

# GAYLORD UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Baptism of Christ January 10, 2021



## 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

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth should change,  
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;  
though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

Come behold the works of the Lord; see what desolations he has brought on the earth.  
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;  
He burns the shields with fire.

Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations; I am exalted in the earth.  
The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

## Prelude

Sandy Wentzloff

## Call to Worship

Psalm 29

One: Give to our GOD, O heavenly beings, Give to our GOD glory and strength.

**People: Give to our GOD a glorious name; worship our GOD in holy splendor.**

One: The voice of our GOD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over mighty waters.

**People: The voice of our GOD is powerful; the voice of our GOD is full of majesty.**

One: The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; Our GOD breaks the cedars of Lebanon.

**People: God makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox.**

One: The voice of our GOD flashes forth flames of fire.

**People: The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;  
Our GOD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.**

One: The voice of our GOD causes the oaks to whirl, and strips the forest bare; and in God's temple all say, "Glory!"

**People: The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; Our GOD sits enthroned as ruler forever.**

One: May our GOD give strength to the people!  
May the LORD bless the people with peace!

**As with gladness those of old did the guiding star behold;  
As with joy they hailed its light, leading onward, beaming bright  
So, true Morning Star, may we evermore your splendor see.**

**As with joyful steps they sped to that lowly manger bed,  
There to bend the knee before One whom heaven and earth adore;  
So may we with willing feet ever seek your mercy seat.**

**As they offered gifts most rare at the manger plain and bare,  
So may we with holy joy, pure and free from sin's alloy,  
All our costliest treasures bring, Christ, to you from whom they spring.**

### **Invocation**

Creating, Calling, and Faithful God, we come to this time and place to be with you, to worship you, and to learn from you.

May our time together be like your creation of light in the darkness that you called good.

May it be that you would call us good while we respond to your call and as we listen to you.

**Amen.**

### **Call to Confession**

People of God, we desire to be refreshed, renewed and changed.

Let us listen again to God calling our names,

to encourage us and strengthen our resolve

to be God's people in faithfulness and peace-loving justice.

### **Prayer of Confession**

**People: O God, we hear your voice and we see the way of Jesus set before us.**

**But it's hard, dear God, to try again and again to live up to our baptismal vows  
and maintain our resolve to be your people in the world.**

**In repentance we ask you to forgive us.**

**Set us once again on a holy path that leads to you. Amen.**

### **Assurance of God's Call**

Friends, God hears our prayers and sets before us the way of Jesus.

God calls us and gives us enough grace and mercy to follow the way.

Thanks be to God.

### **Gloria**

**Glory be to Creator, and to the Christ and to the Holy Ghost**

**As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be.**

**Eternal life! Amen. Amen.**

### **Lectionary Text**

#### **Acts 19:1-7**

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the inland regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. He said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?' They replied, 'No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.' Then he said, 'Into what then were you baptized?' They answered, 'Into John's baptism.' Paul said, 'John baptized with

the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus.' On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied—altogether there were about twelve of them.

Mark 1:4-11

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.' In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

## **Message**

### "I Am Beloved"

When we celebrate the beginning of a new year, we celebrate the rebirth of time. We wait for God to do new things. We wait for who we are.

Today in our church year is the Baptism of Jesus Sunday- a time when we remember the day when Jesus was baptized and also today is a day to remember our own baptisms, as well. Some of us were baptized as infants, some as older children or adults. Think for a moment what that moment was like, or what you have been told about that moment.

In our Christian life, it is one of the most important days of our lives. The day when we are given our identity as a beloved child of God. As Jesus emerged from the waters of his baptism, a voice came from heaven and said, "You are my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." And as we are baptized we are told the same thing.

Each week here at Gaylord United Church of Christ we go through two statements at the beginning of our worship service. These are two statements that I believe are of vital importance as we come into God's presence for worship.

The first is to know that I am welcome here. No matter what! I am welcome to be in the presence of God. In God's presence is a safe place for me to be wholly and honestly who I am. Here in God's presence I am loved. No matter who I am or where I am on life's journey, I am welcome here!

The second statement is to know that my identity, no matter what earthly labels I have gathered, comes from God.

## **Statement of Purpose**

Who are you? I am a beloved child of God!

What does that mean? I am a person of worth to be valued!

Then what will you do? I will live a life of Love and acceptance of myself and all God's people!

These are two things we need to know as we come before God in worship. We are accepted and have purpose in God. As we live into our own personal stories of life and faith, we need to hear the message of baptism more fully. I am a beloved child of God.

When I face the discomfort of the Loss of a loved one,

As I start having to face a new relationship after the loss of a loved one,

When I am starting a different job,  
Moving to a new neighborhood, **I am a beloved Child of God.**  
In the discomfort of being in the same place for too long, yearning for more.  
When facing the challenges of raising children as a single parent.  
When facing being a single person longing for a loving relationship.  
When experiencing an empty nest now that family has moved away and I search to understand who am I now, and what is my role in life. **I am a beloved child of God.**

In the discomfort of Aging,

As our bodies change and the activities and capabilities that we took pride in and found our identity diminish, we must remember, **I am a beloved child of God.**

As our minds are less sharp, **I am a beloved child of God**

As a young person going through the confusing times of discovering who we are, how we fit in at school, and in our families, we must believe what God says to us, as God said to Jesus in baptism: You are my beloved child with whom I am well pleased. After this message was given, Mark says that immediately Jesus was sent into the wilderness. Here, Jesus discovered what he was going to do as “beloved Son of God.” How was he going to live and serve God?

Paul writes to the Ephesians 3:6, “the Gentiles have become fellow-heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. . .”

We are children of God, fellow-heirs. We are God’s children. And as God’s children we are given a purpose. Paul continues in Ephesians 4:1-3,

“I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, **beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called**, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

As I stated earlier in referring to our statement of purpose, we are to live in love of ourselves and of all God’s people.

The Ten Commandments were the directives to the Jewish people as to how to live their lives. Commandments with which Jesus was fully familiar. When asked which one was the greatest commandment, Jesus replied, **“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”**

Our identity is being a child of God, and our calling is to love God and our neighbors as we love ourselves. In actively living out our identity and our calling, we seek to bring peace and justice to all God’s people.

One of the hardest parts of living out our baptismal lives is to love ourselves. It has often been asked, “How can we love our neighbor if we do not love ourselves?”

Kathy Escobar states, “I truly believe one of the reasons the world is so screwed up right now is that we are indeed, loving our neighbors as ourselves.” The problem is that a lot of us actually hate ourselves—and others notice it.” Hate is a strong word, but the truth is that many people are filled with self-hatred and thus cannot accept their value and worth as children of God. And when we cannot and do not believe our worth as a beloved child of God, the world suffers as well as we do.

Believing that we are created in God’s image and thus a beloved child of God, allows us to overcome our own self-doubt. We can claim our place in God’s world and live accordingly.

Part of the dangers of not believing God in saying we are beloved and pleasing to God, is that we stop loving ourselves. We stop because we find fault in what we say and do. We know our shortcomings from the inside out. We know where we could be better...and we are not better in our own eyes. Self-doubt, leads to self-hatred and then jumps over to the same rejection of others. Do you love yourself, the way you are, in the situation you find yourself, with the secrets you carry about yourself that you hope no one else knows?

It is often difficult to say, Yes! Yes, I love myself, just the way I am.

Shy or outgoing,  
Black, brown, white,  
Indigenous, exile, refugee  
Cis gender, transgender, Gay, straight,  
Upper, middle, or lower class  
Overweight, underweight  
Married, single or in transition  
Financially stable, or financially insecure  
In a mansion or homeless

As we wrestle with all the labels we put on ourselves, or allow other to place on us, we struggle to love ourselves. We resist seeing ourselves as God sees us, a person of value and worth.

Many of us are struggling with self-loathing, in an effort to escape the pain that this brings. We use various ways, usually unhealthy ways, for coping and acceptance such as over working, over eating, porn, drugs, alcohol and even religion. How often do we submerge ourselves in helping others while silently hating ourselves?

Dr. Fred Craddock tells of an evening when he and his wife were eating dinner in a little restaurant in the Smokey Mountains. An elderly man came over to their table and introduced himself, "I am from around these parts," he said. "My mother was not married, and the shame the community directed toward her was also directed toward me. Whenever I went to town with my mother, I could see people staring at us, making guesses about who my daddy was. At school, I ate lunch alone. In my early teens, I began attending a little church but always left before church was over, because I was afraid somebody would ask me what a boy like me was doing in church. One day, before I could escape, I felt a hand on my shoulder. It was the minister. He looked closely at my face. I knew that he too was trying to guess who my father was. "Well, boy, you are a child of. . ." and then he paused. When he spoke again, he said, "Boy, you are a child of God. I see a striking resemblance." Then he swatted me on the bottom and said, "Now, you go and claim your inheritance." "I left church that day a different person," the elderly man said. "In fact, that was the beginning of my life." "What's your name?" Dr. Craddock asked. He answered, "Ben Hooper. My name is Ben Hooper." Dr. Craddock said he vaguely recalled from when he was a kid, his father talking about how the people of Tennessee had twice elected a fellow who had been born out of wedlock as the governor of their state. His name. . . Ben Hooper.

On this day that we remember Jesus' baptism and our own, I tell you,

**You are a beloved child of God! You are a person of worth to be valued! You are to live a life of Love and acceptance of yourself and all God's people!**

**Live a life worthy of your calling, "Now, you go and claim your inheritance."**

Hymn                    *"I Was There to Hear Your Borne Cry"*                    NCH #351

I was there to hear your borne cry, I'll be there when you are old.  
I rejoiced the day you were baptized, to see your life unfold.  
I was there when you were but a child, with a faith to suit you well;  
In a blaze of light you wandered off to find where demons dwell.

When you heard the wonder of the Word I was there to cheer you on;  
You were raised to praise the living Lord, to whom you now belong.  
If you find someone to share your time and you join your hearts as one,  
I'll be there to make your verses rhyme from dusk 'till rising sun.

In the middle ages of your life, not too old, no longer young,  
I'll be there to guide you through the night, complete what I've begun.  
When the evening gently closes in, and you shut your weary eyes,  
I'll be there as I have always been with just one more surprise.

I was there to hear your borning cry, I'll be there when you are old.  
I rejoiced the day you were baptized, to see your life unfold.

## Baptism and Renewal of Baptismal Vows

### Introduction

Our GOD created new life forms and brought them up from the waters of chaos, embraced them, and called them good.

Jesus, baptized in the river Jordan by John the Baptist, became living water for us and embraces all of us. Jesus embraces those who are poor, oppressed, marginalized and all others who come seeking.

We follow Jesus with our Baptism, marking a starting place for new life and new ways of being. We join Jesus in love and service.

Let us prepare our hearts and minds to see, feel, and hear again the vows of Baptism.

### Renewal of Baptismal Promises

One: Do you renew and affirm the promises made at your Baptism?

**People: I do.**

Do you recognize the call of God to be God's people always?

**I do.**

Do you embrace the way of Jesus in faith and ministry?

**I do**

Do you accept the nurture of the Holy Spirit who renews your spirit each day?

**I do.**

Do you accept and embrace others who seek a liberating faith in God?

**I do.**

One: In renewing your baptismal vows, remember your Baptism as a mark of acceptance and welcome into the care of Christ's church where you may begin again your Christian faith and life.

### Unison Prayer

**People: O God, we rejoice in your grace, given and received.**

**We thank you that you claim us, that you wash us, strengthen us, and guide us, that you empower us to live a life worthy of our calling.**

**In the way of Jesus, make us as water in a dry and thirsty world.**

**Establish us to be places of refreshment.**

**Root us and nurture us in love, that with all your people, we may rightly and justly serve you. Fill us with your fullness that our lives may overflow in service and love. Amen.**

### Offering

One: As we claim the blessings of our baptism, let us be a blessing to others. Come, bearing your tithes and your offerings, that the world may be changed, one blessing at a time.

## Dedication

One: Faithful God,  
Bless us in our baptismal calling to be in ministry of showing hospitality to others.  
We offer the gifts that we have been given to be used not for conquest and dominance,  
but for use in liberating the poor and hurting people who pray for our liberation as well as  
their own. Receive and multiply our gifts for life-giving ministry.  
Amen.

## Sending Hymn

*“Go, My Children, with My Blessing”*

NCH #82

**Go, my children, with my blessing, never alone;  
Waking, sleeping, I am with you, you are my own;  
In my love’s baptismal river, I have made you mine forever,  
Go, my children, with my blessing, you are my own,  
  
Go, my children, fed and nourished, closer to me;  
Grow in love and love by serving, joyful and free.  
Here my Spirit’s power filled you, here with tender comfort stilled you;  
Go, my children, fed and nourished, joyful and free.**

## Benediction

Thank you, God, for blessing us with memories of Jesus' baptism and ours.  
Thank you for removing our reluctance, doubt, and fears,  
for replacing them with courage and commission.  
We go forth with your calling, direction, and blessing. Amen.

## Postlude

Sandy Wentzloff



To view our service click on the link: <https://listen2god.org/weekly-message/>

Our **From the Heart Offering** in January goes to the Salvation Army.

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](https://listen2god.org) or drop off at the church office  
on Wednesday between 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.**

**Remember in Prayer:** 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](mailto:dmckee545@gmail.com) • Website at [listen2god.org](http://listen2god.org)**

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### **Upcoming at UCC:**

- ❖ **Undecorate the Church** - January 13 at 4 p.m.
- ❖ **Church Council** meeting - January 7 at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom
- ❖ **Annual Meeting** - watch for more information.

**We will *undecorate* the church on  
Wednesday, January 13th at 4:00 p.m.  
If you are able to help it would  
be appreciated.**

