She tells the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." With that, Jesus has no choice but to do something. And the rest is history... the mystery of the miracle of the turning of water into wine (not just any wine, but very good wine) so that the party could go on. Now, listen to the impact, as told in verse 11: "Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him."

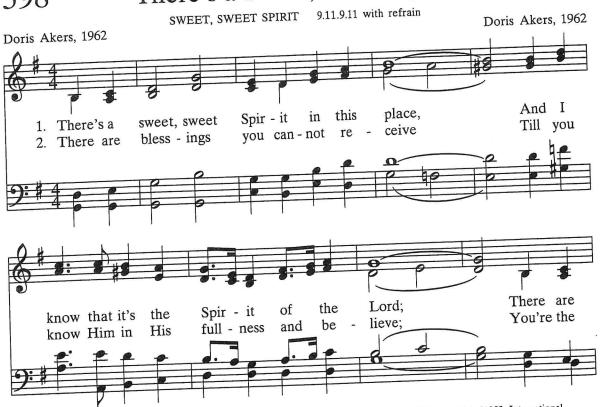
*That*, loved ones, is when his disciples truly believed in him, when they drank the wine at a party in the presence of community. They believed because in that moment they had the blessing and pleasure of tasting the sweetness of life, enacted and embodied by their rabbi and his wise, meddling mom.

Friends, for many different reasons throughout history and in the present, we Christians have often gotten stuck on the same separation of body and spirit that may have led Matthew, Mark, and Luke to leave out the story of Jesus' first miracle at the wedding in Cana. We, also, have gotten stuck on Paul's argument that the

desires of the flesh are opposed to the desires of the Holy Spirit. We have somehow equated the dour, pleasure-less, joyless life with the righteous, religious life. And we have rightfully been named hypocrites for preaching prohibition and purity, and using those as standards for judgement, while failing to live up to those standards in our own lives. And let me tell you, there is nothing quite like hypocrisy to turn people away from the Church! We forget that in the same breath that Paul sets the flesh and the Spirit against each other, he argues against strict legalism, saying that we are led by the Spirit, not subject to the law. In the same breath that he rattles off a list of works of the flesh that he finds problematic, he presents the works of the Spirit in the image of FRUIT—a delicious thing that can be touched, tasted, smelled, crunched, and yes—if squeezed and fermented, that can be drunk at parties where the community comes together in joy, where the community comes together to taste the sweetness of life.

Loved ones, self-control is on the list of the fruit of the Spirit for good reason. If we indulge to the point of losing control or losing agency we can too easily harm ourselves and harm others. But love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, and gentleness are also all there. And those all make life sweeter for ourselves and for our communities. Those all invite us to indulge—to drink good drink, to eat delicious food, to feel the many pleasures that our bodies contain, to let the warm breeze kiss our skin, to listen to the sounds of nature and the sounds of children, to play, to laugh, to explore, and to share all of it with others—in short, to taste the sweetness of life. For, God created us and all the world with so many opportunities and so many reasons for joy. And when Mary convinced Jesus to turn the water into wine, all those gathered tasted and saw the goodness of the Lord, and in experiencing the sweetness of that joy, they truly believed. May we do likewise every chance we get! Amen.

# There's a Sweet, Sweet Spirit

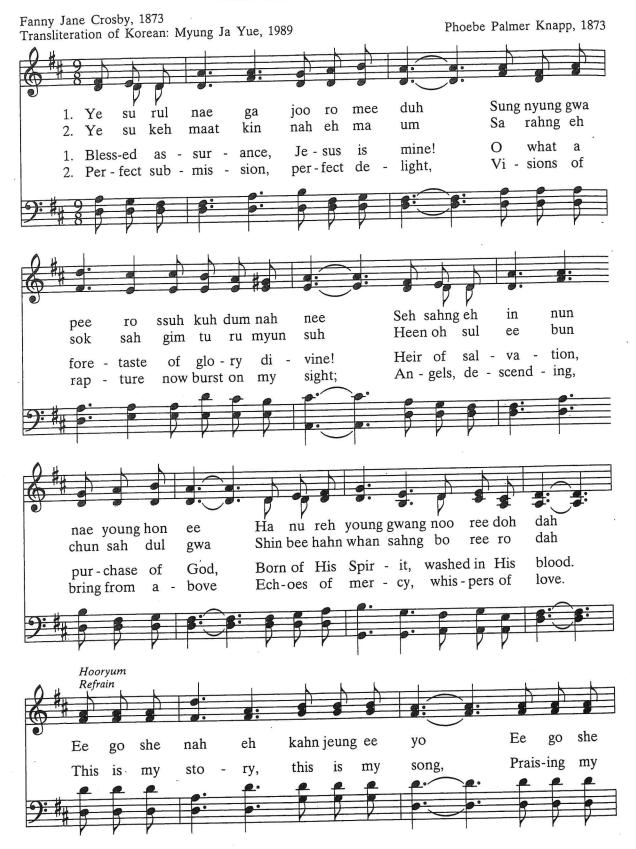


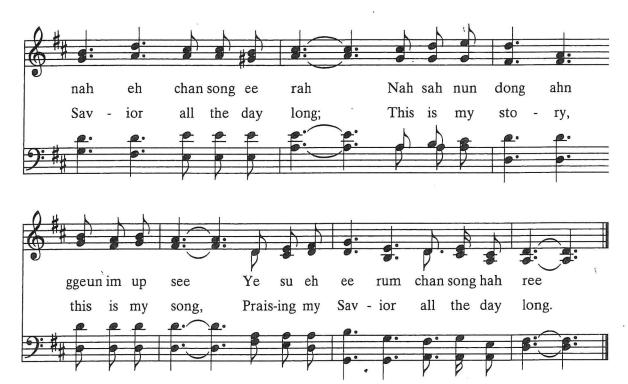
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# Whak Shil Hahn Nah Eh Kahn Jeung Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine!

ASSURANCE 9.10.9.9 with refrain





- 3. Joo ahn eh ees suh jeul guh wuh rah Ma um eh Poong nahng ee jahm jah doh dah Seh sahng doh up go na doh up go Sa rahng eh joo mahn bo ee doh dah Hooryum
- 3. Perfect submission, all is at rest,
  I in my Savior am happy and blest,
  Watching and waiting, looking above,
  Filled with His goodness, lost in His
  love.
  Refrain