

Order of Worship

First Sunday after Christmas
January 1, 2023

Call to worship *(Based on Psalm 148)*

Leader: Sun and moon and all of you bright stars!

People: Praise God!

Leader: All of you who are his messengers and comprise
his heavenly forces!!

People: Praise God!

Leader: Highest heaven and you waters that are above the sky!

People: Praise God!

Leader: Let all of these praise the Lord's name because God gave
the command and they were created!

**People: God set them in place always and forever. God made
a law that will not be broken.**

ALL: Let us worship God!

Call to confession *(Based on Isaiah 63:7-9)*

Surrounded by God's everlasting faithfulness, we acknowledge our
distress in how we have lost faith, become separated from God and one
another. Let us confess our sins to God our loving and merciful redeemer.

Prayer of confession *(Thomas Merton, Thoughts in Solitude)*

"My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road
ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really
know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does
not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to
please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all
that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.
And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I
may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always though I
may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you
are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone."

Assurance of pardon *(Based on Isaiah 63:7-9)*

Leader: During all our distress, God is also distressed, so he
sends a messenger who serves him to save us. In
love and mercy God has redeemed us.

People: Thanks be to God. Amen.



Prayer for illumination

Open our hearts, Oh God, to this your Word. May we hear with joy what you would have us hear this day and may the music of your grace build our whole lives long that we may sing your praise with our whole being.

Scripture readings

Sermon

Affirmation of faith *(Confession of 1967 – Inclusive Version)*

God has created the world of space and time to be the sphere of God's dealings with humankind. In its beauty and vastness, sublimity and awfulness, order and disorder, the world reflects to the eye of faith the majesty and mystery of its Creator.

Call for the offering

In the babe of Bethlehem, we have been given an immeasurable gift. May we give our gifts to play our part in the refrain of his story of redemption for our lives and the world. Let us give of our tithes and offerings.

Prayer of dedication

As the magi follow that star and turn their final corner toward Bethlehem, surely they wondered about the adequacy of their gifts for the newborn king. Teach us to follow you just as the magi followed that star faithfully and remind us that you have given us what we need to serve you and your kingdom. May these gifts serve to guide yet others to the manger of the savior as well. May they serve to build up community and heal our planet. Amen.

Prayers of the people and the Lord's Prayer

God of years 2022 and 2023, and of all times and places. You have journeyed with your people from the very first moment of relationship in that garden, through the events of history, and alongside the events of this last year and the year to come. Show us each day the beauty of your creation, the strength of your human community and the potential of our aspirations.

We are grateful this day for gifts you have brought to us in this life and on this day. *[Here you may wish to bring up specific joys of the community or recall recent signs of beauty and life in your community (i.e. Christmas Eve service, a new birth, new jobs, or a holiday mission project.)]*

Even during times of alienation and exile you still longed to bring your people back to the promise. We still find ourselves in uncertain times, disorienting circumstances and long for restoration of your creation and community.

In that longing and uncertainty, we lift our prayers of intercession and supplication up to you:



We pray for our newly elected leadership in the United States. May leaders govern with a heart for the welfare of the people of this land and every land. May they find common ground to bring the greater good into the world.

We pray for the war in Ukraine and Russia. For families ripped apart and grieving the losses of loved ones as well as the trauma of war on their children and future generations.

We pray for the women of Iran and the Iranian people seeking greater agency, equality and opportunity for them and for their children.

We pray for those held hostage and without due process as pawns of states and terrorist groups. May people never be used as currency and their humanity, dignity, and agency be preserved and always honored.

We pray for those in the LGBTQIA+ and gender nonconforming communities whose lives are threatened by violence merely for who they love or for living into authenticity.

We also take this moment to pray for those closest to us we may know by name who need your love and care this day [Here you may list prayers of the community and/or provide a moment of silent reflection.]

Draw close to each one in body, mind, or circumstance, Gentle Savior. Work within each situation a knowledge of your divine love and compassion that compels your human family toward justice and love. Teach us where we may become hands and feet that all may know your grace and your powerful love.

For we pray this in the name of Jesus Christ whom you sent that we may know the depth of your love and that we may remember the prayer he taught us all, **“Our Father...”**.

Charge and benediction

Go be part of God’s crescendo of redemption. Bring the instrument or voice of your life story to play a part in God’s chorus and orchestra of love. Bring others into the music that they may both contribute joyfully to something larger than themselves and offer something beautiful to the world God has created.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship and power of the Holy Spirit be and abide with you and all you encounter this week and forevermore. Amen.

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Liturgy written by Kyle Walker and provided for free distribution.

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