

# *First Sunday of Christmas*

**December 28, 2025**

**10:15 a.m**

## **Prelude**

## **Announcements**

## **Welcome**

Family of Faith, good morning and Merry Christmas! Whether this is your first time with us or your hundredth time, we are so glad you are here.

You may have noticed that our worship setup is a bit unique this morning. Instead of worshipping in pews, we are worshipping around tables. Instead of facing the front, we are facing one another. Instead of listening to one person do a lot of talking, we're going to listen to each other.

And the reason we are doing all of this is because the last Sunday of the year deserves something special.

So this morning we will break bread and sing. We will pray and listen. We will gather together, and God will meet us here, for surely God is in this space.

A few logistical notes to help you orient yourself to this space:

Later in the service we will eat together, so know that we will have dedicated time for breaking bread soon.

There is coffee and water located by the kitchen. Please help yourself as you need.

If you spill something or drop crumbs, count it as holy proof of our gathering here. Do not fret.

God is with us, even in the messes.

Friends, with that in mind, I invite you to join me in the Call to Worship. Let us go now to God in prayer:

## **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. **Amen.**

## 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 easier said than done. That is why we need the 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 along with 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.**

## Gathering Hymn: ELW #296 "What Child Is This"

1. **What child is this, who laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping? Whom angels greet with anthems sweet while shepherds watch are keeping? This, this is Christ the king, whom shepherds guard and angels sing; haste, hast to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary!**
2. **Why lies he in such mean estate where ox and ass are feeding? Good Christian, fear; for sinners here the silent Word is pleading. Nails, spear shall pierce him through, the cross be borne for me, for you; hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe, the son of Mary!**
3. **So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh; come, peasant, king, to own him. The King of kings salvation brings; let loving hearts enthrone him. Raise, raise the song on high, the virgin sings her lullaby; joy, joy, the Christ is born, the babe, the son of Mary!**

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## Prayer for Illumination & Blessing for the Meal

In a few moments, we will break bread together. Once everyone has been served and we are all settled at our tables, we will hear scripture read and proclaimed and spend some time engaging in conversation together as we eat. So let us now pray a blessing for our food as we also invite God to speak to us through today's scripture and our conversations together. There is a Latin American prayer that says: Thank you God for the bread. To those who have hunger, give bread. To those who have bread, give a hunger for justice. Thank you God for the bread. This morning, we add a second verse to that prayer, saying: Thank you God for the Word. To those who seek your truth, may they hear your Word clearly. To those who hear your Word clearly, may they speak of love fervently. Thank you God for the Word. **Amen.**

## Special Music – Verse 1 of O Holy Night

**O holy night! The stars are brightly shining, It is the night of our dear Saviour's birth. Long lay the world in sin and error pining, 'Til He appear'd and the soul felt its worth. A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices, For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn. Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices! O night divine, O night when Christ was born; O night divine, O night, O night Divine.**

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## Reading

### Gospel Acclamation

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew starting with the 2nd Chapter. **Glory to you O Lord.**

### Gospel: Matthew 2:1-13

*A is the voice of the narrator. B is the voice of (and narrator for) the magi. C is the voice of (and narrator for) Herod. D is the voice of the prophets and angels.*

A: In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, asking,

B: "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east and have come to pay him homage."

A: When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, and calling together all

the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him,

D: "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah, for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'"

A: Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying,

C: "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage."

A: When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was.

B: When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary, his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

### **Special Music – Verse 2 of O Holy Night**

**Led by the light of Faith serenely beaming, With glowing hearts by His cradle we stand. So led by light of a star sweetly gleaming, Here come the wise men from Orient land. The King of Kings lay thus in lowly manger; In all our trials born to be our friend. He knows our need, to our weakness is no stranger, Behold your King! Before Him lowly bend! Behold your King, Before Him lowly bend!**

### **Breakfast & Table Discussion**

*In lieu of a sermon, we will spend about 20 minutes reflecting on the scripture reading, using the conversation prompts provided.*

- When you hear the story of the Holy Family fleeing political persecution, how does it make you feel? Does it make you think of any current or historical events?
- We often skip the story of Herod's persecution and the Holy Family fleeing to Egypt. Why do you think that is? What do we lose if we don't read and know about this text?
- There is so much suffering in the world. What is one organization, non-profit, or grassroots movement that inspires you?
- Where and how do you see our congregation making a difference in the world? Where can we grow in this next year and the years to come?
- The scripture of the Holy Family fleeing to Egypt is a story that stirs up compassion for refugees. When it comes to the work of justice, compassion, and peace, what other causes or movements are you invested in?
- The theme for this morning is, "Let fear fire a fuel for justice." How can we move from fear to action? How do we not let fear stop us in our tracks?

### **Special Music – Verse 3 of O Holy Night**

**Truly He taught us to love one another; His law is love and His gospel is peace. Chains shall He break for the slave is our brother; And in His name all oppression shall cease. Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we, Let all**

**within us praise His holy name. Christ is the Lord! O praise His Name forever, His power and glory evermore proclaim. His power and glory evermore proclaim.**

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## • III. Response | Acts of Justice

*The story of Herod's brutality is one we know all too well. Our world is full of vengeful leaders and violence. On this day, we not only want to acknowledge that truth, but respond in a tangible way.*

### **Assemble car care bags for those without housing**

*Suggested supplies: Large gallon-sized plastic bags, bulk items of lip balm, deodorant, sanitary pads, socks, gloves, small tissue packs, granola bars, toothbrush kits, combs, flashlights, electrolyte packets, etc. You may also want to make or write cards to include in the care bags.*

#### *Instructions:*

Friends, we cannot undo the injustice and brutality that King Herod inflicted on his people during Jesus' time. However, we can allow our anger and fear at his injustice to fuel more compassionate actions today.

We cannot undo his hurt, but we *can* do the good that is ours to do, here and now.

So this morning, in response to the violent acts of angry kings all throughout time and history, let us choose love.

This morning we will prepare car care bags for our unhoused neighbors. These care bags are intended to be kept in your car so that if you pass someone in need, you can offer them this small gift.

Each person will get one large plastic bag to fill with caring items such as toiletries and granola bars.

To assemble them, we will invite you, table by table, to come forward and build your bag.

While you wait to build your bag, or after your bag is complete, we invite you to find the pens, markers, and cards on your table and take a few moments to write a prayer or an affirmation that you can add to the bag. Let the recipient know that they are not alone and that they are loved.

At the end, we will pray over these bags. Friends, let us get to work! Let fear fuel a fire for justice in us now.

### **Hymn of the Day: ELW #710 "Let Streams of Living Justice"**

- 1. Let streams of living justice flow down upon the earth; Give freedom's light to captives; let all the poor have worth. The hungry's hands are pleading; the workers claim their rights, the mourners long for laughter, the blinded**

**seek for sight. Make liberty a beacon, strike down the iron power, abolish ancient vengeance; proclaim your people's hour.**

- 2. For healing of the nations, for peace that will not end, for love that makes us lovers, God grant us grace to mend. Weave our varied gifts together; knit our lives as they are spun, on your loom of life enroll us till the thread of life is run. O great Weaver of our fabric, bind church and world in one; dye our texture with your radiance, light our colors with your sun.**
- 3. Your city's built to music: we are the stones you seek; your harmony is language; we are the words you speak. Our faith we find in service, our hope in other's dreams, our love in hand of neighbor; our homeland brightly gleams. Inscribe our hearts with justice, your way – the path untried: Your truth – the heart of stranger, your life – the Crucified.**

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### **Affirmation of Faith**

**We have seen the valley.**

**We have seen a sky without stars.**

**We have seen the longest night, and *still* we believe.**

**We believe in a with-us God.**

**We believe in the hope of tomorrow.**

**We believe that good news is louder than fear.**

**We believe this good news is for all people.**

**So even when our knees shake, even when our voice trembles, even when fear is all around us, we will hold onto that good news.**

**We will reach for each other.**

**We will look for God in our midst.**

**We will sing songs of joy.**

**We will proclaim: *Unto us, love is born.***

**We have seen the longest night, and we have seen unimaginable love.**

**So *still*, we believe. Amen.**

### **Sharing of Peace**

The peace of the Lord be with you all. **And also with you.**

### **Prayers of the People**

Holy and loving God, you are the one who paints the sky with stars each night.

You are the one who stirs our souls awake and invites us to dream. You are the one who was born in a manger, and you are the one who meets us now. So with gratitude and humility, we bring you our prayers. Loving God, we have so much to be grateful for in this season. As we move toward the end of the year, we look back on the last 12 months with gratitude for every joyful memory. Thank you for the winter snows and the summer sun. Thank you for the moments of laughter and the moments of growth. Thank you for the magic of Christmas and the joys of life in community. At this time, we name our prayers of gratitude silently and out loud:

*Allow time for people to speak their prayers of gratitude out loud.*

Holy God, thank you for every beautiful and lovely thing. However, in addition to our gratitude, God, we also look back over these last 12 months with painful awareness that life on Earth is far from perfect. God, we worry for those who are hungry. We worry for those who have been told all their life that there is no room in the inn for them. We worry for those who feel alone, and for those trapped in layers of grief. At this time, we name our prayers of concern, especially including Arlen, Lan-Shiang, Deb, Ruth, Barry, Monica, Dennis, Nathan, Sue and Donna Richards, the family of Beverly Devoe and the Hruska family and those we name silently and out loud:

*Allow time for people to speak their prayers of concern out loud.*

Emmanuel, when we look back over the last 12 months, it is clear that there has been abundant beauty *and* abundant suffering. Where there is injustice—where there is violence and suffering, bigotry and hatred— fuel a fire in us.

Show us how to care for our immigrant neighbors, our hungry neighbors, our Republican, Democrat, and Independent neighbors, our male, female, transgender and nonbinary neighbors. Show us how to love as you loved. Show us how to make this next year a little more beautiful and a lot more loving than the last. *Optional addition for blessing the car care packages and/or the diaper/book drive:* And as you do, we ask that you pour out your Spirit on this offering of *care bags*. May the individuals and families receiving these items feel your love through these small gifts. May this act of service bind us all more closely to our neighbors. May your protection safeguard everyone who is in harm's way.

With hope for tomorrow and the determination to make this world a safer place for us all, we pray- **Amen.**

## **Offering and Offertory Hymn: ELW #253 "He Came Down"**

- 1. He came down that we may have love; he came down that we may have love; he came down that we may have love; hallelujah forevermore.**

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## **Offering Prayer**

**God of healing and hope, you bless those who are hungry, promising to fill them with good things. Fulfill that promise through us and these your gifts. Nourish us with the abundance of your feast and unite us into the blessed body of Jesus Christ our Savior, now and forever. Amen.**

## **The Great Thanksgiving**

With-us God, We live in a fearful world. If we're honest, we come to this Table today with the taste of fear on our tongues. We come to this Table carrying our anxiety. We come to this Table asking for guidance. We come to this Table with all of life's "what-ifs." But you do not disregard our fear. You do not brush it under the rug or call us foolish.

You do not ignore the realities in front of us. You do not dish out hurtful platitudes, telling us to “toughen up” or “power through.” Instead, you meet us here. You listen to our fears. You remind us that we are not alone. You surround us with people who love us. You show us where we are strong. You walk beside us. So today we pray, gracious God: replace the fear on our tongues with these words of hope:

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

As we come to this Table, pour out your Spirit on this bread and cup. Remind us that even in a fearful world, you are on the move. Remind us that even in a fearful world, you are here, inviting us to the Table, nourishing our spirits, reminding us that we belong, calling us by name.

Instill that good news in us, for this is a joyful feast. Fear is not the loudest voice today. What a gift that is. Now with hope for a better tomorrow, we join our voices together to pray the prayer your son taught us to pray, saying. . .

### **Lord’s Prayer**

**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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

### **Invitation to the Table**

Here at this Table, there is enough room, enough food, enough love for everyone. Here at this Table, Jesus is standing up on his chair, waving his hands over his head, saying to each of you, “I saved you a seat!” Here at this Table, you are wanted and welcomed. You are safe and loved. Here at this Table, you belong. So my friends, there is no need for fear here, for this is a joyful feast. And you are invited.

Today, we will be communing one another at our tables. The elements are set out for you- I’ll begin by communing the first person at the table, and then we’ll pass the elements down, communing the person sitting next to us with the words “The body of Christ, given for you. The blood of Christ, shed for you.” The cups in the middle are grape juice for those who need them, the others are wine. The last person will then commune me. Come. All are welcome.

### **Distribution Hymn: ELW #487 “What Feast of Love”**

- 1. What feast of love is offered here, what banquet come from heaven?  
What food of everlasting life, what gracious gift is given? This, this is  
Christ the king, the bread come down from heaven. Oh, taste and see and  
sing! How sweet the manna given!**

2. **What light of truth is offered here, what covenant from heaven? What hope of everlasting life, what wondrous word is given? This, This is Christ the king, the sun come down from heaven. Oh, see and hear and sing! The Word of God is given!**
3. **What wine of love is offered here, what crimson drink from heaven? What stream of everlasting life, what precious blood is given? This, this is Christ the king, the sweetest wine of heaven. Oh, taste and see and sing! The Son of God is given!**

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### **Prayer after Communion**

**Loving God, In a world racked with fear, you gather us together. You set the table. You meet us here. You nourish our bodies as you nourish our spirits. You remind us that this is a joyful feast, and that fear cannot win every time. So with renewed courage, with renewed hope, with renewed conviction, send us out into the world. Help us to feed others as you have fed us. With gratitude we pray, amen.**

### **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.**

### **Sending Hymn: ELW #290 "Go Tell It On A Mountain"**

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

1. **While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night, behold, through-out the heavens there shone a holy light. Refrain:**
2. **The shepherds feared and trembled when, lo, above the earth rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior's birth. Refrain:**
3. **Down in a lonely manger the humble Christ was born; and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. Refrain:**

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### **Dismissal**

Go in peace. Do not fear.  
**Thanks be to God.**

### **Postlude**

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 **Prayers:** Please continue to keep our members and loved ones in your prayers, including Arlen, Lan-Shiang, Deb, Ruth, Barry, Monica, Dennis, Nathan, Sue and Donna Richards, the family of Beverly Devoe and the Hruska family.

 **Weather Related Closings:** Please tune into KEYC TV.

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