

Baptism of Christ Sunday

January 12, 2025



Baptism of Christ by Daniel Bonnell

We Gather in Response to God's Invitation

THE GIFT OF MUSIC TO GATHER US

WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS AND AFFIRMATION OF MISSION

We declare ourselves to be a Christ-centered Open and Affirming Congregation, welcoming persons into full membership and participation in the Body of Christ regardless of race, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identities and expressions, ability, culture, economic status, ethnicity, or family composition.

We recognize that there are differences among us, but believe that we can love alike even though we may not think alike. We proclaim this covenant of welcome to all who have known the pain of exclusion or discrimination in church and society. We invite all people to join us in our faith journey toward greater love, understanding, and mutual respect.

*CALL TO WORSHIP (*RESPONSIVE*)

**An asterisk indicates when the people stand in body or spirit.*

One: Come, beloved of God, to remember who you are and whose you are.

All: **God in Christ, has named us all "Beloved."**

Yes, here and now, God's heaven of love is being poured out anew.

May this motion of the Holy One, shape our hearts and minds.

May it brighten the Epiphany light in us and the whole creation.

And may it shape our words and work into good news for the world!

*OPENING PRAYER (*RESPONSIVE*)

Holy One, awaken us again to Your outpouring Spirit of Love. Through this generous gift, stretch our souls wide and form us into channels of your healing grace. Gift us with an ability to recognize You in each other, all imprinted with Your beloved blessing. Clarify our intentions, purify our actions, fill our words with grace and our hearts with hope. Yes, soak our thinking, our praying, our hoping, our everything in You. Amen.

Because of who YOU are and where YOU are on life's journey, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!

*SINGING TOGETHER:

“Sweet, Sweet Spirit”

Black #293

**There’s a sweet, sweet Spirit in this place,
and I know that it’s the Spirit of the Lord;
there are sweet expressions on each face,
and I know they feel the presence of the Lord.**

Chorus: **Sweet Holy Spirit, Sweet heavenly Dove,
stay right here with us, filling us with Your love;
And for these blessings we lift our hearts in praise.
Without a doubt we’ll know that we have been revived
when we shall leave this place.**

**There are blessings you cannot receive
till you know that Spirit’s fullness and believe;
You’re the one to profit when you say,
“I am going to walk with Jesus all the way.”** *[chorus]*

We Pray for Transformation and New Life

INTRODUCTION

Hear the words of our God who created us in love and redeems us, hear these words spoken through the prophet Isaiah: “I have called you by name. You are mine. Do not fear, for I have redeemed you.”

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (TOGETHER)

Loving God, let me enter again Your baptismal river of grace. Let it soak every stain attached to the fabric of my life and longings. Yes, Holy One, submerge me in You again and again and again. Cleanse every distracting impulse luring me away from You who are my heart’s deepest desire. Let no urgency be more important than Your forgiving love, always transforming. Today, help me choose you above every temptation that lures me to worship lesser things. By this of You, forgive me, renew me, and grant me the grace promised by You in Jesus Christ. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS:

Before we thought to turn to God, God already turned toward us in love. The saturating grace of God is trustworthy and true. Our prayers of transformation have been met with God’s outpouring of forgiving love. In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!

Thanks be to God!

Because of who YOU are and where YOU are on life’s journey, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

The Spirit who named Jesus “beloved,” also calls us “beloved.” In God’s love through Christ we can find peace with God, ourselves, neighbors, strangers, and God’s creation. The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you!

***SUNG RESPONSE**

“Children of God”

Sing! #195 chorus, vs 3, chorus

Children of God, let’s love one another. Love is a gift, a blessing of God.

Love one another, sisters and brothers. Love is a gift of God.

Let us bear witness to the Light, living in love, doing what is right.

Oh, oh, Children of God, let’s love one another. Love is gift, a blessing of God.

Love one another, sisters and brothers. Love is a gift of God.

We Listen for God’s Word

MINISTRY THROUGH MUSIC

“I’ve Got Peace Like a River”

arr. North

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Guide us, O God, by your Word, and Holy Spirit, that in your light we may see light, in your truth find freedom and do justice, and in your will discover both peace and purpose; through Christ our Savior, Amen.

HEBREW SCRIPTURE READING

ISAIAH 43:1-7

God promises restoration and protection of God’s people. Our reading from Isaiah begins.

But now thus says the Lord,

he who created you, O Jacob,

he who formed you, O Israel:

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;

I have called you by name; you are mine.

²When you pass through the waters, I will be with you,

and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;

when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,

and the flame shall not consume you.

³For I am the Lord your God,

the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

I give Egypt as your ransom,

Cush and Seba in exchange for you.

⁴Because you are precious in my sight

and honored and I love you,

I give people in return for you,

nations in exchange for your life.

Because of who YOU are and where YOU are on life’s journey, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!

⁵ Do not fear, for I am with you;
I will bring your offspring from the east,
and from the west I will gather you;
⁶ I will say to the north, “Give them up,”
and to the south, “Do not withhold;
bring my sons from far away
and my daughters from the end of the earth—
⁷ everyone who is called by my name,
whom I created for my glory,
whom I formed and made.”

PLAIN AND SIMPLE

“I have called you by name, you are mine”

RESPONSIVE PSALTER READING

PSALM 29

The voice of God in a great storm. Our responsive reading begins.

¹ Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

² Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name; worship the Lord in holy splendor.

³ The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord, over mighty waters.

⁴ The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.

⁵ The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars; the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon.

⁶ He makes Lebanon skip like a calf and Sirion like a young wild ox.

⁷ The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire.

⁸ The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

⁹ The voice of the Lord causes the oaks to whirl and strips the forest bare, and in his temple all say, “Glory!”

¹⁰ The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king forever.

¹¹ May the Lord give strength to his people!

May the Lord bless his people with peace!

ACTS READING

ACTS 8:14-17

Peter and John bless the baptized Samaritans that they might receive the Holy Spirit. Our reading from Acts begins.

¹⁴ Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. ¹⁵ The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit ¹⁶ (for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). ¹⁷ Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

GOSPEL READING

LUKE 3:15-17, 21-22

John the Baptist preaches and then Jesus is baptized. Hear the Good News.

Because of who YOU are and where YOU are on life’s journey, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!

¹⁵ As the people were filled with expectation and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶ John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water, but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

²¹ Now when all the people were baptized and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, ²² and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

SINGING TOGETHER

Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

CCLI Song # 14301; Amy Grant and Michael W. Smith;

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MEDITATION:

“Sign of God’s Presence”

Pastor Dave

SINGING TOGETHER

“Wonder of Wonders, Here Revealed”

Black #328, vs 1, 2, 4

Wonder of wonders, here revealed; God’s covenant with us is sealed.

And long before we know or pray, God’s love enfolds us every day.

Here in this sacrament we see God’s grace unbound, for all, for me!

May we respond with joyful praise in loving service all our days.

Now we our vow of faith renew, stretch wide our sights to global view,

And claim with Christians far and near a larger family held dear.

We Respond to God’s Word

RENEWAL OF BAPTISM

INVITATION

The Body of Christ continues to be renewed and refreshed. As members, we belong to the baptized and covenantal life in Christ. We gather today to affirm our faith and renew our commitments as followers of Jesus.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

(Adapted from a Reading from the Second National Meeting of United Church of Christ Women)

O God, because you are the source of all life and love and being, we call you Creator.

Because we know the history of your presence among your covenanted people and honor their tradition, we call you Lord.

Because of who YOU are and where YOU are on life’s journey, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!

Because our Savior, Jesus Christ, your obedient child, knew you intimately and spoke of you so, we call you Father.

Because you are present in each act of birth; and because you shelter, nurture and care for us, we call you Mother.

Because you hold us up and give us strength and courage when we are weak and in need, we call you Sustainer.

Because we have known you in our pain and suffering, we call you Comforter.

Because beyond pain lies your promise of all things made new, we call you Hope.

Because you are the means of liberation and the way to freedom, we call you Deliverer.

Because you have chosen to come among us and share our common lot, making the hard choices, suffering and dying; because you rose victorious, bringing new life, we call you Redeemer.

Confident that you will hear, we call upon you with all the names that make you real to us, the names which create an image in our minds and hearts, an image which our souls can understand and touch. And yet we know that you are more than all of these. Blessing and power, glory and honor be unto you, our God, Amen.

Do you believe in the One of Many Names, God, Jesus Christ, and Holy Spirit?

We believe in the God of Many Names.

Do you reject the powers of oppression in this world, the systems that marginalize and degrade human beings and communities created by God, and the norms of the world at odds with the way of God's realm?

We do, with the help of God.

Do you embrace grace as God's gift, to be freely given and freely received?

We do, with the help of God.

Do you recommit to the covenantal and baptized life, the cost and joy of discipleship, and the community of belonging as a member of the Body of Christ?

We do, with the help of God.

RENEWAL "I AM GOD'S BELOVED. I AM BAPTIZED."

Please locate the cup of water you brought to your pew.

John the Baptist told his disciples that he baptized them with water but the one to come would baptize with the Holy Spirit. As we receive the mark of our renewed baptismal vows, we recognize the movement of the Holy Spirit within us and among.

Please dip your finger in the water and make the sign of the cross on your forehead repeating these words: "I am God's beloved. I am baptized."

Because of who YOU are and where YOU are on life's journey, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!

PRAYER OF THE BAPTIZED

Voice, Body, Spirit, we give thanks for the gathering of your people into a beloved community of belonging. By our baptism, we accept the invitation to public and faithful witness to the ministry of Jesus Christ in the world and to be instruments to that work. May we live the baptized life in the Spirit as caring companions of one another, with accountability, support, and grace. Shelter us in your love, nourish us in your truth, and uphold us in your word. May it be so. Amen.

A TIME FOR PRAYER

SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

You are invited to share joys and concerns we can pray for together. Let our sharing itself be an act of prayer.

ENTERING INTO PRAYER (RESPONSIVE)

When we pass through the cleansing waters of baptism and the troubled waters of our lives, God declares:

I will be with you.

When we go through the fires that refine us and the fires that threaten our livelihoods, God declares:

I will be with you.

Even when we travel to the far corners of the earth or down into the depths of our souls, God declares:

I will be with you.

So come, let us turn to our God in prayer, our God whose love never fails, whose presence never leaves, whose mercies never end.

PRAYERS ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE

THE PRAYER OF OUR SAVIOR

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.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO SHARING OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

You are invited to place your gifts in the offering basket as you arrive or depart from our worship together.

The outpouring of God's spirit described in the baptism of Jesus reminds us that God's very nature is generous, self-giving love. It is the source of our deepest joy. When we open our hearts in generous giving, we give space for God's love and joy to grow in us for the good of others. May our hearts be stretched wide by this motion of the Holy One, as we joyfully bring our gifts.

Because of who YOU are and where YOU are on life's journey, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!

DEDICATING OUR OFFERING (TOGETHER)

O Gracious God, we thank you for the invitation to grow through giving, made possible by Your outpouring spirit. May these gifts we bring be used to form ever-new blessings in this congregation and around the world. And may our lives be the instruments of love and joy you desire. Amen.

We Go Out to Serve

*SINGING TOGETHER

“Let It Shine”

Sing! #196

Chorus: **Let it shine, let it shine, the light of the word that shows the way;
let it shine, let it shine, and show us peace today.**

**The church bears witness to God’s grace, its mission crystal clear:
to show the world God’s human face, a world that God holds dear. (*chorus*)**

**When love replaces human greed, a lasting peace will come
as hands reach out to human need from hearts no longer numb. (*chorus*)**

**Now let us give ourselves to God within this war-torn world,
and work till justice walks abroad with flags of peace unfurled. (*chorus*)**

*GOOD WORDS FOR GOING FORTH

May the Triune God, whose presence surrounds you always and everywhere, bless you with the deep assurance that you are never alone. In the waters, in the fires, in the far corners of the world, God is with us. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Written by Dr. Lisa Hancock

*BENEDICTION RESPONSE

“This Little Light”

Black #524, vs 1

This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine.....

This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine.

This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine,

Let it shine,... let it shine,... let it shine.

TAKE WITH YOU GOD’S GIFT OF MUSIC

WE RETURN TO THE WORLD

RENEWED AND EMPOWERED BY GOD’S SPIRIT

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