

01-01-2023 Worship

Welcome – So glad to see you all and to be welcoming this new year with you! As much of the world seems to sort of be “done” with Christmas now and hurtling into New Year’s celebrations and on to next things, in the church we’ll continue to revel in the celebration of the birth of Jesus. So I invite you to worship, to ponder and reflect, to allow this space and time to nourish your soul and renew your spirit. What are the opportunities and announcements for the work of the church that you have to share this morning?

Call to Worship

Prayer – O God, we acknowledge your Holy Spirit presence with us. Come into each heart and mind in just the ways that are needed. Be the fulfillment of our longings, be the calm in our worries, guide us in our uncertainties, be the light in our darkness. Amen.

Morning Prayer – this morning I’ll end with a prayer written by Howard Thurman, a great teacher and civil rights advocate. Let’s pray.

Loving God, we thank you for sending Jesus to this earth – Immanuel, God with us. Help us to allow the significance of that child’s arrival seep into our consciousness and transform our lives. Thank you for the year just past, for the accomplishments and challenges, for what has been learned and suffered, for what has been endured and celebrated. Be with us as we forge ahead. We want to be your faithful people and for this, we will need your help.

We continue to pray for your mercy, love and comfort for those who grieve. We pray for the friends and family of Dan Bergen and Milton Duerksen. We pray for those in Buffalo and other places who are grieving the loss of loved ones in storms.

We thank you, God for times of celebration with family and friends. Bless Erin and Dylan as they begin their marriage.

“God, grant that we may pass through the coming year with faithful hearts. There will be much to test us and make weak our strength before the year ends. In our confusion we shall often say the word that is not true and do the thing of which we are ashamed. There will be errors in the mind and great inaccuracies of judgment. In seeking the light, we shall again and again find ourselves walking in the darkness. We shall mistake our light for Your light and we shall drink from the responsibility of the choice we make...

Though our days be marked with failures, stumbling, fallings, let our spirits be free so that You make take them and redeem our moments in all the ways our needs reveal. Give us the quiet assurance of Your Love and Presence. Grant that we may pass through the coming year with faithful hearts.” (Howard Thurman, changing first-person “I” to corporate “we/us”) Amen.

Prayer of Dedication – Bless these gifts, God, and those who've offered them. Bless the giving of ALL of the gifts you've given us as we offer them back to you as tokens of what you've given us. Amen.

We'll hear the familiar Biblical story once again and then we'll hear a contemporary story, a children's book, with a message for all of us. And we'll add some singing to accompany the storytelling.

Luke 2:1-7 – In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Benediction – (1057 VT)

May the Son of God, who is already formed in you, grow in you so that for you he will become immeasurable, and that in you he will become laughter, exultation, the fullness of joy which no one will take from you. Amen.