

# First Sunday of Christmas Worship

## December 28, 2025

- Fellowship Hall at round tables
- Begin with breakfast

### Call to Worship

In worship, we hear God's story and we ask:

**“What did God do long ago?”**

In worship, we hear God's story, so we ask:

**“What is God doing, here and now?”**

In worship, we hear God's story, then we ask:

**“What can I do to respond to it all?”**

Listen, God is speaking.

**Listen, it may be time to act.**

Let us worship our moving, inspiring with-us God.

### Hymn

O Come, All Ye Faithful, v. 1 and 4

GG #133

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant;

O come ye; O come ye to Bethlehem!

Come and behold him, born the King of angels!

O come, let us adore him; O Come let us adore him;

O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;

Jesus, to thee be all glory given;

Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing!

O come, let us adore him; O Come let us adore him;

O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!

## Call to Confession

Family of faith, the invitation of our faith is simple. We are invited to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God. And yet, those acts have always been more easily said than done. That is why we need our Prayer of Confession. In confession, we speak honestly with God. We tell the truth of our lives, and in response, God offers us grace. God picks us up, shakes the dust off our weary bones, and shows us how to keep walking toward God. So let us go to God in prayer, not because we have to, but because God will always meet us there. Let us pray.

## Prayer of Confession

**Emmanuel, God with us,  
scripture tells us that you were a refugee,  
but we love to forget that information.  
We love to forget every act of gun violence.  
We love to forget how many people go hungry,  
or how many students do not have access to good education.  
We love to forget the injustices in our world  
that feel too big for us to face.**

**But you are a God who refuses to forget.**

**So today we pray:**

**Make it impossible for us to overlook the stories of those in need.**

**Make it impossible for us to sweep injustice under the rug.**

**Open our eyes, open our hearts,  
so that the anger we feel around injustice  
might fuel a fire for action.**

**With hope for a better tomorrow, we pray.**

**Amen.**

## Words of Forgiveness

Church family, even when we fail to do justice,  
even when we fail to love kindness,  
even when we allow fear to override action, freezing us in place,  
God still loves us.

So hear and believe the good news of the Gospel:

**On our best days and on our worst days, we belong to God.**

**We are invited into community.**

**We are held in God's grace.**

**We are forgiven.**

**And we are sent to serve.**

**Thanks be to God for a love like that. Amen.**

### Act of Praise

Go Tell It On the Mountain, v. 3

GG #136

Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born,  
and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn.

Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere;  
go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!

## Prayer for Illumination

God, you are here.

You are with us.

Help us feel you near.

Help us know you better. Amen.

### Scripture Reading

Matthew 2:1, 13-15, 19-23 (*The Message*)

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem village, Judah territory – this was during Herod's kingship – a band of scholars arrived in Jerusalem from the East.

After the scholars were gone, God's angel showed up again in Joseph's dream and commanded, "Get up. Take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt. Stay until further notice. Herod is on the hunt for this child, and wants to kill him."

Joseph obeyed. He got up, took the child and his mother under cover of darkness. They were out of town and well on their way by daylight. They

lived in Egypt until Herod's death. This Egyptian exile fulfilled what Hosea had preached: "I called my son out of Egypt."

Later, when Herod died, God's angel appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt: "Up, take the child and his mother and return to Israel. All those out to murder the child are dead."

Joseph obeyed. He got up, took the child and his mother, and reentered Israel. When he heard, though, that Archelaus had succeeded his father, Herod, as king in Judea, he was afraid to go there. But then Joseph was directed in a dream to go to the hills of Galilee. On arrival, he settled in the village of Nazareth. This move was a fulfillment of the prophetic words, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

This is the Word of the Lord / **Thanks be to God.**

### Joseph Tells His Story

The angel came again last night. I thought dreams were supposed to be weird or fantastic, not life-changing. First it was, "You're going to help raise God's son," and now it's, "Pack your things and go to Egypt." *Egypt!* We'll have to travel for weeks to get there. We'll have to find a place to live, and I'll have to find work. Even if we settle in the Jewish Quarter, will our customs be the same as our neighbors? Will we even speak the same language? I could chalk this dream up to something I ate last night. I could forget everything the angel said, pretend I didn't hear.

But then I hear a giggle from across the room. It's my son, playing with his mother, unaware of the danger we're facing if the message is real. He's worth protecting, even if it means days of walking through the desert. He did nothing to deserve the threat to his life. It's not fair to him. It's not fair to the other families Herod will rip apart to get to him. But if I can't change Herod's heart, I can at least keep our family safe.

So I'll pack our things. I'll say goodbye to the home we've built, our family, our friends, the land we've lived on for generations. And I'll head into the unknown, despite all the danger that might lie ahead. Because more than anything, he's worth protecting.

## Reflection Questions

*Instructions to Table Facilitators: Use the following questions to prompt conversation, connection, and wonder around the story. Allow the conversation to wander between and beyond these prompts as long as it's fruitful. Each table may move to the Prayer Activity when ready.*

- How does this story make you feel? Are you angry? Scared? Sad? Hopeful?
- Mary, Joseph, and Jesus moved to Egypt to keep Jesus safe from Herod. Today, what are some reasons people leave their homes and move to another country? What might make you leave your home?
- Do you think Mary and Joseph traveled to Egypt alone, or did they go with extended family? Were other families with young children fleeing Bethlehem, too?
- What kind of help do you think Mary and Joseph needed during their journey to Egypt? What kind of help can you offer refugees where you live?
- What injustices would you like to fix in the world? What causes or movements light a fire in you to make a difference? What makes you feel excited to help others?

## Prayer Activity: Feather Prayers

## Call for Offering

## Offering Prayer

Dear God, you don't mean for us to live in fear. You tell us to take care of one another, to do justice and love kindness.

But the world doesn't always follow your rules.

Use the gifts we bring – our treasure, our talents, our very selves – to bring justice and kindness where they are needed. When we see your children fearing for their lives, open our hearts to them. Let us do what we can to protect each other, care for each other, and fight for a world where no one has to live in fear.

May the feathers of blessing and prayer which we gather and display this morning be an expression of our trust in you, a statement of our commitment to your justice and peace, and a call to action as your faithful children.

We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray together, saying:

## **Our Father, who art in heaven ...**

Hymn Joy to the World, v. 1 and 2 GG #134

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her king;  
let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven and nature sing, and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reign! Let all their songs employ,  
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

## Benediction

In a fearful world,  
may you look for God's spirit.  
May you reach for each other's hands.  
May you choose courage whenever you can.  
And in all things, may you remember  
that good news is louder than fear.  
In the name of the one who calls,  
the one who sends,  
and the one who journeys with –  
go in peace and  
*be not afraid.*

Amen.

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### **Worship Leaders:**

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Liturgy in this worship service has been adapted from liturgy by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed / *A Sanctified Art LLC / sanctified art.org*.