ALMIGHTY GOD, you have shed upon us the new light of your incarnate Word. May this light, enkindled in our hearts, shine forth in our lives: through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

from the Book of Common Worship, Presbyterian Church, USA

GATHERING IN THE PRESENCE OF THE NEWBORN KING

THE PREPARATION

Puer Natus Est

Everett Titcomb

WELCOME AND CONCERNS OF THE CHURCH FAMILY

*CALL TO WORSHIP

One: We praise God who made the heavens and earth!
All: We praise God who has given us salvation through Jesus Christ.
One: We praise God who calls forth life from stardust and ashes;
All: We praise God who has given us eternal life in Jesus Christ.
One: We praise God who made us and gave us hearts to love:
All: We praise God whose love reigns in us because of Jesus Christ.
One. Come, worship our God, who is the creator of all things:
All: Worship Christ, the new-born King!

*HYMN 31

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Mendelssohn

1. Hark! The herald angels sing,
   “Glory to the newborn King,
   Peace on earth and mercy mild,
   God and sinners reconciled!”
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
Join the triumph of the skies,
With angelic hosts proclaim,
   “Christ is born in Bethlehem!”
Hark! The herald angels sing,
   “Glory to the newborn King!”

2. Christ by highest heaven adored,
   Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold him come,
   Offspring of the Virgin’s womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
   Hail the incarnate Deity,
Pleased in flesh with us to dwell,
   Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! The herald angels sing,
   “Glory to the newborn King!”
3. Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
   Hail the sun of righteousness!
   Light and life to all he brings,
   Risen with healing in his wings.
   Mild he lays his glory by,
   Born that we no more may die
   Born to raise us from the earth,
   Born to give us second birth.
   Hark! The herald angels sing,
   “Glory to the newborn King!”

Text: Charles Wesley, 1739
Music: Felix Mendelssohn, 1840

*CALL TO CONFESSION

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION (praying together)

HOLY GOD, we know that you have been present to us throughout all of history, even throughout our own histories. We know you will be with us in our future. Yet often we do not live as if we know that. As Jesus’ parents were asked to give within their means at the temple, you ask us to give of our means. We often fail to do this. As Simeon recognized in Jesus the salvation of his people, we recognize in Jesus’ Way our own wholeness and health, yet we often fail to follow. As Anna recognized in Jesus the redemption of her people, we recognize in Jesus God’s saving grace for us, yet we often fail to rejoice and to share this good news. Forgive us, make us wise and joyful and strong so that we live in the understanding of your never-ending love.

*TIME OF SILENCE AND PERSONAL CONFESSION

*KYRIE

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

*ASSURANCE OF PARDON

*CHRISTMAS RESPONSE

Angels we have heard on high, Sweetly singing o’er the plains,
And the mountains in reply, Echoing their joyous strains.
Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing:
Come, adore on bended knee, Christ, the Lord, the newborn King
Gloria in excelsis Deo; Gloria in excelsis Deo!
HEARING THE WORD

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE READINGS

THE OLD TESTAMENT: I Samuel 2:18-20; 26

Samuel was ministering before the Lord, a boy wearing a linen ephod. His mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year, when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, “May the Lord repay you with children by this woman for the gift that she made to the Lord”; and then they would return to their home. Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the Lord and with the people.

*THE PSALTER*  
Psalm 148  

Salzburg

1. Let the whole creation cry,  
“Glory to the Lord on high.”

2. Men and women, young and old,  
Raise the anthem manifold;

Heaven and earth, awake and sing,  
Join with children’s songs of praise,

“God is our Eternal King.”  
Worship God through length of days

Praise God, all ye hosts above,  
From the north to southern pole

Ever shining forth in love,  
Let the mighty chorus roll:

Sun and moon uplift your voice;  
“Holy, holy, holy One,

Night and stars, in God rejoice!  
Glory be to God alone!

Text: Stopford A. Brooks, 1881  
Music: Jacob Hintze, 1678

THE EPISTLE: Colossians 3:12-17

As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.


Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day’s journey. Then they started to
look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, “Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.” He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

SERMON
The Rev. Denise Clark-Jones

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

*THE HYMN
Who Would Think That What Was Needed

1. Who would think that what was needed
   To transform and save the earth
   Proud in purpose, proved in worth?
   God surprises earth with heaven,
   Coming here on Christmas Day.

2. Shepherds watch and wise men wonder
   Monarch scorn and angels sing;
   Such a place as none would reckon
   Stable beasts and by-passed strangers
   Watch a baby laid in hay;
   God surprises earth with heaven,
   Coming here on Christmas Day.

3. Centuries of skill and science
   Span the past from which we move,
   Yet experience questions whether
   With such progress, we improve.
   While the human lot we ponder;
   Lest our hopes and humor fray;
   God surprises earth with heaven,
   Coming here on Christmas Day.

Text: John Bell and Graham Maule, 1987
Music: John Bell 2005

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (Reading together)
from Romans 8

We believe there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus; for we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to God’s purpose. We are convinced that neither death, or life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
*PASSING OF THE PEACE

THE GIFT OF MUSIC

Christmas Day

Gustav Holst

Good Christian men, rejoice With heart, and soul, and voice; Give ye heed to what we say: News! News! Jesus Christ is born today: Ox and ass before him bow, And he is in the manger now. Christ is born today! God rest you merry, gentlemens, Let nothing you dismay, Remember Christ our Saviour Was born on Christmas day, To save us all from woe and sin, When we were gone astray. O tidings of comfort and joy. In Bethlehem, in Jewry, This blessed Babe was born, And laid within a manger, Upon that holy morn; The which his mother, Mary, Did nothing take in scorn. O tidings of comfort and joy. Good Christian men, rejoice With heart, and soul, and voice; Now ye hear of endless bliss: Joy! Joy! Jesus Christ was born for this! He hath oped the heav’nly door, And man is blessed evermore. Christ was born for this! Come, ye lofty, come, ye lowly, Let your songs of gladness ring; In a stable lies the Holy, In a manger rests the King; See, in Mary’s arms reposeing, Christ by highest heav’n adored; Come, your circle round him closing, Pious hearts that love the Lord. The first Nowell the angels did say, Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay; In fields where they lay keeping their sheep, On a cold winter’s night that was so deep. Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Born is the King of Israel. Come, ye poor, no pomp of station Robes the child your hearts adore: He, the Lord of all salvation, Shares your want, is weak and poor: Oxen, round about behold them; Rafters naked, cold and bare, See the shepherds, God has told them That the Prince of Life lies there. Come, ye children, blithe and merry, This one child your model make; Christmas holly, leaf and berry, All be prized for his dear sake; Come, ye gentle hearts, and tender, Come, ye spirits, keen and bold; All in all your homage render, Weak and mighty, young and old. High above a star is shining, And the Wisemen haste from far: Come, glad hearts, and spirits pining: For you all has risen the star. Let us bring our poor oblations, Thanks and love and faith and praise: Come, ye people, come, ye nations, All in all draw nigh to gaze. Now to the Lord sing praises, All you within this place, And with true love and brotherhood Each other now embrace; This holy tide of Christmas All others doth deface. O tidings of comfort and joy. Good Christian men, rejoice With heart, and soul, and voice; Now ye need not fear the grave: Peace! Peace! Jesus Christ was born to save! Calls you one, and calls you all, To gain his everlasting hall: Christ was born to save.

PRAYERS AND INTERCESSIONS

(In your mercy ... Lord hear our prayer)

THE LORD’S PRAYER [praying together]

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.
BEARING THE WORD INTO THE WORLD

*HYMN 46

On This Day Earth Shall Ring  Personent Hodie

1. On this day earth shall ring
   With the song children sing!
   To the Lord, Christ our King,
   Born on earth to save us;
   Him the Father gave us
   Ideo –o–o, Ideo –o–o
   Ideo gloria in excelsis Deo!

2. His the doom, ours the mirth;
   When he came down to earth
   Bethlehem saw his birth
   Ox and ass beside him
   From the cold would hide him
   Ideo-o-o, Ideo-o-o
   Ideo gloria in excelsis Deo!

3. God’s bright star, o’er his head,
   Wise men three to him led,
   Kneeling low by his bed,
   Lay their gifts before him
   From the cold would hide him;
   Ideo –o–o, Ideo –o–o
   Ideo gloria in excelsis Deo!

4. On this day angels sing:
   With their song earth shall ring,
   Praising Christ, heaven’s King,
   Born on earth to save us
   Peace and love he gave us.
   Ideo-o-o, Ideo-o-o
   Ideo gloria in excelsis Deo!

Text: Piae Cantiones, 1582
Music: Piae Cantiones, 1582; arr. Gustav Theodore Holst, 1924

*COMMISSION AND BENEDICTION

*CHORAL BENEDICTION  Nunc Dimitis (The Song of Simeon)  Harold W. Friedell

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen, have seen thy salvation Which thou has prepared before the face of all people; To be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of the people Israel. 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.

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LEADING IN WORSHIP TODAY

The Rev. Denise M. Clark-Jones, Pastor
Thomas Clark-Jones, Organist-Choirmaster
The Westminster Choir
Elder Larry Hicks, Video Production

A HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL from the staff of Westminster Church on this second day of the Christmas Season. May your Christmas Season be blessed and filled with the joy at the yearly remembrance of the Christ Child.
OPEN HANDS, OPEN HEARTS, OPEN MINDS
THE FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS

26 DECEMBER 2021

WESTMINSTER CHURCH OF PEORIA

A Presbyterian Church, USA in the Presbytery of the Great Rivers

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