**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**January 9, 2022 Baptism of Our Lord**

Rev. Amy Pospichal, Pastor Marjorie G. McKenzie, Accompanist

**Bulletin Insert Baptized in Water**

**RH 390 Open My Eyes That I May See**

**BH 322 Spirit of the Living God (Prayer for Illumination)**

**RH 456 All Things Bright and Beautiful**

**Call to Worship**

The Lord has called us by name, called us out!  
**We are here, is that not enough?**  
We have been called for a purpose, to offer hope for the world.  
**Where can this hope be found?**  
It is within you, that yearning for something bigger than yourself.  
**What do we do with it?**  
We speak the truth of God’s grace, mercy and love. We live the truth every moment of our lives as best we can.  
**It sounds too hard, it seems too big!**  
And that is what Jesus came to do: to help us, guide us, encourage us. Come:

**Let us worship the Lord, the Almighty!**

**Opening Prayer**

**Call to Confession**

With our feet still wet from the waters of our baptism, we have sinned yet again.  Ever dependent on the grace of God, let us affirm our brokenness and trust God’s goodness to carry us through to a new day, with a new name, and a new song.

**Confession (Responsive)  
O Lord our God, light of the world, we confess that we are not always good at letting your light shine through us. We insist that the earth is ours, not yours. We insist on building walls that keep others out. We insist on serving ourselves first, and offering you our leftovers. Forgive us for all the ways we obscure your light, and turn our attention to you, that all our days we may glorify only you.***~silence~* **Amen.**

**Assurance of Pardon**In the beginning, God planted goodness deep within creation—and through the grace of God, poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, we are able to live as the Body of Christ, showing that goodness to the world. Friends, live and believe this good news:

**In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God. Amen.**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

**\*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.**

**Psalm 29**

Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings,

ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

**Ascribe to the LORD the glory of his name;**

**worship the LORD in holy splendor.**

The voice of the LORD is over the waters;

the God of glory thunders,

the LORD, over mighty waters.

**The voice of the LORD is powerful;**

**the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.**

The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;

the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon.

**He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,**

**and Sirion like a young wild ox.**

The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire.

**The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;**

**the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.**

The voice of the LORD causes the oaks to whirl,

and strips the forest bare; and in his temple all say, "Glory!"

**The LORD sits enthroned over the flood;**

**the LORD sits enthroned as king for ever.**

May the LORD give strength to his people!

**May the LORD bless his people with peace!**

**Prayers of the People**

We praise you, O Lord, for your greatness and splendor;  
we rejoice in you for the beauty and delight of your presence.  
Your goodness flows abundantly in the life of the world,  
and you provide enough  
not only to sustain life  
but to make living a delight.  
We pray for all that lives,  
and especially today for those creatures  
whose lives are filled with suffering or uncertainty  
because they cannot find enough  
food, shelter, security, love, or hope.  
Guide us as we seek to use the gifts you have given us,  
and open us to see what wonders you can work in the world through us.  
We pray for those who hunger for signs of your love  
and who thirst for the gladness of your good news.  
Make us vessels of your mercy  
and servants at your welcome table,  
so we might make room for everyone to find a home in you.  
We pray as disciples of Jesus Christ, our Lord,  
who teaches us to pray, saying:

**The Lord’s Prayer**

**Offering**

**Prayer for Illumination BH 322 Spirit of the Living God**

**Time out for Teaching: “What is Baptism?”**

What does water do? (pour water into fount)

Does it clean us off?

Does it make us feel good when we drink it on a hot day?

What else does water do? What is it good for?

Sometimes, a very special thing happens here in this church. Sometimes, we have a person who wants to have that experience here. So, we put water in this wooden thing we call a “fount” and we sprinkle them with water on their head. Does that sound weird to you? It’s okay if it does.

We do this when a person has decided to let God wash them clean. The water helps, but it also tells us that God is working on us all over, washing us inside and out. Whenever we do something wrong or bad, we can remember that God helps wash us clean of that feeling of being bad. Why? Not so we can go and be bad again. But because God is here to make us feel better.

So, when you take your next bath, can you remember one thing for me? What do you think that is? Just remember that no matter how bad we feel about something, tell God all about it, and He will wash you clean of your mistakes. This is exciting because it also means God is doing that to me, to you, to everyone in this place.

**Isaiah 43:1-7**

1But 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,

Ethiopia 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.

5Do not fear, for I am with you;

I will bring your offspring from the east,

and from the west I will gather you;

6I 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 —

7everyone who is called by my name,

whom I created for my glory,

whom I formed and made."

**Acts 8:14-17**

14Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. 15The 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). 17Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

**Gospel Luke 3:15-17, 21-22**

15As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, 16John 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 thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17His 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."

21Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, 22and 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."

**Sermon “At the Lord’s Pleasure” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

How do you make God happy? God declared, as Jesus rose up from the waters of His baptism, that this is God’s son and God is well-pleased with Him. Jesus is given two titles: Son of God and “the Beloved.” God is also telling this to Jesus. God is speaking to Jesus in the first person. It is natural for us all to wonder, if just for a second, whether “all the people” saw this and heard this? It is possible that not everyone saw it, for their reaction – as a crowd – might have been recorded here by Luke. But someone heard and saw this, or it would not have been written down.

Now, I am sure that God is happy when God is well-pleased, especially with Jesus, God’s own Son. But sometimes I wonder about us, as His children. We do quite a few things that make God DISpleased. I know that we will never be able to please God the same that Jesus can. However, God already knows that we cannot measure up to our big brother Jesus. I suppose it is a little bit like being the younger kid whose big brother happened to be star athlete and valedictorian! And we… we are following in His wake! We don’t measure up to big brother Jesus.

Thanks to numerous places in the Scripture, such as in our Old Testament reading from Isaiah today, we can be assured that we have been adopted into God’s family. Adoption is an enormous opportunity and a beautiful gift. We aren’t just the little brothers and sisters who don’t measure up to Jesus. If we continue to come into this place and share this space for worship, we eventually discover that God has adopted us all. Our baptisms are the sign and seal of this. Even if you are not baptized, God already sees you as God’s child. Let this be known to you: You belong to God.

In the Calvinist tradition, we will baptize children and even infants. There are reasons we can do that. But there are some whose conscience tells them to allow the child to wait till about 14 or 15 - that’s okay too - to be confirmed with a profession of faith and baptized. No matter what, or when we are baptized, God has already claimed you – for God created you - through the one who died for us all.

So why be baptized? Well, the time-honored answer is to think about what water does. Cleanse us. Is the water what baptizes us? Not really, not exactly. The water becomes the sign of the Spirit’s work on us. But what really cleanses us? The Spirit. But also our willingness to become new. We can look to the story in Luke, as he tells it. Each of the four gospels have a version of this story. Matthew, Luke and Mark all have a part about fire. Fire, as you heard in Luke, is a promise that comes with the Messiah. Fire, which shall be used to burn away the chaff. Luke writes, “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.  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."” This might remind you of when people clear their yards around here with a controlled burn. We see those burn spots here and there at certain times of year. Luke’s version of a controlled burning baptism it is not entirely clear. Is the chaff in all of us? That would mean that the Holy Spirit cleanses us, a little like we think of baptism. It takes away the bad parts and leaves only the good. The other way is to think maybe it cleanses all the other people and each of us are the “good grains” to go into God’s granary. Luke does not exactly explain it.

What I think is this. By the very suggestion of there being fire, I’m ready to accept what God is offering here. As I think about the various McDonalds cups, tumbleweeds, beer cans, and more which blow by my house on the corner, the idea of a controlled burn sounds a lot better than taking a risk on thinking I just might be one of the good guys. If I assume that, then I just might end up counted as one of those little wispy bits of chaff.

I suppose as we stand on the edge, one week into 2022, I would do well to remember to be the best I can in God’s eyes. To seek how to make God happy, to be well-pleased with me. To not be wispy, useless chaff. To sometimes let God burn me a little if I get out of line. To be willing to experience new ways that the Holy Spirit is leading me. To please God, and to be intentional about that. Now, I know that in some things I will fall short and I may get burned. But I also know that God is endlessly patient, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. God invites you into this dance of discipleship, and embrace the opportunities to grow and become new. What are your plans to learn and grow in 2022? How do you plan to make God happy? Amen.

**\*Benediction**

**Prayer Requests:**

Amy (Glenna Gray’s daughter) chronic medical issues  
Betty (Alzheimer’s) and Dolores (paralyzed) – Glenda’s sisters  
Elmer Schuster - leg pain

Fay Birch – stage 4 cancer   
Glenda Coles – awaiting shoulder surgery (mid January)  
Lucy Jasper – Alzheimers/Dementia  
Misty Tompkins and her family – stiff person syndrome, seeking experimental program

People seeking jobs, and people seeking employees  
Ruth Johnson – for general health  
Sarah Hittson's daughter Marie – chronic surgery needs  
Schools, students, teachers and families  
Sharon and Wayne Huffman – general health  
Shay – Julie Sursa’s daughter

Susie – still seeking a car, planning for EMS school  
Tommy Morris – for health and strength  
Travelers  
All those suffering from COVID19

**Announcements:**

**May everyone have a safe Thanksgiving week.**

**Bible Study** will resume Thursday, December 2nd at 5:15PM. We are presently thinking of what to study next. Special Requests? Ask Amy 575-708-0860

Baptism is about agreeing to join in a dance with God, who is asking for our hand.

Did you ever think that maybe God was trying to make steam? Baptism starts with water. But the Holy Spirit brings fire! So, why be baptized? Because we commit ourselves to knowing that we belong to God, and commit our entire lives to pleasing our Lord. We try, and when we fail, we try again. Amen.

This is that time when we all quite often think about what our opportunities are. At the edge of 2022, have you pondered what new creature God wants you to be? Maybe a new hobby or a habit. A chance to serve or give support. Study something in the Bible.

Luke is the only one who includes parts of nearly all of the other gospels in his. In fact, you could even say that here, Luke is not a minimalist. Luke has – as he promised in his first sentences to the reader – gathered all of what he is able to find about Jesus and after assessing their validity, what he has here is in his opinion, the most accurate version of our Lord’s story. So in a way, this is the very best version we can find – historically speaking – of Jesus’ baptism. Including the part about the fire. And the belonging to God.

God declared pleasure, great pleasure in Jesus. By contrast, there were people who were baptized, but who probably did not receive quite as high a praise. Many throughout the centuries have wondered whether anyone was able to witness this with their own eyes and ears. Or was this declaration of God’s Son, the Beloved, words meant just for our Christ’s ears? Of course, if we are reading it today, then the answer is ultimately no. It was given to us to read and understand. Someone witnessed that moment. But to think of God speaking directly to Jesus – if that boggles the mind a little, it’s okay – this is not the only time. Jesus is found praying to God a number of times during the gospels. So maybe this is no surprise to us. But we also know one other thing. God is pleased with anyone who knows they belong to Him. Pleased with any one of us who lives the way He wants us to live, the way that Jesus lived.

The desire we might find in here to simply please Him when we learn what