

January 3, 2016 The Second Sunday after Christmas 11:00 a.m.

***Call to Worship (Please refer to the insert: "A Common Prayer for the New Year")**

Call to Confession

As we continue the season of Christmas,
let us confess our sins,
our actions and our inactions,
that are contrary to the kingdom of the newborn King.

Prayer of Confession (see bulletin)

Assurance of Pardon

Our sin does not have the final word.
God will turn our mourning into joy, God will comfort us,
God will give us gladness for sorrow.
Friends, in the name of the Jesus Christ, you and I are forgiven!
Alleluia! Amen!
The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Psalm 147 (Sung) Blue Hymnal #255

Presentation of Offering and Offertory

Time out for Teaching: The Story of Jeremiah

You are about to hear a reading from Jeremiah. He's an interesting prophet. Out of all the prophets, with the exception of Hosea, Jeremiah literally wears his heart on his sleeve for God and for Israel. He lived during the Babylonian Exile - a time of great fear and uncertainty. He has been known to some as "the Weeping Prophet," for he weeps to symbolize Israel's abandonment of the Lord. God makes Jeremiah do some seemingly crazy things to signify Israel's situation, like bury some undergarments in a river bank and then dig them out and wear them, to show that Israel has become soiled by sin. But here's another story about Jeremiah that speaks highly of his wisdom and character.

He is in the Temple courtyard, holding a staff, and God has told him that Israel in Exile shall remain under the staff of Nebuchadnezzar for many years. And suddenly, Jeremiah's arch-rival prophet, Hananiah, shows up, grabs the staff from his hand and breaks it in defiance. For Jeremiah had been speaking out against the King. Guess what Jeremiah does? He just walks away. Why do you think he did that?

He drops out of sight for a few months after that.

Some say he didn't want to respond in violence. But I say he went away to rethink what God had to say. Here was one prophet of the Lord disagreeing with another. Jeremiah in his wisdom went away to discern what God was saying. We live in a conflicted world today, one where there are lots of Hananiahs. Let Jeremiah be an example for you of someone who is humble enough to discern God's word very carefully.

Old Testament Reading Jeremiah 31:7-14

⁷For thus says the LORD:
Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob,
and raise shouts for the chief of the nations;
proclaim, give praise, and say,
"Save, O LORD, your people,
the remnant of Israel."
⁸See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north,
and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth,
among them the blind and the lame,
those with child and those in labor, together;
a great company, they shall return here.
⁹With weeping they shall come,
and with consolations I will lead them back,
I will let them walk by brooks of water,
in a straight path in which they shall not stumble;
for I have become a father to Israel,
and Ephraim is my firstborn.
¹⁰Hear the word of the LORD, O nations,
and declare it in the coastlands far away;
say, "He who scattered Israel will gather him,
and will keep him as a shepherd a flock."
¹¹For the LORD has ransomed Jacob,
and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.
¹²They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion,
and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD,
over the grain, the wine, and the oil,
and over the young of the flock and the herd;
their life shall become like a watered garden,
and they shall never languish again.
¹³Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance,
and the young men and the old shall be merry.
I will turn their mourning into joy,
I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.
¹⁴I will give the priests their fill of fatness,
and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty,
says the LORD.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 2:1-12

¹In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ²asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." ³When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

6 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,

are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.”

⁷Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.”

⁹When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Sermon

“Go to the Light!”

With each passing year, I grow in appreciation for the story of the wise men.

First, it was their revelation - the king for whom all of Israel waited was finally born! And the wise men were prepared for Him. HOW they received this revelation - or epiphany - was the way most ordinary people receive epiphanies about God. They received this revelation not through a direct message from Heaven by an angel - like Mary, Joseph and the shepherds. Rather, they are ready for Jesus, learning of him through years of study - armed by knowledge of Scripture and their knowledge of the stars.

Second, WHAT they did with this epiphany. They followed it. Not only did they LITERALLY go to the light, they go to the light in another sense, by trying to do the right thing, guided by wisdom. They go to King Herod when he summons them. But instead of receiving their news with joy, Herod acts out of fear to defend his position of power. He tells them that when they find the Messiah, to send word back as to his whereabouts. But the wise men, in their wisdom, knew better than to do what Herod said. At their own peril, they defy him; after worshiping the Christ Child, they continue on their way.

I would like to be like those Wise Men. I imagine they were noble and courageous, intelligent people. They were prepared after years of study, so when the time was ripe for them to act, they did the right thing.

These Wise Men had an epiphany. It took their entire lives as students of God and astute observers of people. They remind us of how we too - ordinary people of faith - can be prepared for an epiphany. Rather than wait around for a message from heaven, we should be preparing ourselves with diligent study of God, of nature and of people. It's the wise course of action as we discern our paths for the coming year, both as individuals, and as a church. Knowledge and wisdom have always been necessary to living a full Christian life, particularly to serving in

leadership. Elders - or *Presbuteroi* in the Greek - are our leaders, for they are considered wise students of God, nature and people. .

With age comes wisdom, they say. But also let us be prepared to do the right thing at all times, choose the wise path, be ready to know the direction to go when God calls to you. Paying careful attention to what God is saying through studying His word, studying the world around you, and listening for God in one another. I challenge you as you enter this new year to make wisdom a priority, so you - like those wise men - are ready to act with the same courage and integrity when the moment is ripe. And on this Epiphany may your faith may be born anew. May God bless you and keep you this New Year. Amen.

Service of Holy Communion

Invitation

Jesus is with us at this table. As we approach communion with our Lord Christ, we can find assurance through ordinary things coming from our earth - wheat and fruit. In the strength they give us, we are invited to discover the strength and unity that God provides us through the grace of Jesus Christ - in us, through us and among us.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Good and gracious God,
we thank you for your presence among us,
that you would bring us the eternal Word made flesh,
that you would call us your beloved children,
that you would send your light into the darkness.
To you we ascribe all thanks and praise,
for you alone are our hope and our salvation.
Through the power of your speech,
you brought all creation into order;
all things have come into being through you;
not one single thing is exempt from your creation.
With all creation, with people in every time and place,
we join the everlasting chorus:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest.**

We remember how, on that holy night,
Mary and Joseph could find no place to stay,
so they found a manger and made their bed with the animals of the stable.
Through these marginalized people seeking refuge,
you made your presence known to the world.
We remember how the shepherds and the wisemen gathered
to worship the child who would redeem all of creation.
Their gifts were brought to pay homage to the true King. -
We give you thanks for the gifts of this Table,
which are given to us to proclaim your holy and majestic name.
We remember how this child grew up,
growing in wisdom and in years,
embodying your goodness in word and deed,
healing people, comforting people, loving stranger and friend.
We remember how he gathered his friends on the night he was betrayed,
how he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to his disciples saying:
“take, eat, do this in remembrance of me.”
Likewise, he took the cup and, pouring it, said:
**“this is the cup of salvation, shed in my blood, for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this in remembrance of me.”**

For as long as we eat this bread and drink this cup,
we proclaim the resurrection of our living savior until he comes again.
As we wait, watch, and wonder with the wise men and the shepherds,
we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

Lord, we pray that you be in and among all people in need. For folks who have been getting the terrible floods and tornadoes, grant them help and hope For people who are taking their last breath of life, usher them into the next one comforted by your presence of peace. For those who are desperately trying to get home through the snow and ice, grant them safe passage. For refugees everywhere seeking a better life, fill them with hope and courage. For every person who is sick or alone during this season of joy, bring them healing.

As we prepare to live as your disciples,
hear us as we pray as you taught us to pray, saying:

**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.**
Prayer After Communion

We give thanks for your gifts of grace and goodness in this season of Christmas.
 May this meal of remembrance transform us into your servants,
 going out into the world to proclaim your resurrection
 and to welcome all to partake in your reign of peace, love, and harmony.
 Strengthen us for your service and help us to love and serve you in everything we do. In your
 holy name, Amen.

***Closing Hymn**
On the Mountain"

BH#29

"Go Tell It

***Benediction**

January Birthdays

- 1/6 Dr. Ray McCausland
- 1/12 Rev. John Mikow
- 1/14 Ray McKenzie-Young
- 1/23 Rev. Iola Allender
- 1/25 Lois Hanson
- 1/26 Marie Sims
- 1/28 Laurel Sims

This Week at First Presbyterian

MWF @ 9AM	Exercise, Eat & Pray
Sunday:	9:30AM Adult Sunday School 11:00AM Worship

VISITORS – WELCOME

Thank you for worshipping with us today. If you like, please leave your name and address in the friendship folders at the end of the pew. Please come back soon!

THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

- *If you are thinking of joining our church*, you can contact any of the Elders: Wayne or Sharon Huffman, Betty Faye Ragan, Kenna McKenzie, Julie Sursa or Ron Wilmot. You can also contact Amy at 575-708-0860. You can join by Confession of Faith, Reaffirmation of Faith or by Letter of Transfer from another church.
- Tired of seeing your name on the *Prayer List*? Let us know if you feel it's time to come off of the list.
- Adult Sunday School is at 9:30AM in the Library. Join us next Sunday, weather permitting, to talk about what we want to study in the new year!
- Please come to church next Saturday, January 2 at 3:00PM and we'll take down the decorations. See you at the church!

Please,
 Pray for peace in the Middle East, including Iraq and Afghanistan

Pray for a safe return of daughters and sons from combat
Pray for our global community and those in the midst of disaster
Pray for America and her enemies, that all would seek peace!
Pray for all the people and leaders in our local community
Pray for those who are seeking a deeper spiritual life.
Pray for our church, national and local
Pray for our Presbytery
Pray for our pastor

PRAYER REQUESTS FOR COMFORT AND HEALING

Dr. John and Cheryl Faith
Shay – requested by Julie Sursa
Jim Enriquez & family
Emma Lowther, Lou Sims' great niece – ongoing heart trouble
Dot Vogel
Sacia Malone – Pancreas problems
Jo Priddy – in nursing home in Albuquerque
Bob McClelland – at Quail Ridge
Tom Morris - at Quail Ridge
Bruce White (cousin of Theresa Goldston) – recovering from heart attack
Amber Varsallona – knee problems
Frances Agnew - Amber's aunt, very sick
Ed Goodell - Kay Hart's father, cancer
Myra (daughter of Amber's friend) – heart problems
Clifford and Molly Kenyon (Ft. Sumner) daughter Reagan fighting cancer
Gilbert Martinez – heart problems
Bill Greenfield – cancer
Tom Anderson – cancer
Gloria (Teresa Gallegos-Brake's sister) - recovering

A Common Prayer for the New Year

This day is a new day that has never been before.
This year is a new year, opening the door to transformation.
Let us open the door of our hearts.
Enter, Lord Christ—
that we may feel the joy of your presence.
You give us life,
and we welcome you with opening hearts.
I turn now to face you.
I open my life to you.
Be the light shining on my face, O Beloved;
be the blessing in my eyes,
and the fire in my heart.
**May the inner eye of your soul
behold the beauty within you;
may your outer eye behold the beauty around you—**

**may you see your neighbors, your loved ones,
and those you find difficult to love
as treasured gifts shaped by God's good and generous hands.**

Silence

Enter, Lord Christ—

I feel joy in your presence!

I turn now to face you.

I open my life to you.

Be the light shining on my face, O Beloved;

be the blessing in my eyes,

and the fire in my heart.

May the inner eye of your soul

behold the beauty within you;

may your outer eye behold the beauty around you—

may you see your neighbors, your loved ones,

and those you find difficult to love

as treasured gifts shaped by God's good and generous hands.

Silence

Enter, Lord Christ—

I feel joy in your presence!