

GATHERING IN GOD'S WORD

Prelude

Sharing Our Lives in Prayer

Prayer Requests

Silent Prayer

Pastoral Prayer

Welcome

Letting God In

During this time, we invite you to prepare your heart and your mind for worship. We want you to be able to use this quiet time to settle your thoughts, set aside any distractions that may be troubling you, and focus your whole self on God. Open your heart, your mind, and your spirit, and let God into your life.

Centering Prayer: We hear you, God: "Get up. Go."

As you breathe in, pray, "We hear you, God."

As you breathe out, pray, "Get up. Go."

* Opening Praise (from *Spill the Beans*, iss. 14, © 2014 Spill the Beans Resources):

One: On the road,

Many: God is with us.

One: In our joys,

Many: God is with us.

One: In our challenges,

Many: God is with us.

One: In our community,

Many: God is with us.

One: In our church,

Many: God is with us.

One: Let us go another way and walk the road less traveled

Many: Because God is with us.

* Invitation to Confession

* Joining in Prayer (based on *Spill the Beans*, iss. 14, © 2014 Spill the Beans Resources):

Loving God, you did a wonderful thing in coming into humanity in Jesus. A child born in your image – a vulnerable baby the brought your hope and glory to our world. In this Christmas season, we seek to reflect the adoration of the Magi who, with the shepherds, were the very first visitors to behold your Son. And we bring that Son our own gifts today, more precious than gold or silver or precious perfume. We bring him our gratitude and our heartfelt promise to live as his people. We're sorry for those times when we turn a blind eye to the guidance you give us as we seek to follow our own path of faith. We're sorry for being slow to be moved by the miracles of your goodness that are made known to us day by day. We're sorry for sometimes taking the wrong paths, for being led by others instead of being led by you. Lord, help us. Have mercy on us. In mercy, hear us. In mercy, release us. In mercy, help us. Lead us by a bright star, that we might walk the road that makes you happy. (Please take a moment for silent reflection and confession.)

In the name of Jesus – your Son, our Savior – we pray.

Amen.

* God's Promise of Grace

* Sharing the Peace of Christ

* Song of Peace: "Let There Be Peace on Earth"

(reprinted with permission, © Jan-Lee Music, copyright-protected alternate lyrics)

**Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.
Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.
With God our Creator, we are family.
Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony.**

**Let peace begin with me, let this be the moment now.
With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow.
To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally.
Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.**

HEARING GOD'S WORD

Prayer to Open Minds and Hearts

Scripture reading – Matthew 2:1-23 (from the *Common English Bible*, © 2011)

¹ After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the territory of Judea during the rule of King Herod, magi came from the east to Jerusalem. ² They asked, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We've seen his star in the east, and we've come to honor him." ³ When King Herod heard this, he was troubled, and everyone in Jerusalem was troubled with him. ⁴ He gathered all the chief priests and the legal experts and asked them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ They said, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for this is what the prophet wrote: ⁶ You, Bethlehem, land of Judah, by no means are you least among the rulers of Judah, because from you will come one who governs, who will shepherd my people Israel." ⁷ Then Herod secretly called for the magi and found out from them the time when the star had first appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search carefully for the child. When you've found him, report to me so that I too may go and honor him." ⁹ When they heard the king, they went; and look, the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stood over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were filled with joy. ¹¹ They entered the house and saw the child with Mary his mother. Falling to their knees, they honored him. Then they opened their treasure chests and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹² Because they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another route. ¹³ When the magi had departed, an angel from the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up. Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod will soon search for the child in order to kill him." ¹⁴ Joseph got up and, during the night, took the child and his mother to Egypt. ¹⁵ He stayed there until Herod died. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: I have called my son out of Egypt. ¹⁶ When Herod knew the magi had fooled him, he grew very angry. He sent soldiers to kill all the children in Bethlehem and in all the surrounding territory who were two years old and younger, according to the time that he had learned from the magi. ¹⁷ This fulfilled the word spoken through Jeremiah the prophet: ¹⁸ A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and much grieving. Rachel weeping for her children, and she did not want to be comforted, because they were no more. ¹⁹ After King Herod died, an angel from the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt. ²⁰ "Get up," the angel said, "and take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel. Those who were trying to kill the child are dead." ²¹ Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus ruled over Judea in place of his father Herod, Joseph was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he went to the area of Galilee. ²³ He settled in a city called Nazareth so that what was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled: He will be called a Nazarene.

Sermon: "Faith on the Run" – Rev. Lisa Johnson

Exploring the Word Together

This is a time for us to process our faith and our hearing of God's word together – a time to be the word of God for one another. It's also a time to build community with one another – a time to share elements of our faith and our understanding of that faith with each other. Feel free to participate in conversation with those around you or sit and ponder this question on your own.

Have you ever followed God along a different, unexpected road? How?

Hymn #151 – We Three Kings of Orient Are
(from *Glory to God*, © 2013 Westminster John Knox Press)

We three kings of Orient are;
Bearing gifts we traverse afar,
Field and fountain, moor and mountain,
Following yonder star.

O star of wonder, star of night,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect light!

Born a King on Bethlehem's plain,
Gold I bring to crown him again,
King forever, ceasing never,
Over us all to reign.

O star of wonder, star of night,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect light!

Frankincense to offer have I;
Incense owns a deity nigh;
Prayer and praising gladly raising,
Worshiping God Most High.

O star of wonder, star of night,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect light!

Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume
Breathes a life of gathering gloom;
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,
Sealed in a stone-cold tomb.

O star of wonder, star of night,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect light!

Glorious now behold him arise,
King and God and Sacrifice:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Sounds through the earth and skies.

O star of wonder, star of night,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect light!

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Coming Together in Prayer
Pastoral Prayer

Lord's Prayer: **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 sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

Prayer of Gratitude and Blessing

Our offering plates are located at the entrance to the sanctuary. This offering allows us to continue our outreach and mission both here in the community of Oronoco and beyond – in the greater Rochester area, in Minnesota, and even around the world. We are grateful for your willingness to join us in this mission and thank you for your generosity.

Distribution of Star Words: A Star Word is a simple, star-shaped piece of paper with a word printed on it. As the first offering plate is passed, please take a Star Word. Take it home with you and post it someplace where you'll see it every day. You're invited to ponder what significance this word might have in your life and how God might be speaking to you through that simple message. And as we go through the year together, you're invited to share with one another – or with the congregation as a whole – about your thoughts and reflections regarding your Star Word.

Hymn – Star-Child (insert)

(from *Sing the Faith*, © 2003 Geneva Press)

Star-Child, earth-Child, go-between of God,
Love Child, Christ Child, heaven's lightning rod,
 This year, this year, let the day arrive
 When Christmas comes for everyone,
 Everyone alive!

Street child, beat child, no place left to go,
Hurt child, used child, no one wants to know,
 This year, this year, let the day arrive
 When Christmas comes for everyone,
 Everyone alive!

Grown child, old child, memory full of years,
Sad child, lost child, story told in tears,
 This year, this year, let the day arrive
 When Christmas comes for everyone,
 Everyone alive!

Spared child, spoiled child, having, wanting more,
Wise child, faith child, knowing joy in store,
 This year, this year, let the day arrive
 When Christmas comes for everyone,
 Everyone alive!

Hope-for-peace Child, God's stupendous sign,
Down-to-earth Child, Star of stars that shine,
 This year, this year, let the day arrive
 When Christmas comes for everyone,
 Everyone alive!

Announcements

BEING SENT OUT IN GOD'S WORD

* Blessing

* Claiming Our Faith Identity

This is a chance for us to remind one another of both who we are and whose we are before we head back out in the world. The hope is that, as we grow more and more familiar with the words and the claim and call that they place on our hearts, we'll be able to recall them throughout the week in those moments when we need to tap into our faith. The words and phrases are also aimed at helping us connect with our congregation's own mission statement: "We are a community of believers whose mission is to share God's Word, show God's Love, serve God's World, and strive for God's Peace."

One: We are the Church –

ALL: God's beloved children today, tomorrow, and always.

One: Here, in this worship, through prayer, word, and fellowship,

ALL: God has embraced us yet again, and our spirits have been made new.

One: Suffused with God's grace,

ALL: We claim new strength, new purpose, and new hope in our call.

One: With spirits reaffirmed and renewed,

ALL: We are called to SHARE God's Word. We are called to SHOW God's Love. We are called to SERVE God's World. We are called to STRIVE for God's Peace.

One: We are the Church

ALL: Because God binds us together in sacred companionship and blessed connectedness.

One: And now, as the Church, God calls us out

ALL: To do and be God's extravagant love in the world.

One: This service has ended.

ALL: Now our service can begin.

Postlude

** indicates please rise in body or spirit as you feel led*