

December 25, 2020 – At Home Worship

Welcome to worship for our Christmas Day service ☺ Thank you for joining us to celebrate the birth of our saviour, Jesus ☺

We will be gathering with ZOOM. Until we work out our technology limitations, we are experimenting on Ros's Zoom service for live online worship. This allows us to gather together for worship from our respective homes. We want to ensure this is the best package for our use before the church invests in our own Zoom subscription. **You don't have to have a computer or internet to connect to any of the Zoom services; you can also just call in on one of these numbers (long distance charges may apply):**

1 587 328 1099 or
1 647 374 4685 or
1 647 558 0588 or
1 778 907 2071 or
1 204 272 7920 or
1 438 809 7799

Use your telephone keypad to enter the meeting ID and Passcode when asked.

Christmas Day service: We will have a 10:00 am Zoom Christmas Day service, which will be jointly lead by myself and Ven. Reverend Rosalyn Elm.

Christmas Day Service

Dec 25, 2020 09:30 AM Zoom opens, service begins at 10:00 am.

Join Zoom Meeting <https://zoom.us/j/94892614909>

Meeting ID: 948 9261 4909

We hope you enjoy the music and videos Lorre and Brad have put together with guest voices including Randy Murphy and Debbie-Lou Ludolph.

As always, if you need a phone call or distanced visit, please do reach out by email or phone: pastor@st-peters-cambridge.org or 519-653-4721 ... The church office is closed, but walking visits or coffee shop visits, video phone visits or regular phone visits remain available ☺ Have a blessing filled week, and please do be in touch if I may be of help or support in these times!

- with love, in Christ, Pastor Janaki.

A Word from Lorre:

I want to extend a huge thank you to everyone who has generously allowed the use of your photographs in the making of our videos for use in our online worship services. I will still take any scenery photos you'd like to send along to be included in future videos. Full credit will of course be given. And also I want to thank everyone who has sent words of appreciation for the efforts of Brad, his guest singers to make our worship the best it can be. We have all learned quite a few new tech skills throughout 2020 and each video gets better than the ones that came before. Thank you for bearing with us and for your words of encouragement. God bless you all during this holy season.
—Lorre Calder

We give thanks to God, for granting our existence on this safe, bountiful, land,
and we recognize that we thrive and enjoy life here,
on the traditional territories of
the Anishnabe, Neutral and Haudenosaunee peoples.

**Please take a few moments of silence, prepare your heart,
centre yourself for worship.**

Gathering Hymn: #297 Jesus What a Wonderful Child

<https://youtu.be/59JIsulUmcl>

Text African American Traditional; Music African American Traditional; Contributor: Jeffrey Radford
arr. Bradley Moggach. All Rights reserved. Reprinted with permission under ONE License # A727610

Greeting:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all, in your home and in mine.

Prayer of the Day: God of humble beginnings, today and tonight we celebrate the humble beginnings of your son, Jesus. How amazing it is, that you came into our world, in the wriggling, squirming, crying, pooping, blood-covered reality of a newborn baby. What a reminder to us that salvation and restoration and grace and mercy and the most incredible acts of love have humble beginnings. Remind us this Christmas to hold fast to humble beginnings, as we celebrate the light of Jesus, entering into darkness that fails to put out the light. Amen.

The Lesson: Hebrews 1:1-4

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

(NRSV)

Word of God, word of life. **C: Thanks be to God.**

Hymn: #298 Angels We Have Heard on High

<https://youtu.be/aOUszXqpu-c>

Text: French Carol; tr H. F. Hemy Music: French Carol Arranged by Jay Althouse, Alfred Publishing Co. Used by Permission. CCLI License #11098609

Psalm 98

¹Sing a new song to the LORD, who has done marvelous things,

whose right hand and holy arm have won the victory.

²O LORD, you have made known your victory,

you have revealed your righteousness in the sight of the nations.

³You remember your steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel;

all the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.

⁴Shout with joy to the LORD, all you lands;

lift up your voice, rejoice, and sing.

⁵Sing to the LORD with the harp,

with the harp and the voice of song.

⁶With trumpets and the sound of the horn

shout with joy before the king, the LORD.

⁷Let the sea roar, and all that fills it,

the world and those who dwell therein.

⁸Let the rivers clap their hands,

and let the hills ring out with joy before the LORD, who comes to judge the earth.

⁹The LORD will judge the world with righteousness

and the peoples with equity.

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Gospel Acclamation: Bless the Lord, My Soul, Taize; Bradley Moggach, Synthesizer and Bells

Click Here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wi38m9haMno&t>

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The Holy Gospel according to John 1:1-14

C: Glory to you O Lord.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness

did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (NRSV)

C: Praise to you, O Christ.*

Sermon (Imagine Pastor Janaki's voice here): (Link for a recording of the sermon will be sent out following the service)

After all the commotion of shepherds, angels, wise men, sheep, after Herod instructing the wise men to come back and tell him about the King they are going to see following the cosmic sign of the star, with Herod hoping to put an end to all this Messiah nonsense - after all this on Christmas morning we hear about the Word in the gospel of John.

Have you ever wished that you could just say a word and by the mere act of saying make things happen? By the mere act of saying a word, bring something, anything into being?

In the beginning was the word, and we hear that word being uttered in the very beginning of time, when God orders the chaos back in Genesis. God says a bunch of stuff:

let there be light,
let there be a dome separating the waters,
let the dry land appear,
let the earth put forth vegetation"

God says, "let this, that and the other be" and so it is.

I wish I had that gift. I probably wouldn't use it very wisely – I have to admit the first thing I would test the gift on would not be "let there be world peace".

But I'd say something like this:

- Let COVID be banished.(boom, it happens)
- Let social distancing and masks and lockdown be banished (boom, it happens)
- let there be chocolate (imagine it, boom, chocolate appears).
- let there be bacon (I can even smell it, mmmm, bacon)
- let me be the size I was in my twenties before COVID and chocolate and bacon immediately became one with my person (voila, no more need for gruelling hours at the gym)

It is a handy skill to have, this gift of speaking things into being. When humanity was created in Gods image and likeness, most of us did not get this gift. But we did receive the gift of free choice - and ever since Genesis, the start of time, human beings have been quite occupied with more or less mucking things up.

After so many years of wandering in the dessert with the Israelites, and so many leaders good bad and in between, after prophets and kings, angels and visions I imagine God scratching his divine head a bit, wondering how he could get us to understand his love for his creation: us.

In the law, given to Moses, in the transmissions from the prophets God is still acting "long distance" if you will. He's sending humanity memos, emails, instructions ... But we do not see his face. I don't know about you, but it is hard for me to imagine taking instructions and relating to a pillar of cloud or a pillar of fire. It is hard for me to relate to a prophet, coming out of the fields or a cave saying "hey dude, God said this, God sent this message for you – you are really messing things up".

I do find it hard to trust people who come with messages from God ... I kind of tend to think "message from God, likely story". The experience of being human has taught me to be skeptical. There is so much that is wrong, that is not of love around – it is not easy to love and to trust. The inevitable darkness of human existence gathers in around us.

After so many efforts of acting "long distance", At long last, God speaks himself into being ... Being in a form we can relate to. Who cannot relate to a little baby? Who can resist the urge to trust, the surge of love, the desire to squeeze a newborn? To sniff the newborn baby's head?

A human being is born. His name is Jesus. He is called Immanuel, God with us. He is both God and human. He is the bridge over which we cross to re-enter, time after time our love with God. God comes to us in the form of a little baby, in a way we can relate – this is the Word of which the Gospel of John speaks.

We, made in God's image and likeness, may not be able to speak things into being quite the way God does, but we do have free will and choice: the choice to live with love, the choice to live the Word of God, and let our own light so shine in the world that darkness does not overcome ...

This is the word we celebrate today – the word of God which became flesh and lived among us. This word made flesh, the birth of God within us, amongst us is what we give thanks for today. Amen.

Hymn of the Day: #292 Love Has Come

<https://youtu.be/V9Xw4KrnCzQ>

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Prayers of the People – at home without ZOOM edition ☺

In the spirit of this season let us now confidently ask our God for those things we need and seek:

For ourselves as we participate in this Christmas as beloved children, holding all of our griefs and losses. God, hear our prayer. *And in your mercy, answer.*

For our families and friends, that they may be sources of constant help and support. God, hear our prayer. *And in your mercy, answer.*

For all the people we have loved who have died, that the love that never dies may sustain us. God, hear our prayer. *And in your mercy, answer.*

For our family and friends, that you may bless them with love, peace, and joy. God, hear our prayer. *And in your mercy, answer.*

For peace throughout the world as proclaimed by the Christmas Angels on that faraway hillside. God, hear our prayer. *And in your mercy, answer*

For greater understanding of the lessons of love and grace as taught by Jesus your Christ. God, hear our prayer. *And in your mercy, answer.*

God of great compassion and love, listen to the prayers of these your people. Grant to all, especially the bereaved and troubled ones this Christmas, the blessing we seek, in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Let us share the peace of Christ:

The Peace of Christ be with you always, in your home and in mine, and throughout God's creation.

Thanksgiving at the Table:

If you are doing this at home, prepare your elements before beginning – bread or cracker, wine or juice

Click here for communion thanksgiving at the table with the Lord's Prayer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RnRfJoYmjs>

We come to God's table with thanksgiving for the unique and mysterious way in which Spirit connects us through the simplest of things. We come with thanksgiving, remembering all who have gone before, and celebrating the power of Spirit to join us in one communion of saints:

In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Holy God, we give thanks for the meal you provide: to nourish, sustain and unite us, bringing us closer to you, through your power – not ours. Amen.

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass 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 and ever. AMEN.

The Body of Christ is given for each one of us. (consume your bread or cracker)
The Blood of Christ is shed for each one of us. (consume your wine or juice)

Prayer after Communion

Emmanuel, God with us,
you grace us with life and breath
and give us bread for the journey.
Send us out in service to this world that you love,
telling the amazing news of your coming
to be Savior and Lord of all.

Amen.

Sending Hymn: #294 In the Bleak Midwinter

<https://youtu.be/TD1mO53aqDE>

Winter Carol (In the Bleak Midwinter) Music by Sherri Porterfield, Words by Christina Rossetti
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Blessing:

May God bless us and keep us.
May the face of God shine upon us with grace and mercy.
May God look upon us with favor
and give us ☩ peace.
Amen.

Dismissal: Go with Jesus who is in our midst. **Thanks be to God.**

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