

Order of Worship for at Home Use

December 20, 2020

Welcome to worship with Grace@Home!

We pray that you are healthy and well as you worship this week.

If you wish to worship via the video, click this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F62IZiVIOUs>

May God's peace fill Your heart and mind as we enter, with intention, into our time of worship this week. We continue to live in a strange time, yet, God is with us. God is for us. God will never leave us. It is right, then, that we can rest in His presence, seek His face, and rely on His grace throughout all of life.

In these moments of worship, today, we honor those who have served in our armed forces. We seek God's peace for our city, nation and world. We pray for healing and help in this time of hardship. We ask for God's provision as we watch the unfolding of events surrounding our elections.

Again this week you are encouraged to find a place where you can center your heart and mind on Christ, you might light a candle, bring your bible and take a deep breath as you join in our time of worship.

Let us worship God together.

With God's love,

Pastor Dana

We Gather as God's Family to Worship

Prelude "Prelude on 'Christmas Day'" arr. J. Mansfield
Dr. Jerry Reeves, piano, Dr. David Dorway, organ
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9qdj-DB4viw>

Welcome/Advent Wreath/Call to Worship Pastor Dana Pope
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NC-LtkHEIXQ>

In the laughter of a child, Joy suddenly overflows.
With the touch of a hand, suddenly, Love overflows.
We know God, but when grace is shown,
In forgiveness, in love, in acts of kindness and labors of love,
God Spirit fills and overflows.
So, let us worship Holy God together
Together we remember that God is here and we are never alone.
This is community. This is Family.
This is the body of Christ.
Welcome in, welcome home.

Again today, we dream...
We dream of music that makes our hearts swell.
We dream of trees that take our breath away.
We dream of sunrises that wrap us in warmth and light.
We dream of family dinners that feel like home.
We dream of times in worship that give us hope.
We dream of love as the default.
So today, as we draw near to Christmas day,
we light the candle of love.
May this light burn bright as a reminder that God is here
and God is love.
We are not alone. Thanks be to God for a love like that. Amen.

Hymn "Welcome to Our World" C. Rice
BJ Jamison, Scott Plummer, Kathy Koch
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDLO7421NGo>

Sharing the Peace of Christ **not in video**

The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you...
and also with you.

In this time of social distancing it is important for us to remember that in Christ we are connected to all who believe in Jesus in every time and place. As the world continues to be isolated, and many are feeling anxious, as Christians we share the peace of Christ as a way to offer hope and the joy of Christ. Again today we use the familiar words, “The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you... and also with you.”

Now, or after your time of worship, reach out via text, email, phone or video call, to someone outside of your home extending the invitation to enter into the peace of Christ with our faith community.

Praise God, that His peace is with us, always!

Prayer and The Lord’s Prayer

Pastor Dana Pope

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t47b9g5VsGU>

God of Good News, as we gather together in Your presence we struggle to hear Your calling on our lives, Your song of love, in this weary world. Bless us now with an extra measure of Your Spirit as we pray. Help us to boldly approach Your throne that we might be changed, renewed, lifted up, enlivened, and made whole in Jesus name. Help us to rejoice in You.

You say “You are highly favored,” but we struggle to see how that could be. So much has been done that cannot be taken back, and left undone - opportunities missed or refused. Help us. Forgive us. Grant us mercy.

You say, “Do not be afraid,” but we are afraid so much of the time. Forgive us for our tendencies to look at the trouble, darkness, and at the circumstances of the world. Help us to focus instead on You. You are good. You are life itself.

You say, “Even the impossible is possible... just look at Elizabeth, look at Mary, look at the empty tomb!” but we doubt, and hope slips through our hands like water. God, the impossible still feels impossible. Help us to put our trust in You. And believe that all will be well. Believe that Your love is stronger than even death itself.

Today we pray for all who struggle, those who are sick, the many who mourn and are grieving. Today we lift all who are dealing with financial difficulties and job loss, loneliness and the many for whom the inability to celebrate and gather as is traditional is heartbreaking. We ask Your mighty hand be upon us all. We pray for provision, wisdom and discernment, we ask for light to shine brightly in the darkness. Together we wait for life to

spring forth and for peace to come. Grant us grace to uphold one another as we wait.

Today we ask that You would teach us to sing like Mary, laugh like Elizabeth, trust like the angels, love like You, and Your Son, Jesus. We pray all of these things in His name, and we pray the prayer that He taught us, saying: **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.

We Listen to God's Word

Hymn/Praise

“Jesus Loves Me”

not in video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C63z5hCd7bc>

Children's Message

Pastor Jim Houston-Hencken

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nds9INpoMZQ>

How many ways can you think of to communicate with another person? How many devices do you have in your home that help you communicate? Cell phones, Ipads, house phones, pen and paper, televisions and radios, it seems the list is endless. Human beings were created to communicate and be in relationship with one another. In worship today we look at devices of communication and remember that God wants us to communicate and be in relationship with Him. This morning we are looking at Mary, the mother of Jesus, and her story of communicating with God through His angel, Gabriel. Today we are challenged to remember, as children of God, that God does come to us. God communicates with us through His word, the gift of His Son, Jesus and even through angels and people who speak God's word to us. We celebrate Christ at Christmas because at Christmas Christ came to the world so God could communicate with us and we could now have a relationship with Him.

Special Music

“God Rest You Merry Gentlemen”

Men's Quartet

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=47Esd4bzmvg>

Reading of the Word

Luke 1:26-45

Pastor Jim Houston-Hencken

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_kdAZzdK70A

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴ Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶ And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸ Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

³⁹ In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, ⁴⁰ where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴² and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³ And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? ⁴⁴ For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

Message

"Dreamers...Are Not Alone"

Pastor Jim Houston-Hencken

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDhsJKWqDS0>

Miracles, I want to start this morning by talking about miracles. How many of you have experienced a miracle in your life? How many of you have been touched by the miraculous power of God? Many of you have. For those of you who did not raise your hands, I can tell you that you are skeptics or you just aren't looking. Miracles happen and we often miss them. We are so caught up in the medicine of it that we miss the miracle of birth and we don't realize what a God given experience we have been granted. We are healed, or saved from pain, when we were expecting the worst, and we don't recognize that God was in the moment. We fail to say thank you to the person who came out of nowhere to help, to offer comfort, to give us a shoulder to cry on when we needed it most. We miss that fact that God may have just touched us with an angel, be it heavenly or the hand of God through an ordinary person. Too often we miss God until we turn around and look back, and then, sometimes it is too late.

This is the season of miracles. I don't know why, maybe it is because people are feeling the holiday spirit and they go a little further out of their way. Maybe it is because we are motivated by the meaning of Christmas, the stories that we hear. Maybe? I don't know, but I know that miracles are happening all around us, and it would be a shame to miss them this Christmas.

This morning's Christmas text is about miracles, miracles promised, miracles received, and miracles accepted. This text is a text that challenges our faith at Christmas, because, you see, without faith, you miss the miracles at Christmas and in life.

So here is the story, and it is a better one than even Hollywood could concoct. There is a woman who had tried to get pregnant for years and now she was too old. An angel tells her husband that she is going to have a baby and he thinks he is hallucinating. The angel gets mad and strikes the man mute until the baby is born. Now comes this morning's part of the story. The angel next appears to this woman's younger cousin who is a young teenager and says you will be having a baby and He will be the savior of the world. She has a hard time believing this because she is an unmarried virgin, but she accepts it on faith. While they are both pregnant, Mary, the younger of the two, goes to visit her cousin and when she arrives, even the unborn child in Elizabeth's womb jumps for joy.

With this story, the world is about to change forever. The child of Elizabeth will be John the Baptist who will serve as a prophet for the coming messiah and the son of Mary will be Christ the Lord who will give his life for the salvation of the world.

If we hadn't heard this story before, it would be too hard to believe. Old women having babies, a young unmarried virgin having a baby that will become the ruler of eternity. It is a miracle that is almost too far-fetched to believe. But some do.

Elizabeth believed, John the unborn infant believed, or at least, miraculously responded, and Mary believed. Mary, the least likely of them all to play a major part in this story, believed.

Think about this, Mary believed in miracles, and one was happening to her. She was the least likely person to be chosen for such a tremendous task as to be the mother of the messiah, but she believed when she was touched by the presence of God almighty. She knew that God could use even her. God could use a pregnant unwed mother who was too young to be married. God could use a no name girl living in a backwoods town.

You know, God calls people like Mary and the murderous apostle Paul, as well as the adulterous David and the weak kneed Abraham, because God has faith in his people. God knows that even the weakest of us have the potential of being something amazing under his leadership.

There is a story of a preacher who served several small churches in northeastern Pennsylvania. He served congregations shaped by the drudgery of coal mining. The modern circuit rider would take communion to many people's homes each week and bring hope to his discouraged parishioners. At one point, at the beginning of his ministry, this brilliant pastor, went to the county dump and collected bits and pieces of trash. Being a skilled craftsman, he fashioned the garbage into a plate and chalice that he would use to serve communion.

He would sit around the kitchen table with his parishioners, the people the world has overlooked and discarded and he would tell them the same message over and over. He told them the history of his plate and cup, and then he would explain, "This is what God is in the business of doing. He takes broken lives that seem useless, broken and thrown away and make them into vessels of beauty – vessels through which God can minister to the world." God performs miracles and things change.

Mary believed in miracles, Elizabeth believed in miracles, John believed in miracles. Do you believe in miracles? You should, because this Christmas, miracles are all around you. In fact, if you just believed, you might be called by God to be a miracle in someone's life.

This Christmas, this New Year, why not believe in the miracle of Jesus Christ. Why not believe that He died for you. Why not believe in a miracle? Such miracles are the meaning of the season.

Amen

We Respond to the Voice of God

Presentation of our Tithes & Offerings

Pastor Dana Pope

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sgwvt7zZ1bE>

We are blessed with many opportunities to give of our time talents as well as our resources...this is not about funding the church or fundraising; it is an act of worship. We respond to God's Word, His love for us, and His mercy by giving of ourselves. We give all sorts of things, including our hearts, our finances, our time and our gifts. Let us now participate in God's kingdom by returning God's tithes and our offerings to the church via mail or online giving, using text to give or the following link: <https://onrealm.org/gracepclv/-/give/now>

Offertory "Joseph's Lullaby" arr. S. DeCesare
BJ Jamison & Scott Plummer
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_hNGV8c0FCk

Offertory Prayer Pastor Dana Pope
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LxETwAZYXY0>

Holy God, bless us as we offer these Your tithes and our offerings. Put Your almighty hand upon us and grant us opportunities to share the riches of Your love with those around us. Bless the world and Your kingdom with Your love and by our hand and, Holy One, grant that we might be truly grateful for all that we hold and share in Jesus name. Amen.

We Go with God to Love and Serve

Closing Hymn #277 "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" vs. 1 & 3 Dr. Lisa Elliott
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Quvb2rooyg>

Benediction Pastor Jim Houston-Hencken
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-HrtB9jsRRI>

May God Almighty who was born at Christmas be working in you that which is acceptable and pleasing in His sight. May He give you a very merry Christmas and may He use you to bring hope, Peace, Love and Joy to others this Christmas season.

Postlude "Messiah Medley" arr. L. McKechnie
Dr. Jerry Reeves, piano Dr. David Dorway, Organ
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spzYLotQ7Tw>

Acknowledgements
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k5dwJ0GJy1Y>

As you continue to worship this week, please keep the following people in prayer, and reach out to one another in word or deed.

In Need of Prayer

Dolores Harris (Merrill Gardens)
Alice Black (Skilled Nursing at Las Ventanas)

Judy Aitken, Becky Aldridge, Fred & Mickie Bratschie, Bernard Buswell,
Bill Carlston, Bob & Joan Clark, Tanner Cordon, Carol Daniel, Ann Donithan,
Rosamaria Duenas, Jill and Robert Eaton, Pennie Everhart, Joice Franklin,
Mary Gafford, Terry Glaser, Charlene Harper, Greta Hougnon, Pam Kodey,
Lara Kolberg, Dorell Koon, Carole McKinnis, Sherrie Miles, Maggie O'Donnell,
Alice Oiler, Dodi Palmer, Taylor Palmer, Mary Phillips, Russ & Pat Reid,
Aminta & Jorge Santanilla, Bruce Simon, Marty Swartout, Nick Vogelzang,
Mike Walsh, and Dick Wohletz

In Memoriam:

Jack Crockett 3/18/2020
Randy Innis 3/18/2020
Clark Trapp 3/18/2020
Ruthy Stull 3/19/2020
Ted Phillips 4/1/2020
Violet Cross 4/4/2020
Bill Franklin 5/4/2020
Greg Holt 5/7/2020
Carol Mohr 5/25/2020
Priscilla Taylor 7/4/2020
Louis Romero 8/8/2020
Bettye Hodgkins 8/11/2020
Gary Oiler 8/23/2020
Donna Gibson 9/14/2020
Audrey Mitchell 12/1/2020