

GAYLORD UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Second Sunday after Christmas – Communion Sunday

January 3, 2021

In preparation for this communion service, you may want to prepare some bread, a slice or a small loaf of any kind of bread or cracker. Prepare a cup of juice or wine. Remember, in John's gospel, Jesus' first miracle was to turn water into wine. If all you have is a glass of water, it's enough.

Welcome and News of the Church

Statement of Welcome

**No matter who I am, No matter where I am on life's journey, I am welcome here.
No matter who you are, no matter where you are on life's journey, You are welcome here!**

Statement of Purpose

One: Who are you?	All: I am a beloved child of God!
One: What does that mean?	All: I am a person of worth to be valued!
One: Then what will you do?	All: I will live a life of Love and Acceptance of myself and all God's people!

THE CALL

PSALM 148

Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise him in the heights!
Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his host!

Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars!
Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!

Let them praise the name of the LORD, for he commanded and they were created.
He established them for ever and ever; he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.

Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth!
Young men and women alike, old and young together!

Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his glory is above earth and heaven. He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his faithful, for the people of Israel who are close to him. Praise the LORD!

PRELUDE

Sandy Wentzloff

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: When Jesus is born to Mary and Joseph,
People: God is there.

Leader: When they present Jesus at the temple,
People: God is there.

Leader: When Simeon holds Jesus in his arms,
People: God is there.

Leader: When Anna recognizes Jesus as the answer to prayer,
People: God is there.

Leader: This very morning,
People: God is here.

Leader: In the future we cannot see,
People: God is there. Let us worship God!

**Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the Christ-child bring;
Peace on earth **on earth** and mercy mild, God and sinner reconciled!"
Joyful, all you saints arise, join the triumph of the skies;
With the angel host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the Christ-child bring!"**

**Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time the Savior comes, off-spring of the Virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh, the God-head see; hail the incarnate Deity,
Pleased on earth with us to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the Christ-child bring!"**

**Hail the Bearer of God's peace! Hail the Sun of righteousness,
Light and life our Savior brings, risen with radiant, healing wings.
Mildly laying glory by, born that we no more may die,
Born to raise us all from earth, born to give us second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the Christ-child bring!"**

INVOCATION

O God, in the sweetness of the story we tell today, the encounter of old and young--
Mary and Joseph presenting Jesus to the elders--
We feel the movement of your Spirit making all things new.
Awake us to your presence in this moment as we seek Christ in our midst:
Let us recognize God-with-us, a light to the nations, your glory revealed.
In Jesus' name we pray.

SPECIAL MUSIC

SHANNON HRUSKA AND PAULINE MARLINSKI

LECTIONARY TEXTS

Ephesians 1:3 -14

³ Bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! He has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing that comes from heaven. ⁴ God chose us in Christ to be holy and blameless in God's presence before the creation of the world. ⁵ God destined us to be his adopted children through Jesus Christ because of his love. This was according to his goodwill and plan ⁶ and to honor his glorious grace that he has given to us freely through the Son whom he loves. ⁷ We have been ransomed through his Son's blood, and we have forgiveness for our failures based on his overflowing grace, ⁸ which he poured over us with wisdom and understanding. ⁹ God revealed his hidden design to us, which is according to his goodwill and the plan that he intended to accomplish through his Son. ¹⁰ This is what God planned for the climax of all times: to bring all things together in Christ, the things in heaven along with the things on earth. ¹¹ We have also received an inheritance in Christ. We were destined by the plan of God, who accomplishes everything according to his design. ¹² We are called to be an honor to God's glory because we were the first to hope in Christ. ¹³ You too heard the word of truth in Christ, which is the good news of your salvation. You were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit because you believed in Christ. ¹⁴ The Holy Spirit is the down payment on our inheritance, which is applied toward our redemption as God's own people, resulting in the honor of God's glory.

John 1:1-18

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into

being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. ⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵(John testified to him and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me." ') ¹⁶From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

SERMON

"WE ARE A CHRISTMAS PEOPLE"

We all are familiar with the Christmas story presented by Luke. It is the story of angels, shepherds, a stable, a manger, and the birth of a baby. Today we are taking a look at another Christmas story. Hear the Christmas Story according to the Gospel of John.

John 1:1-18

1In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2**He was in the beginning with God. **3**All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. . .

14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

A brief and unusual story. John ties the birth of Jesus to the Genesis story creation. The Word, God, that created the heavens and the earth and all that is, the one who sent God's Son, Jesus. The Word became flesh and brought grace and truth to the people of God.

John doesn't bother with the how, but focuses on the what. What happened, The Word, God, because flesh that we may see and understand what God is all about. That we may know love and forgiveness. That we might begin to more fully understand God and what a life with God is all about.

The story of Helen Keller is a familiar story to many of us. Born June 27, 1880, nineteen months later, Helen became gravely ill with an unknown disease, perhaps scarlet fever or meningitis. After overcoming the illness, Helen was left deaf and blind.

Can you imagine living in a world from that early age with no sight or hearing. Greatly limiting your way of communicating. How would you learn about the world, about family, about love and acceptance? How would your family communicate with you in a world that depended so strongly on sight and hearing?

Because of her inability to communicate, out of fear and frustration, Helen became a wild uncontrollable child. Ranting and raving in a world she could not understand.

The family brought a tutor, Anne Sullivan, into the household to try to communicate with Helen and teach her how to live in the family, where to find food, how to eat. Anne came from the Perkins school for the blind and had been trained in teaching blind students.

Through her teaching skills, Anne was able to teach Helen how to behave, but still wanted more for Helen. She wanted to be able to help develop Helen's mind. The difficult part was reaching into the darkness in which Helen lived to bring of a light of understanding.

Using sign language, Anne would spell words on Helen's hand but she just could not reach Helen's mind to connect words with things.

The event that became a pivotal point in Helen's life happened at a water pump where Anne was pumping water. Helen went over to investigate what was happening. Anne held Helen's hand under the water and spelled out "w-a-t-e-r."

Helen would later write about this moment:

"Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten—a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that "w-a-t-e-r" meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! ...Everything had a name, and each name gave birth to a new thought. As we returned to the house every object which I touched seemed to quiver with life."

In that moment, Helen experienced a "living word" that opened her soul and brought light, hope, joy, and set her free!

Helen's own Christmas story. Light coming into the darkness, and overcoming that darkness with hope, joy, and the rebirth of freedom from her own darkness.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Christmas gives us the opportunity to discover God in a way that begins to open a whole new world of understanding of the meaning and joy of life.

Jesus has come into our hearts. We begin to know that we have a God who reaches out to us. We are not alone. We are children of light that now have the opportunity to be part of that light and reach out to others.

Sisters and brothers of the light, in this time of social distancing, how important it is to reach out to others. So many of us live in isolation and fear.

Mental health issues are on the rise as we try to cope with all the challenges that the pandemic brings to us. Let us reach out.

The need for food, shelter, and clothing is growing every day as people run out of funds because of loss of employment. Let us reach out.

What greater time in our lives has there been than now, where our light is needed. So many people living in the darkness of so many needs. Let us reach out.

As Christians we have been given the gift of light. Our hands have been held under the water as the Word has been revealed to us. Our awareness has been awakened. Our eyes see and our ears hear and a whole world now awaits our actions of caring and serving.

Now is the time to actualize the birth of God's grace and God's coming among us. We must act so that the light might continue to shine in even the darkest of places.

Hear the words of "The Work of Christmas" by Howard Thurman:

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flocks,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among the people,
To make music in the heart.

We are called: to live a life reflecting the light of Christ.
We are called: to be a Christmas people throughout the entire year.
We are called: to make Christmas not a season, but a way of life
We are called: to be bearers of light!

HYMN *"I Am the Light of the World"* NCH #584

Refrain: I am the light of the world! You people come and follow me!
If you follow and love you'll learn the mystery
Of what you were meant to do and be.

When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone,
When the sages and the shepherds have found their way home,
The work of Christmas is begun: **Refrain**

To find the lost and lonely one, to heal the broken soul with love,
To feed the hungry children with warmth and good food,
To feel the earth below, the sky above! **Refrain**

To free the prisoner from all chains, to make the powerful care,
To rebuild the nations with strength of good will,
To see all God's children everywhere! **Refrain**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

CALL TO OFFERING

God, you call us to give as we have received In this Christmas Season when you have shared your Child with us, help us to share our blessing with those in need.

DEDICATION PRAYER (*In unison*)

People: **God of Vision, Take these offerings of money and turn them into vision;
vision of all people fed,
vision of all people safe,
vision of all people housed,
vision of all people educated. Amen.**

COMMUNION

HYMN OF COMMUNION

"HERE, O MY LORD, I SEE YOU FACE TO FACE"

NCH #336

**Here, O my Lord, I see you face to face; Here would I touch and handle things unseen.
Here grasp with firmer hand the eternal grace. And all my weariness upon you lean.**

**Here would I feed upon the bread of God, here share the cup, the gracious gift of heaven.
Here would I lay aside each earthly load, here taste afresh the calm of sin forgiven.**

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

One: Simeon and Anna were steeped in revered tradition, and yet spent their lives praying to recognize the action of God pointing to a future they could not imagine. Far from being held back by tradition, for them it was a constant stretch toward faithfulness: where is God at work? What are the signs? What needs to be let go, entrusted to a new way, new people, new and unexpected shape?

Ways of being Church are changing quickly in these Covid-19 days, and "getting back to normal" may mean a "new" normal.

So, in this moment, what are we clinging to?
What do we need to relinquish
so that we can recognize the call of God in this moment?

All: Forgive us, make us wise and joyful and strong so that we live in the understanding of your never-ending love. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

One: The scriptures promise that God will make all things new. As God makes the year new, may we also be made new by God's love and forgiveness in Jesus. **Amen.**

ASSURANCE OF GRACE

1 Corinthians 1: 3-9

One: God is faithful, and gives us grace in Christ Jesus. In this fellowship we can count on being enriched in speech, in knowledge, in every spiritual gift. Let us give thanks. In Christ, we are set free and sent forth to work for God's reign among us. **Amen.**

CALL TO THE TABLE

SHARING THE ELEMENTS

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Gracious and loving God, you have made us one in the body of Christ, and nourished us at your table with holy food and drink. Now send us forth to be your people in the world. Grant us strength to persevere in resisting evil, and to proclaim in all we say and do your Good News in Christ Jesus. Amen.

SENDING HYMN: "Go Tell It on the Mountain" NCH #154

Refrain: Go tell it on the mountain, over the hill and everywhere.
Go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born!

While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,
Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. **Refrain**

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

BENEDICTION

Send us into the world refreshed in hope,
Awake, alert, attuned to your presence
ready to join your work of blessing for all.
Amen.

Closing Song: "Spirit Song"

**O let the Son of God enfold you with his Spirit and his love
Let him fill your heart and satisfy your soul,
O let him have the things that hold you, and his Spirit like a dove
will descend upon your life and make you whole.**

Refrain:

**Jesus, O Jesus, come and fill your lambs
Jesus, O Jesus, come and fill your lambs**

POSTLUDE

Sandy Wentzloff

Remember in Prayer: Jim Peterson, Bill Walsh, Greg Armstrong (Howard's brother), Dick Carlson, Bill and Nancy Cowell, Eunice Gasow, and Aggie Schue. We pray for health and healing for all people. Pray especially for those serving on the front lines caring for those with COVID-19. Pray for the ministries of our church. Pray for those serving in the military and for our local and national leaders.

If you have a prayer request or would like to receive a call from Pastor Dennis call his office at 237-2595 (leave a private voice mail) or his cell 763-258-3371

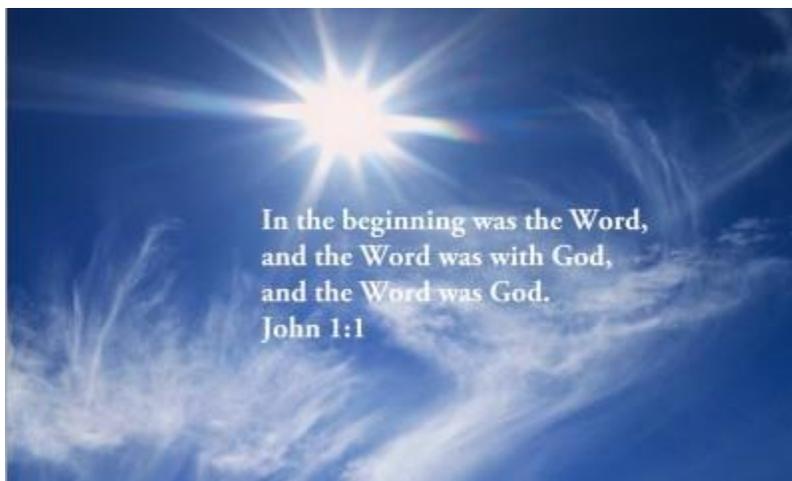
Pastor Dennis is usually in the office each Tuesday and Wednesday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. He can be reached at the office, 237-2595 (private voice mail) or his cell: 763-258-3371. E-mail: dmckee545@gmail.com • Website at listen2god.org

Please remember how important your financial support of the ministry of Gaylord United Church of Christ is, especially in this time. We pray for wisdom of leaders, the support of us all in doing what we can to suppress the spread of corona virus, and the safety of all our friends, families, and people of the world. *God is Good, all the time.*

**Tithes, Offerings, From the Heart Offering and Pledges can be sent to
Gaylord United Church of Christ P.O. Box 385 Gaylord, MN 55334.**

***You can also donate on our website listen2god.org
or drop off at the church office on Wednesday between 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.***

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In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
John 1:1