

## *Order of worship*

1st Sunday of Christmas

**December 27, 2020**

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### **Call to worship** *(based on Psalm 148)*

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens;  
Praise God in the heights!

**Praise the Lord, all angels;  
Praise God, all God's host!**

Praise God, sun and moon;  
Praise God, all you shining stars!

**Praise God, you highest heavens,  
And you waters above the heavens!**

### **Call to confession**

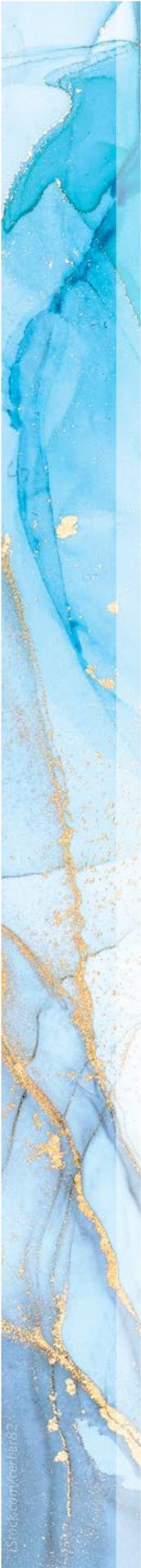
As we look to the new year, we hope for an end to polarization, enmity and fissures that have scarred our country and world. We yearn for peace with justice; yet we know that we have not always lived as those who are formed in the peace of Christ. We confess our sin assured of God's mercy and empowering grace.

### **Prayer of confession**

Merciful God, we confess our complicity in the divisions that have wounded our country and our world. We have been silent when others are disparaged or held in contempt. Indeed, we ourselves have harbored ill will in our hearts. Forgive and restore in us your Spirit of compassion and justice-seeking love. Amen.

### **Assurance of pardon**

Friends, hear the good news of the gospel. In Christ we are forgiven and set free from the sins that bind and enslave us. God's Spirit has been sent into our lives and our world to empower us to live out the Great Commandment — loving God with all of who we are, and loving others as ourselves. Thanks be to God.



### **Prayer of illumination**

O God, we praise you for your word, the lens of our faith with vision-framing power. As we hear your word this day, may it sharpen our focus on what you seek for us to be and to do. Help us listen to what your Spirit is saying to the church.

### **Scripture readings**

### **Sermon**

### **Affirmation of faith** *(from a Brief Statement of Faith)*

In life and in death we belong to God.

Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit,  
we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel,  
whom alone we worship and serve.

With believers in every time and place, we rejoice that  
nothing in life or in death can separate us from the  
love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### **Call for the offering**

In the Christmas season, we celebrate the great gift of Emmanuel, God with us. Let us now bring our gifts in joyful response to God's incarnate love.

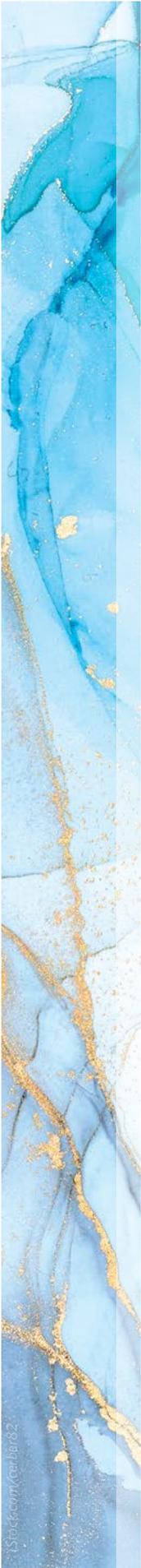
### **Prayer of dedication**

O God, giver of all good gifts, we offer gifts to you in return, including the gift of our very lives. May they, and we, bear your peace, love and justice into our community and our world. Amen.

### **Prayers of the people and the Lord's Prayer**

Loving God, in this season of celebration, we remember all for whom hardship has robbed joy. We remember especially the children in our church family, in our community and around the globe. We lift before you children who are separated from their parents, who are without a family or who grieve the death of a parent during this season in which family is our deepest yearning. Help us to be ever attentive to the needs and tender sufferings of children in our midst. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

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Help us to be your witnesses in word and deed in our communities. Empower us to break down barriers that divide your human family — to resist and disarm stereotypes that malign, to stand in solidarity with outcasts and to hold our civic leaders accountable for our common life and for support of the most vulnerable in our midst. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of the nations, we pray for elected officials of this country and countries around our globe. Help them resist greed, prideful ambition and partisan gain in order that they may serve the welfare of all. Inspire them to strive for peace and justice so that all your children may dwell secure, free of war and injustice. Move them to hear the cries of the poor and hungry, and to ensure a rightful share of the resources needed to sustain life. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

And as we continue to grapple with overwhelming pandemic challenges, we pray that you would grant special measures of strength and endurance to weary healthcare workers who labor on the frontlines of this struggle and to all who are now facilitating vaccinations. We pray for your comfort for all who are sick and for all who have lost loved ones. Grant us all wisdom and courage for the living of this hour. We pray all these things in the name of Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray saying, **Our Father...**

### **Charge and benediction** *(based on Isaiah 61)*

Let us greatly rejoice in the Lord with our whole being,  
For God has clothed us with the garments of salvation,  
God has covered us with the robe of justice.  
So, let us lift up the broken-hearted and stand with the oppressed.  
Let us love God with our whole lives and  
love our neighbors as ourselves. Amen.

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Liturgy written by Roger Gench  
and provided for free distribution.

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