

**A Joint Service of  
Lakewood Congregational Church**

*A Congregation of the United Church of Christ*

and

**Trinity Lutheran Church**

Sunday, December 27, 2020

The First Sunday After Christmas



**Those Who Dream...will not keep silent**

Below is an order of worship to be followed in your home that can be used on its own or alongside with the accompanying worship video.

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Pastor Joanna:** Welcome to worship with us at Trinity Lakewood Church and Lakewood Congregational Church on this First Sunday after Christmas.

**Pastor Sara:** We are glad you're worshipping with us today. Traditionally, on the first Sunday after Christmas, our two congregations have gathered together for a service of lessons and carols. This year, in keeping with that tradition, we're here together across time and space to worship God.

**Pastor Joanna:** As you know, at Lakewood Congregational Church, as well as at Trinity Lutheran Church, we strive to be people of extravagant welcome. Whether you are young or old, gay or straight, single or partnered, happy or sad, confused or inspired, street smart or college-educated, whether you can't pay your bills or you have more than enough to share—no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here in this place, to worship the God who welcomes us all.

**Pastor Sara:** As you think of the many people you love at the corner of West Clifton and Detroit, and the Body of Christ throughout the world, say "May the Peace of Christ be with you."

**Both:** May the peace of Christ be with you. Let us worship God.

**Prelude**

*That Boy-Child of Mary*

Judy Fesko

## Call to Worship

Rev. Joanna D'Agostino

One: Here on the heels of Christmas,

**All: We speak of love.**

One: We speak of joy.

**All: We speak of candle light and fireside.**

One: We speak of dreams being fulfilled.

**All: We speak of "glorias" and angel choruses.**

One: We speak the words, "Do not be afraid."

**All: Here on the heels of Christmas,  
We are called to speak, for the world needs a light.**

One: A light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not overcome it.

**All: Let us worship and listen. Then, let us speak. Amen.**

## Prayer of Confession

Pastor Sara Cogsil

God of today and tomorrow,

We know

That your fingerprints are all over this world.

And we know

That those who dream cannot keep silent.

So today we pray,

Give us eyes to see you.

Give us courage to trust you.

And give us lips to speak of you in our midst.

Gratefully we pray,

Amen.

## Hymn *Angels We Have Heard On High*

(Victoria Peacock and Ben Malkevitch, vocals and piano)

## Prayer for Illumination

Liz Spahr

Divine Voice,

In the beginning,

It was you who spoke over the water and brought forth creation.

And then it was you who asked, "Cain, where is your brother?"

It was you who spoke to Elijah in a still, small, voice.

And it was you, through angels,

Who spoke to Mary and Joseph and the shepherds.

You have always been speaking—

In words, in memories, in songs, and in dreams.

So today, as we prepare to hear your word read aloud,

We ask that you would speak to us once again—as only you can—

So that we might speak this same good news to others.

We are listening. We are grateful.

## Isaiah 61:10--62:3

Bruce Tillberg

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,

my whole being shall exult in my God;

for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,

he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,

as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,

and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

For as the earth brings forth its shoots,

and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,

so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise

to spring up before all the nations.

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,

and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,

until her vindication shines out like the dawn,

and her salvation like a burning torch.

The nations shall see your vindication

and all the kings your glory;

and you shall be called by a new name

that the mouth of the Lord will give.

You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord,

and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

## Hymn

*O Come. All Ye Faithful*

Judy Fesko

## Luke 2:22-40

Liz Spahr

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, ‘Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord’), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, ‘a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.’

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

‘Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,  
according to your word;  
for my eyes have seen your salvation,  
which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,  
a light for revelation to the Gentiles  
and for glory to your people Israel.’

And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, ‘This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.’

There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.

## Sermon

Rev. Sara Cogsil and Rev. Joanna D’Agostino

### Pastor Joanna:

God may the words of our mouths and the meditations of all of our hearts in this hour be acceptable in your sight, for you are our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

### Pastor Sara:

Just a few nights ago our respective faith communities gathered to celebrate the good news of the Christmas story. As Luke tells us, this is “good news of great joy for all people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.” This Good News reverberates throughout the region and across time. This Good News is a fulfillment of God’s dream for the world, of God coming to earth in the flesh, of God birthing salvation.

At Trinity, we have spent the season of Advent thinking about God’s dream and how we are recipients of God’s dream and participants in bringing it about. We have heard the call to keep awake to God’s presence in our midst; we have followed John the Baptist in preparation to the ways God shows up in our lives; we

have joined Mary in singing her song in acknowledgement of God's dream to cast the mighty down from their thrones and to lift up the lowly; and we have pondered about the time Mary and Elizabeth spent together both as expectant mothers whose lives were intricately woven into God's plan for the world.

Now we gather again this day as the Christmas season continues. God's dream has come to us in the flesh and is visible in a baby. The baby has been born and the story continues. God's living and breathing self still has more to show us, to teach us, to give us. We are invited to linger with this baby, to pay attention, to notice how God's inbreaking is already drawing a response and inviting us to do the same.

**Pastor Joanna:**

I'm grateful this year for the opportunity to zoom in on Luke's depiction of Simeon and Anna. Pastor Sara and I both realized we don't typically preach a sermon on the Sunday after Christmas. While we have often read the passage about Simeon on the Sunday after Christmas in the past, neither of us had preached on it.

I felt really drawn to this point about sacrificing turtledoves at the temple. I associate turtledoves with the 12 Days of Christmas. I'm not sure we hear that word too often outside of that song. Here in this text, Mary and Joseph bring their newborn baby boy to do what is written according to the law in Leviticus on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of life, and the scripture says they offered a sacrifice of two turtledoves or two young pigeons.

I'm trying to think about what it must have felt like to be in their shoes-- to enter a Temple in a town they're not used to living in, not knowing who they'll meet there, just 8 days after giving birth in a stable, after a long journey, knowing by the power of the

Holy Spirit that the child they're holding is going to redeem the world.

I'm trying to imagine searching the marketplace or asking around for two turtledoves, and finding the resources to purchase them, while trying to heal from birth and sustain new life away from the comfort of home. Perhaps a table was set up right outside the temple, with sacrifices available to purchase... perhaps it was a fairly common experience, but it sounds stressful to me.

When the Book of Leviticus explains this whole process, around chapter 12, it explains that the mother should bring a year-old-lamb to sacrifice at the temple, but then it goes on to say, "If she cannot afford to bring a lamb, she should bring a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

Our Gospel writers, in this case Luke, like to remind us using these contextual images that Jesus' family was in a lowly and marginalized position in society. This is not a family that can afford to bring a lamb. This is a family that will do their best to provide two turtledoves. It is no accident of the Christian story that The One who has come to redeem the world is one who can only afford a humble offering.

**Pastor Sara**

The first days following Christmas Day allow us to linger in the details of Jesus' birth. We don't get to just acknowledge that there is the song 12 Days of Christmas, but we also get to celebrate the Christmas season recognizing that Christmas Day is just the first day. Today we are still with the newborn and his family, but we also are with Simeon and Anna. It's no surprise that we find them in the temple. They have been waiting and waiting and waiting for the Messiah. They had been waiting their whole lives for the Messiah and Simeon has been told, he has been promised that he will indeed see the Messiah before he dies. I can

imagine Simeon entering the temple excited, but also cautious. Can the Messiah that he has been waiting for now be here? And yet as he enters, he immediately knows. When Simeon sees Mary and Joseph with their baby, he knows that this is the one for whom he has been waiting. He approaches them and reaches out, taking the baby in his arms. I wonder what that moment felt like. How did Simeon feel when he embraced the long awaited Messiah? Scripture tells us as he held the baby, he praised God. He praises God for a promise fulfilled. His eyes have seen salvation, his arms have held salvation, his whole body beheld the body of God.

And Anna, she too is in the temple. An eighty-four-year-old widow, she stays in the temple praying and fasting. Upon seeing the baby, she too is moved to respond. She too praises God. And she begins to tell the others. She tells anyone she can about the redemption that is present in and through this baby.

### **Pastor Joanna**

Narrowing in on this Gospel this year, I recognize that Luke, in telling this part of the story, wanted to underscore the way in which the Messiah came through a humble family with so little to offer rather than through the wealthy, the powerful, the elite--but even further than that, it is a profound statement that even though he comes as a humble newborn baby, Simeon does not skip a beat in recognizing that he is the one who will redeem the world. As Pastor Sara said, when they enter the temple he immediately knows.

It is no mistake that this story comes without questioning or uncertainty. Simeon does not ask, "Are you sure the Prince of Peace would come from a family who can only offer two turtledoves?" "Or, hmm, I wonder if this is him?" Guided by the Holy Spirit, Simeon had a deep sense of unwavering clarity, which Anna also experienced when she saw Simeon take Baby Jesus into his arms.

At LCC this Advent, I preached about how we, like Mary, are Theotokos; God-Bearers...called to give birth to Christ in this time and culture, and that we, like Isaiah, are anointed and sent by God to bring the Good News of healing, liberation, comfort, provision, reparation, restoration, and the springing up of new life.

Today we want to point out that we, like Simeon and Anna, are called to deepen our own sense of clarity, to recognize the work of God, the work of redemption, the light that shines in the shadows, when it is happening before our own eyes.

For all that has been disrupted in our lives in this past year, I wonder how we might embrace an opportunity to become more clear, more attentive, more mindful of the ways in which God is working in our lives. Far too often, we have become so accustomed to distraction, to questioning, to researching, to wandering...and perhaps the Holy Spirit is empowering us in this season of staying at home to slow down a little, to slow down our hustle and bustle and embrace an opportunity for discernment and spiritual growth...an opportunity to become more like Simeon and Anna, so that when Christ is made known in our midst, we don't skip a beat before offering God our praise.

### **Pastor Sara:**

This Christmas season gifts us with a baby, but the one who has been born goes with us throughout all the seasons both of the church year and of our lives. The one who we had been waiting for, the one who has this humble beginning, the one who is recognized for exactly who he is still present in the here and now.

### **Both:**

Thanks be to God. Amen.

## **Hymn**

### *Hark the Herald Angels Sing*

*LCC Virtual Choir*

## **Apostles Creed**

Pastor Sara Cogsil

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

## **Prayers of Intercession**

Bruce Tillberg

Joining our voices with the song of the angels let us pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

Night and day, all creation praises you, O God, strengthen your church across nations, denominations, and traditions. Fill us with wisdom and unify our proclamation of your forgiveness and mercy.

Hear us, O God, your mercy great.

All creation is holy to you, O God, you cause the earth to bring forth its shoots and gardens to spring up, protect hibernating animals and frozen lands that wait earnestly for longer days of awakening and growth.

Hear us, O God, your mercy is great.

The nations are upheld by your hand, O God, cause righteousness and praise to spring forth, inspiring leaders to serve with compassion and integrity. Send your spirit of discernment upon legislators grappling with complex decisions for the sake of the common good.

Hear us, O God, your mercy is great.

Send the spirit of your son into our hearts, O God, come quickly to hearts that race with fear, hearts that break with grief, and hearts that long for wholeness. Reveal your power to heal and to save.

Hear us, O God, your mercy is great.

Adopt us into your family, O God, bless elders with peace and joy of Simeon and Anna, strengthen those who have retired, those who work in older age, and those in need of income, food, company, or healthcare. Connect young and old across generations.

Hear us, O God, your mercy is great.

Let us depart in peace, O God, according to your word, for all your saints we give you thanks, prepare our salvation in the sight of all your witness of every time and place.

Hear us, O God, your mercy is great.

God of mercy, come quickly to us with grace upon grace as we lift these an all the prayers to you in the name of Jesus. Amen

## **The Lord's Prayer**

Pastor Joanna D'Agostino

**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.**

## **Poem - Swell by Sarah Aye**

You know that feeling when you fall in love?

Time-stands-still and moves too fast.

You'd give up sleep just to talk all night

Because there's so much to say and not enough time.

It's that full to the brim,

Over the stars,  
Living is dreaming,  
Too-good-to-be-true  
Kind of feeling?

I imagine that's how Simeon and Anna felt  
When they saw Jesus that day.  
I imagine it was that full to the brim,  
Over the stars,  
Living is dreaming,  
Too-good-to-be-true  
Good news kind of feeling.

I imagine it was love.  
And I imagine that that good, good news  
Swelled to the tip of their tongues  
Until they could not keep silent.

So may we know what Simeon and Anna knew,  
Which is that some dreams we hold close to our chest,  
For ourselves to cherish and never forget.  
But other dreams must be spoken out loud—  
Dreams of justice and love and hope, here and now.  
So today my prayer is to know that swell,  
For there is good, good news  
That we must tell.

**Postlude**            *Go, Tell it on the Mountain*

arr. Marianne Kim  
Ben Malkevitch, piano