**First Free Methodist Church of Saginaw**

**NATIVITY OF THE LORD**

**December 24, 2021**



*“And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.” (Luke 2:7)*

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*The mission of Saginaw First Free Methodist Church is to be faithful to God and to make known to all people everywhere God’s call to wholeness in Jesus Christ.*

**Prelude**

**\*Call to Worship** (*spoken responsively*)

L: This evening we celebrate the birth of our Lord

**P: Jesus came as a light into the darkness of our world**

L: Our season of waiting has come to an end

**P: God has come in power and love to dwell among us**

L: We worship the child-King, born in a cattle stall

**P: The infant-Redeemer and lowly-Lord is the Almighty God**

**\*Opening Hymn:** “It Came upon the Midnight Clear” #168 (vv.1-4)

**It came upon the midnight clear**

**That glorious song of old**

**From angels bending near the earth**

**To touch their harps of gold**

**Peace on the earth, good will to men**

**From heaven's all-gracious King**

**The world in solemn stillness lay**

**To hear the angels sing**

**Still thro’ the cloven skies they come**

**With peaceful wings unfurled**

**And still their heav’nly music floats**

**O’re all the weary world**

**Above its sad and lowly plains**

**They bend on hov’ring wing**

**And ever o’er its babel sounds**

**The blessed angels sing**

**And ye, beneath life’s crushing load**

**Whose forms are bending low**

**Who toil along the climbing way**

**With painful step and slow**

**Look up for glad and golden hours**

**Come swiftly on the wing**

**O rest besides the weary road**

**And hear the angels sing**

**For, lo, the days are hast’ning on**

**By prophet bards foretold**

**When with the ever-circling years**

**Comes round the age of gold**

**When peace shall over all the earth**

**Its ancient splendor fling**

**And the whole world give back the song**

**Which now the angels sing**

**\*Invocation and Lord’s Prayer**

L: O God, who has caused this holy night to shine with the illumination of the true light. Grant us, we ask, that as we have known the mystery of that Light upon the earth, so may we also perfectly enjoy him in heaven; where with thee and the Holy Spirit he liveth and reigneth, One God, in glory everlasting. We come in the name of the child who would later teach his friends to pray saying…

**P: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come; your will be done in 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 Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

**\*Gloria Patri**

**Glory be to the Father​**

**And to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.**

**As it was in the beginning​**

**Is now and ever shall be**

**World without end**

**Amen. Amen**

**First Scripture Lesson:** Isaiah 9:2-7

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

**Communion**

*We practice an “open table” which means that all are welcome to partake in communion no matter your church background or lack thereof. We do this because we believe that Communion is a means of God’s Prevenient grace – that someone can experience God, even for the first time, in the act of taking communion.*

**Invitation:**

So I extend this invitation to all – May you who live in love and peace with your neighbor and who strive to lead a new life following God’s ways and God’s commandments, draw near in faith, take this sacrament to your comfort, and humbly make your confession before God.

**Confession:**

**God of holy expectation,**

**Unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden. Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In this season of Advent, look with favor on the lowliness of your servants; fill the hungry with good things; and make your Church expectant in faith as we labor for what we cannot yet see. Amen.**

**Absolution:**

Now hear these words of absolution…

God is our wonderful counselor, who through Jesus exalts the humble, restores the broken, dwells among us, and extends forgiveness to those who ask for it.

**Prayer Over Elements:**

Mighty God, You dwelt in the ark and temple, and in the fullness of time you settled in Mary’s womb and became God with us. Come now, in the power of your Holy Spirit, and bless this bread and this cup, that they may be for us the body and blood of Christ, so that we may be the body of Christ incarnate in this world, redeemed by Christ’s blood. Amen.

**Table:**

On the night Jesus was betrayed he took the bread, and after giving thanks, broke it and gave it to his disciples saying, “This is my body broken for you. Take and eat and as often as you do, do so in remembrance of me.

Likewise Jesus took the cup and blessed it and said, “This is my blood of the new covenant shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Take and drink. As often as you do, do so in remembrance of me.”

**Benediction:**

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of the Son, Christ Jesus our Lord. May the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be yours now and forever. Amen.

**Second Scripture Lesson:** Titus 2:11-14

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

**\*Hymn**: “O Holy Night” #183 (vv.1-3)

**O Holy Night, the stars are brightly shining**

**It is the night of our dear savior’s birth**

**Long lay the world in sin and error pining**

**Til He appeared and the soul felt its worth**

**A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices**

**And yonder breaks a new and glorious morn**

**Fall on your knees O hear the angel voices**

**O night divine O night when Christ was born**

**O night divine**

**O night O night divine**

**Led by the light of faith serenely beaming**

**With glowing hearts by His cradle we stand**

**So led by light of a star sweetly gleaming**

**Here came the wise men from the Orient land**

**The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger**

**In all our trials born to be our friend**

**He knows our need to our weakness is no stranger**

**Behold your King before him lowly bend**

**Behold your King**

**Before Him lowly bend**

**Truly He taught us to love one another**

**His law is love and His gospel is peace**

**Chains shall He break for the slave is our brother**

**And in his name all oppression shall cease**

**Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we**

**Let all within us praise His holy name**

**Christ is the Lord O praise His name forever**

**His pow’r and glory evermore proclaim**

**His pow’r and glory**

**Evermore proclaim**

**Gospel Lesson**: Luke 2:1-20

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered.

Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see--I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.”

So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.

But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

**Sermon**

**Advent reading:**

This evening, we celebrate Christ’s birth. We light the Christ candle for the child-King, the infant-Redeemer, the lowly-Lord. We give thanks that our season of waiting has been fulfilled; that God has come in power and love to dwell among us.

John’s gospel tells us, “In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

Jesus - the light of the world!

Just as Jesus came as a light into the darkness of our world, we too are called to spread the light of Jesus to those around us. Amen.

**\*Hymn:** “Silent Night, Holy Night” #171 (vv.1-4)

**Silent night! Holy night!**

**All is calm, all is bright**

**‘Round yon virgin mother and child**

**Holy infant, so tender and mild**

**Sleep in heavenly peace**

**Sleep in heavenly peace**

**Silent night! Holy night!**

**Shepherds quake at the sight**

**Glories stream from heaven afar**

**Heav’nly host sing Alleluia**

**Christ the Savior is born**

**Christ the Savior is born**

**Silent night! Holy night!**

**Wondrous star lend thy light**

**With the angels let us sing**

**Alleluia to our king**

**Christ the Savior is born**

**Christ the Savior is born**

**Silent night! Holy night!**

**Son of God, love’s pure light**

**Radiant beams from Thy holy face**

**With the dawn of redeeming grace**

**Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth**

**Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth**

**\*Benediction**

L: Come to us, Lord Jesus. Be born in us this night; in our hearts, our minds, and our lives. May the light of your life be kindled in us. Lead us to the shining truth, of God with us, God for us, God in us. Go in peace to love and serve. Amen.