



December 26, 2021



A community of worshipping, maturing,
and multiplying disciples of Jesus Christ,
to the glory of God the Father,
by the power of His Spirit,
and in the hope of God's Kingdom.

A WORD ABOUT OUR LITURGY

The elements and sequence that make up our worship service (the liturgy) is the way we tell ourselves, one another, and all in this place, the grand story of the Triune God: the story of God pursuing a people despite their wanderings and forgetfulness, and shaping them into His people for His glory.



QUIETING OUR HEARTS FOR WORSHIP

*If Christ had arrived with trumpets and lain in a cradle of gold,
His birth would have been a splendid affair.*

But it would not be a comfort to me.

*He was rather to lie in the lap of a poor maiden
and be thought of little significance in the eyes of the world.*

Now I can come to Him.

*Now He reveals Himself to the miserable
in order not to give any impression that He arrives
with great power, splendor, wisdom, and aristocratic manners.*

*But upon His return on that Day,
when He will oppose the high and the mighty,
it will be different.*

*Now He comes to the poor, who need a Savior,
but then He will come as a Judge
against those who are persecuting Him now.*

~ Martin Luther

GOD CALLS US TO WORSHIP

We gather at the invitation of God through His Word.
He speaks first, revealing Himself to us,
and we respond with one voice in joy and thanksgiving!

CALL TO WORSHIP

Hebrews 1:1–3

M: Long ago, at many times and in many ways,
God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,

**P: but in these last days He has spoken to us
by His Son,**

M: whom He appointed the heir of all things,
through whom He also created the world.

**P: He is the radiance of the glory of God
and the exact imprint of His nature,
and He upholds the universe
by the word of His power.**

M: After making purification for sins,
He sat down at the right hand
of the Majesty on high...

P: Praise God for the gift of the Son!

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

SONGS OF PRAISE

"Joy to the World!"

**Joy to the world! The Lord is come,
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room.
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n, and heav'n, and nature sing!**

...

**Joy to the earth! The Savior reigns,
Let men their songs employ.
While fields and floods,
Rocks, hills, and plains,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**

**No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as the curse is found.**

**He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness.
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders of His love.**

Words by Isaac Watts (1719).
Music by George Friedrich Händel (1742), arr. by Lowell Mason (1836)
PUBLIC DOMAIN

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

**It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth
To touch their harps of gold.**

**"Peace on the earth, good will to men,
From heav'n's all-gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay,
To hear the angels sing.**

**O ye, beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow.**

**Look now! For glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing.
O rest beside the weary road,
And hear the angels sing!**

...

**For lo, the days are hastening on,
By prophet bards foretold,
When with the ever-circling years
Comes round the age of gold.**

**When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendors fling,
And the whole world give back the song
Which now the angels sing.**

Words by Edmund Hamilton Sears (1850)
Music by Richard Storrs Willis, 1819–1900 (1850)
PUBLIC DOMAIN

Prepare Him Room

**O behold, the mystery now unfolds;
See the star shine on the virgin foretold.
Angels sing and light up the sky,
Hope rings out in a newborn's cry;
 Swing wide, you ancient gates,
For Christ is born today!**

*Prepare Him room,
Prepare Him room,
Let the King of glory enter in.*

**God with us, the promise has come to be;
This, the One, the prophets were longing to see.
In the darkness a blazing light,
To the hungry the words to life;
His kingdom now is near,
For those with ears to hear.**

*Prepare Him room,
Prepare Him room,
Let the King of glory enter in.*

**Oh, our hearts, as busy as Bethlehem,
Hear Him knock,
don't say there's no room in the inn.
Through the cradle, cross, and grave,
See the love of God displayed;
Now He's risen and He reigns,
Praise the Name above all names!**

...

***Prepare Him room,
Prepare Him room,
Let the King of glory enter in.***

***Prepare Him room,
Prepare Him room,
Let the King of glory enter in.***

Words and music by Rebecca Elliot & Dave Fournier
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GOD CLEANSES US

We gather each week as sinners in constant need of His mercy.
The corporate confession of sin acknowledges this
and invites honest expression before God.
However, God isn't silent as we cry out to Him —
He assures us that His grace is bigger than our sin.
God's forgiveness is for all those who humble themselves
before Him in Christ Jesus.

OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE READING

Daniel 7:9–14

⁹ "As I looked,
 thrones were placed,
 and the Ancient of Days took His seat;
 His clothing was white as snow,
 And the hair of His head like pure wool;
 His throne was fiery flames;
 its wheels were burning fire.

¹⁰ A stream of fire issued
 and came out from before Him;
a thousand thousands served Him,
 and ten thousand times ten thousand
 stood before Him;
the court sat in judgment,
 and the books were opened.

¹¹ "I looked then because of the sound of the great words
that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast
was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be
burned with fire. ¹² As for the rest of the beasts, their
dominion was taken away, but their lives were
prolonged for a season and a time.

...

13 "I saw in the night visions,
and behold, with the clouds of heaven
 there came One like a son of man,
and He came to the Ancient of Days
 and was presented before Him.

14 And to Him was given dominion
 and glory and a kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
 should serve Him;
His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
 which shall not pass away,
and His kingdom one
 that shall not be destroyed.

CORPORATE CONFESSION OF SIN

**P: O God, our guide, who once used a star
 to lead people to Christ,
we confess to You our poor sense of direction.
We so easily allow ourselves to become confused,
 distracted, and we lose our way.
We fail to follow Your Word
 and walk in Your ways.
Forgive our waywardness, O God.
Lead us to the Christ
 so that we may follow His way to you. Amen.**

SILENT CONFESSION OF SIN

*In these moments, we confess our personal sins to God
so that we may take hold of the forgiveness
won for us by Christ, our Redeemer.*

PROMISE OF FORGIVENESS

from Galatians 4

M: When the time had fully come,
God sent His Son,
born of a woman, born under law,
to redeem those under law,
that we might receive the full rights of sons.
Because you are sons,
God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts,
the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."
So you are no longer a slave, but a son;
and since you are a son,
God has made you also an heir.

SONG OF ASSURANCE

"Hark! the Herald Angels Sing"

**Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King!
Peace on earth, and mercy mild;
God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
Join the triumph of the skies.
With angelic host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem."**

***Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"***

**Christ, by highest heav'n adored;
Christ, the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of the virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail, th'incarnate Deity!
Pleased, as man, with men to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.**

***Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"***

...

**Hail, the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings,
Ris'n with healing in His wings.
Mild He lays His glory by,
Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.**

*Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"*

Words by Charles Wesley (1739, 1753; Alt.)

Music by Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1840); arr. by William H. Cummings (1856)

PUBLIC DOMAIN

GOD SPEAKS TO US

The Holy Spirit makes the reading and preaching of God's Word a crucial means of growing and comforting God's people and awakening people to new faith in Jesus.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

READING OF THE WORD

Matthew 2:1–12

¹ Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ² saying, "Where is He who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him." ³ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

⁶ "And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will shepherd My people Israel."

...

⁷ Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared.

⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found Him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship Him."

⁹ After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹ And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

GLORIA PATRI

**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.**

PREACHING OF THE WORD

"More than a Manger"

Pastor Nate Hitchcock

PRAYER

SERMON NOTES: _____

SONG OF RESPONSE

The First Noel

**The first Noel, 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.**

***Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel.
Born is the King of Israel.***

**They looked up and saw a star
Shining in the east beyond them far.
And to the earth, it gave great light;
And so it continued both day and night.**

***Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel.
Born is the King of Israel.***

**And by the light of that same star
Three Wise Men came from country far;
To seek a king was their intent,
And to follow the star wherever it went.**

***Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel.
Born is the King of Israel.***

**Then entered in those Wise Men three,
With reverence fell to their knee,
And offered there, in His presence,
Their gold and myrrh and frankincense.**

***Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel.
Born is the King of Israel.***

**Then let us all with one accord
Sing praises to our heav'nly Lord,
That hath made heav'n and earth of nought,
And with His blood mankind hath bought.**

***Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel.
Born is the King of Israel.***

***Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel.
Born is the King of Israel.***

Traditional English carol (17th century)
Music from W. Sandys' *Christmas Carols* (1833); arr. by John Stainer (1840–1901)
PUBLIC DOMAIN

GOD COMMUNES WITH US

The Lord's Supper is a meal for the family of God, given by Jesus the night before His death to be celebrated until His return. It points back to the cross, forward to the return of King, and spiritually nourishes us for today as we eat and drink in faith.

EUCARISTIC PRAYER

CONFESSING OUR FAITH

The Apostles' Creed

**P: I believe in God the Father Almighty,
 Maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord;
 Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
 born of the Virgin Mary,
 suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 was crucified, dead and buried;
 He descended into hell;
 The third day He rose again from the dead;
 He ascended into heaven and sits on
 the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
 from there He shall come to judge
 the quick and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Ghost,
 the holy catholic church,
 the communion of saints,
 the forgiveness of sins,
 the resurrection of the body
 and the life everlasting. Amen.**

CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Please come forward to receive the elements at the table, then return to your seats. Please HOLD elements until we can all partake TOGETHER.

SONG OF MEDITATION

"*O Come, All Ye Faithful*"

**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!***

**God of true God,
Light from Light eternal;
Lo, He abhors not the Virgin's womb;
Son of the Father,
Begotten, not created;**

***O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!***

**Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above!
Glory to God,
Glory in the highest:**

***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 giv'n!
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!***

Words by John Francis Wade (1751); tr. by Frederick Oakeley (1841; alt.)
Music from John Francis Wade's *Cantus Diversi* (1751)
Music by Greg Thompson ©2000 Greg Thompson Music

GOD SENDS US

We end by receiving God's promises to us as His people.
He will be with us as we serve Him in this world,
to the end of all time.

BENEDICTION

DOXOLOGY

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

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Scripture text from

The Holy Bible, **English Standard Version**.

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ASCENSION PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

ASCENSION-PCA.ORG

**9:30AM: Worship Service
(in-person & livestream)**

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A NOTE ABOUT GIVING

Please make sure that checks are made out to

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and that any automatic payments are being sent
to the **P.O. Box mailing address** listed.