

**The Presbyterian Church of Okemos**  
**December 31, 2023**  
**First Sunday of Christmastide**



**Preparation:** “The disorientation of modern, fast-paced life uproots our spirit’s bearings and leaves us without guides. When vertigo of spirit has pushed us to our limits our rituals restore the faith that keeps us moored.” -- Anna Strickland, set to the tune of *Bereden väg för Herran* (Prepare the Way, O Zion)

**Gathering As a People of God**

**Prelude**

Partita on *Coventry Carol*  
Dr. Marlene Brewbaker, organist

John Barr

**\* Call to Worship**

Rebecca Mattern

One: Every year we celebrate Christmas.

**All: Every month we break bread.**

One: Every week we gather for worship.

**All: Every day we count our blessings.**

One: Every minute God is near.

**All: Yes, every minute God is near.**

One: These are the rituals of our faith.

**All: Let us worship Holy God.**

**\* Hymn #143**

*Angels from the Realms of Glory*, vs. 1-4  
[Regent Square]

**Prayer of Confession**

Pastor Lisa Schrott

One: Church family, our faith is decorated with rituals and rhythms that help tie us to God. Confession is one of those rituals. Every week we gather in this space and tell the truth about our lives. And every week God hears our prayers and offers us grace. So let us embrace this holy tradition together. Let us pray:

**All: God of rhythms, we confess: our faith would not be what it is without rituals. Unlike you, we depend on bread and water. We have to return to this space again and again to hear old, familiar stories. For if we stopped, we know it would not take long before we lost our way. Forgive us for our fragility, and thank you for giving us ordinary rituals and rhythms to hold onto. With grateful and humble hearts we pray. Silent prayer. Amen.**

**Promise of the Gospel and Passing of the Peace**

Pastor Lisa Schrott

One: Every week we gather in this space to tell the truth of our lives and be reminded that we are forgiven and held in God’s loving embrace. We cannot hear this good news enough.

Not matter what you have done or left undone, you belong to God. You are claimed. You are known. You are forgiven.

**All: This is the good news of the gospel! Thanks be to God! Amen!**

One: As a forgiven people, let us greet each other, sharing the peace of Christ. The peace of Christ be with you.

**All: And also with you.** *Please greet your fellow worshippers in ways you feel comfortable.*

**\* Act of Praise #583**

*Gloria, Gloria*

Jacques Berthier

*[Gloria]*

Will be sung once by soloist; please join on the second time

*Gloria, gloria, in excelsis Deo!*

*Gloria, gloria, alleluia, alleluia!*

## **The Word**

**Prayer of Illumination**

Rebecca Mattern

Gracious God, when our world turns upside down or when the road ahead is unclear, we return to ritual. We come to the sanctuary. We break bread at the table. We pour water. We greet one another as family. And we listen to your Word. Today we pray—meet us at this moment. Meet us in these rituals that anchor us and speak a word of hope. We are listening. We are drawing near. We are seeking you. Amen.

**Children's Message**

Pastor Lisa Schrott

**\* Hymn #147**

*The First Nowell*, vs. 1-4

**New Testament Scripture**

Luke 2: 21-38

Rebecca Mattern

**Sermon**

*How does a weary world rejoice? We root ourselves in ritual.*

Rebecca Mattern

**Affirmation of Faith**

Rebecca Mattern

**We believe that faith is a journey marked by rituals and rhythms.**

**We come to worship. We confess our sins. We pass the peace. We offer grace.**

**We hear the Word. We baptize children. We break the bread.**

**And we tell the story of a loving God.**

**And through these sacred rituals, we are reminded: we are not alone.**

**God is near, and we have work to do. May this belief shape the rhythm of our lives. Amen.**

**Hymn #123**

*It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*, vs. 1, 2, 3, 5

## **Responding to The Word**

**Invitation to Our Shared Ministry**

Pastor Lisa Schrott

**Offering**

Pastor Lisa Schrott

**Invitation**

**Offertory**

Offertory on *Rocking*  
[Czech Carol]

David Paxton

**\*Doxology #606**

**\*Prayer of Dedication**

**Pastoral Prayer**

Rebecca Mattern

**The Lord's Prayer**

**in unison**

**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.**

**Sent Out As a People of God**

**\* Hymn #119**

*Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*, vs. 1-3

Mendelssohn

**\* Benediction**

Rebecca Mattern

Family of faith, as you leave this place,  
you go into a weary world—so speak tenderly.  
Do the good that is yours to do.  
Choose connection. Hold onto hope.  
And remember that Christ took on flesh for you.  
You are God's beloved. So go rejoicing.  
The world needs it. Amen.

**Postlude**

*In Dulci Jubilo*  
Dr. Marlene Brewbaker, organist

Denis Bédard

*\* Please rise in body or spirit*

**Education Time:** There will be no classes for children, youth or adults. Please enjoy an extended time of fellowship.

**This Morning's Fellowship Team:** Thank you to Mickey Martin and Shirley Rumminger for supplying refreshments this morning.

**Next Week: January 7, 2024**

**Epiphany Sunday**

**Scripture:** Isaiah 60:1-6 and Matthew 2:1 -12

**Education Hour:** Who is My Neighbor? A Bible study accompanied by a demographic exercise about who lives around us.

This morning's liturgy is adapted from words by the Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed. Graphic design by the Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman. A Sanctified Art LLC - *A Weary World Rejoices*  
sanctifiedart.org.

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