

First Presbyterian Church, Tonawanda

December 31, 2023

10:30 am

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

Candlelighting and Reflection:

- ❖ Where in the past year have you felt the presence of God with you?
- ❖ What practice has kept you close to God?
- ❖ How has your faith grown in the past year?

Call to Worship:

We wake up in the morning and see the sunrise:

How majestic is your name in all the earth!

We are warmed by the sun; the rain cleanses all creation:

How majestic is your name in all the earth!

We watch the moon light up the night; we fall asleep to the lullabies of the stars:

How majestic is your name in all the earth!

Opening Hymn: On Christmas Night All Christians Sing #112

Call to Reconciliation

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But when we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Prayer for Forgiveness

Merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart and mind and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

In your mercy, forgive what we have been, help us amend what we are, and direct what we shall be, that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways to the glory of your holy name.

Silence

Assurance of pardon:

Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. The old life has gone; a new life has begun. Know that you are forgiven and be at peace.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Prayer for Illumination

First Lesson: Isaiah 61:10-62:3; God, the Gift-Giver

- ❖ What gifts have you received over the course of the past year?
- ❖ How will this year change you?
- ❖ How will you change yourself?

Isaiah 61:10-62:3

¹⁰I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

¹¹For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

¹For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her vindication shines out like the dawn, and her salvation like a burning torch. ²The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give. ³You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

Psalm 148

¹Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise him in the heights!

²**Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his host!**

³Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars!

⁴**Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!**

⁵Let them praise the name of the LORD, for he commanded and they were created.

⁶**He established them forever and ever; he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.**

⁷Praise the LORD from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps,

⁸**fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command!**

⁹Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars!

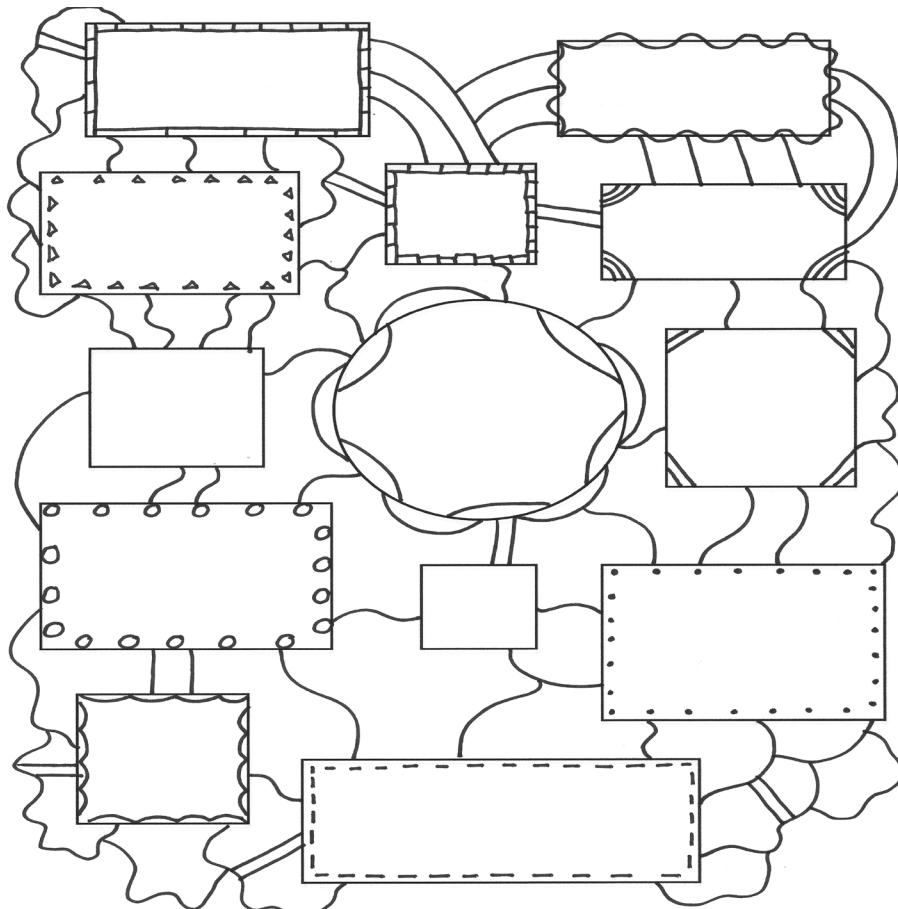
¹⁰**Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds!**

¹¹Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth!

¹²**Young men and women alike, old and young together!**

¹³Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted;
his glory is above earth and heaven.

¹⁴He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his faithful,
for the people of Israel who are close to him. Praise the LORD!



Third Lesson: Luke 2:22-40; Celebrate the Messiah!

- ❖ How do you celebrate?
- ❖ With whom do you celebrate?
- ❖ Where are the places of growth in your celebrations?

Luke 2:22-40

²²When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), ²⁴and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, ²⁸Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, ²⁹"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; ³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

³³And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed ³⁵so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed--and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

³⁶There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

³⁹When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

1 Star - Child, earth-Child, go - be-tween of God, love Child,
 2 Street child, beat child, no place left to go, hurt child,
 3 Grown child, old child, mem-ory full of years, sad child,
 4 Spared child, spoiled child, hav - ing, want - ing more, wise child,
 5 Hope - for - peace Child, God's stu - pen - dous sign, down - to -

Refrain

Christ Child, heav-en's light-ning rod:
 used child no one wants to know:
 lost child, sto - ry told in tears: This year, this year let the day ar -
 faith child know-ing joy in store:
 earth Child, Star of stars that shine:

rive when Christ-mas comes for ev - ery - one, ev - ery - one a - live!

WORDS: Shirley Erena Murray (1931-)
 MUSIC: Carlton R. Young (1926-)
 Words and Music © 1994 Hope Publishing Company

STAR-CHILD
 4.5.4.5.Ref.

Fourth Lesson: Galatians 4:4-7

- ❖ How will you live as a child of God this year?
- ❖ What new thing is God calling you to?
- ❖ What old thing is God calling you to let go of?

Galatians 4:4-7

⁴But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. ⁶And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

Reflection (Pastor Rebecca):

Hymn: In the Bleak Midwinter #144

Prayers (Pastor Rebecca)

... Hear us as we pray as Jesus teaches us ... (Lord's Prayer)

Offering Sentences (Pastor Rebecca)

Prayer of dedication:

May we not keep our blessings, but give them away: so that others might learn new dance steps, so children might be fed, so bridges might be built and so grace may flow to all in your world. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Closing Hymn: I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light #377

Sending:

Let us go from this time of silence and song to be God's voice:

To speak out for the oppressed of our communities and the world.

Let us go from this time of community to be Jesus' faithful:

To feed the hungry, to visit the sick, to be a friend to the prisoners.

Let us go from this sacred space to share the peace of the Spirit:

To work for reconciliation in our neighborhoods, to put an end to violence and death.

Blessing

Postlude

PRAYER CONCERNS

The prayer concerns have recently been updated. If you have a prayer request, please contact **Pastor Rebecca at 315-317-6140 or the church office at 716-692-1319.**

- Prayers for Mary Ferro who is home recovering from surgery.
- Prayers for Adehlia Kowsky who is home recovering from surgery.
- Prayers for Terri DeLuca's parents who are moving from their house to an apartment.
- Prayers for Doug Crossan and his family as he navigates a new diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease.
- Prayers for Mary Bender who is home recovering from surgery.
- Prayers for Bob McMahon, Jane Crossan's brother-in-law for his cancer treatment.
- Prayers for Dana who has cancer.
- Prayers for Janet Bearfield's nephew, Ian Harnden, now recovering at home.
- Prayers for Liam who has Leukemia.
- Prayers for Bob Frech who has serious medical conditions.
- Prayers for healing for Derick Blake and his children.

CALENDAR

The church office will be closed from December 25th thru January 1st. Any emergencies, please contact Pastor Rebecca at 315-317-6140.

Sunday, Dec 31

- 10:30 am Worship for all ages (Sanctuary)
- 11:30am Coffee Fellowship for all ages (Parlor)

Monday, Jan 1

- 10:00 am Alcoholics Anonymous (Circle II Basement)

Tuesday, Jan 2

- 9:00am – 2:00pm Office Hours

Wednesday, Jan 3

- 9:00am – 2:00pm Office Hours

Thursday, Jan 4

- 9:00am – 2:00pm Office Hours
- 10:00am Alcoholics Anonymous (Circle II Basement)
- 6:00pm Hearts4Worship
- 6:45pm Bell Choir
- 7:15pm Choir

Saturday, Jan 6

- 10:00am Alcoholics Anonymous (Circle II Basement)

Sunday, Jan 7

- 9:30am Faith Formation (All Ages)
- 10:30 am Worship for all ages (Sanctuary)
- 11:30am Coffee Fellowship for all ages (Parlor)

