

Hudson River Presbytery
December 27, 2020
“Christmas on the Way to a New Year”

Music

Welcome Call to Worship

Welcome, friends and members of Hudson River Presbytery, welcome to worship today. The moderators in the staff are honored to be with you this the first Sunday following Christmas and the last Sunday of 2020. And it has been a year unlike any other. So welcome. Come and worship with us. Come, all who are weary. Come, all who are heavy laden. Come, all who have hope. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God. The Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us with grace and with truth. Emmanuel, God is with us. So come, come and we will worship this Sunday together

Star Child verse 1

A Reading from the Gospel of Luke 2:1-14

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴ Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵ He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

⁸ In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹ to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host,^[b] praising God and saying, ¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom God favors!”

Star Child verse2

From Walter Wangerin’s The Manger is Empty:

“...there came an aeon, once upon a time in human history, when the world was dark, and the land where the people lived was deep in darkness, and the light of God was hidden. It was dark

as the night in the daytime. It had been dark so long that the people had forgotten what the light was like.

But God was in love with the people.

Therefore, God spoke again, the second time. But the Lord God said what God had said in the beginning, before there was a world at all. God said, "Let there be light!"

And so the Word came down into the world that the Word himself had made.

For the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father."

Star Child verse3

-A Reading from Maya Angelou's "Amazing Peace: A Christmas Poem"

"Thunder rumbles in the mountain passes
And lightning rattles the eaves of our houses.
Flood waters await us in our avenues.

Snow falls upon snow, falls upon snow to avalanche
Over unprotected villages.
The sky slips low and grey and threatening.

We question ourselves.
What have we done to so affront nature?
We worry God.
Are you there? Are you there really?
Does the covenant you made with us still hold?

Into this climate of fear and apprehension, Christmas enters,
Streaming lights of joy, ringing bells of hope
And singing carols of forgiveness high up in the bright air.
The world is encouraged to come away from rancor,
Come the way of friendship...
We clap hands and welcome the Peace of Christmas.
We beckon this good season to wait a while with us.
We, Baptist and Buddhist, Methodist and Muslim, say come.
Peace.
Come and fill us and our world with your majesty.
We, the Jew and the Jainist, the Catholic and the Confucian,
Implore you, to stay a while with us.
So we may learn by your shimmering light

How to look beyond complexion and see community....

At this Holy Instant, we celebrate the Birth of Jesus Christ

Into the great religions of the world....

We, Angels and Mortal's, Believers and Non-Believers,

Look heavenward and speak the word aloud.

Peace. We look at our world and speak the word aloud.

Peace. We look at each other, then into ourselves

And we say without shyness or apology or hesitation.

Peace, My Brother.

Peace, My Sister.

Peace, My Soul.”

-from Maya Angelou's "Amazing Peace: A Christmas Poem"

Music

From Howard Thurman, The Inward Journey

Dr. Howard Thurman tells us that Christmas is “the brooding Presence of the Eternal Spirit making crooked paths straight, rough places smooth, tired hearts refreshed, dead hopes stirred with the newness of life. It is the promise of tomorrow at the close of every day, the movement of life in defiance of death, and the assurance that love is sturdier than hate, that right is more confident than wrong, that good is more permanent than evil.”

From such a place of assurance and promise, as we move to prayer I would invite you to type into the chat a single word or phrase that is a prayer of hope as we move into living the Christmas message in 2021.

Prayer

Please pray with me:

On that not so silent night long ago,

you came to us, O God,

and from a manger

you gathered us in your arms

and swaddled us in your hope.

Come to us again today

to cradle the hurting and the lost,

share a stable with outsiders,

and confront any empires and bullies

who threaten earth's children.

Oh Thou Spirit of Christmas Joy,

as we move toward a new year,
lift us up and help us persist in praising God.
Be with us in all the nights and days to come.
Share in our lives, fill us with hope,
and set us in 2021 on the path toward yet more light and love.
We ask this in the name of the one who taught us to pray:
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.

Star Child verse4

A Reading from Alfred Tennyson's In Memoriam

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring happy bells, across the snow
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to humankind....

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant one and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand.
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

Star Child verse 5

Benediction

In this day, in these times of ours,
the God of Christmas incarnation encircles us

if only we will open our eyes, our minds, and our hearts
to encounter God.
No action of any empire,
no despair,
no pandemic,
no apathy or hatred can overwhelm us
for hope and welcome continually bear witness to the light.
With God's grace let us leave worship today determined to journey
in the direction of Love Incarnate, Emmanuel, God-with-us.
And may the blessing of God-
Creator, Christ, and Comforter-
go with us. Amen.

Music