

Worship on December 25, 2022 (CCLI: License Number #3156883)
(Welcoming Elder: Robert Revington)

Sunday Order of worship

We Gather

- Call to worship
- Praise song – BOP 135 Christians, awake
- Words of Assurance
- Time for our children and youth
- Praise song – BOP 165 O little town of Bethlehem

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination
- Scripture: Isaiah 52:7-10
- Sermon: The Lord has comforted his people
- The Prayer for the people of God

We Respond

- Offering, Doxology & Dedication
- Song for the Journey – BOP 141 Good Christians, all rejoice

We Serve

- Benediction

As we come into the presence of our God, let us open our hearts and minds,
and focus on our Lord and King.

Responsive Call to Worship

Reader 1: We are Christmas people.

Reader 2: We have heard the good news that a child has been born for us, a Son has been given to us, and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Almighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

People: We have seen God kindle hope, peace, joy and love in our lives and in our world.

Reader 1: The centre candle in our Advent wreath is the Christ candle. From this light, all good gifts come.

Reader 2: We light this candle, remembering the One who is the Light of the world.

Reader 1: Let us pray:

People: Holy One, you sent your son as a baby born in Bethlehem. Give us a strong sense of his birth among us, so that our lives reflect the warmth and wonder of this Christmas flame. Make your church a place that shines with the wonder of your love. Amen.

Praise song – BOP 135 Christians, awake

Prayer For Adoration and Confession

God of wisdom and wonder, you stir in our hearts and bring us joy; you stir in our minds and bring us insight; you stir in the world and bring hope to lives who welcome you. In Jesus, you

came as a little child, stirring up our love, so now we come to adore you with the angels; to bow in welcome with the shepherds; to kneel in wonder with the magi; to ponder your mystery with Joseph; to love and cherish you with Mary. We come to you with humble hearts full of joy because you came to us first, and stay with us always, Wise and wonderful God.

God of the highest heaven and the humble manger, we gather on Christmas day with glad hearts. Familiar carols lift our spirits; familiar faces bring a smile to our lips. Yet we confess our Christmas joy often doesn't last. Worries cast a shadow over the manger. Business as usual waits outside the stable door. Forgive us when we rush through Christmas and miss the gift of peace you offer us in the Christ Child.

This time we come to you in prayer that you taught us how to pray: (The Lord's Prayer:)
Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Sisters and brothers in Christ, The very name 'Jesus' declares that God saves us. So hear the Good News. In Jesus, God comes to us to free us from all that harms us. May the peace of Christ, born at Christmas, be with you this day and throughout the coming year.

May the peace of the Lord be with you. Let us take few moments to greet each other and share our peace.

Prayer for children and youth

God of love and grace, thank you for gathering us today to worship and honour you. We remember our precious children and youth. On this joyful Christmas day, as they enjoy their new toys and presents, help us teach them the core message of Christmas. Christmas Day is the day we remember and celebrate the most valuable present given to us from God. That is Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Let them have you in the centre of their hearts all through their lives. As we spend family time, help us build beautiful and meaningful memories. Fill their hearts with a lot precious memories, so they stay in the right course of life. In Jesus' precious and powerful name, we pray. Amen.

Praise Song: BOP 165 O little town of Bethlehem

Prayer for Illumination:

Loving God, your Word became flesh in Jesus Christ and lived among us, full of grace and truth. Send us your Holy Spirit this day, so that we may hear a word of grace and truth once again, and be empowered to live it out in our lives. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Scripture: Isaiah 52:7-10

7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.'

8 Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices, together they sing for joy; for in plain sight they see the return of the Lord to Zion.

9 Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem.

10 The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

“This is the word of the Lord / Thanks be to God.”

SERMON: The Lord has comforted his people.

Today’s sermon title is **“The Lord has comforted his people.”**

This prophetic poetry of Isaiah was written at the end of the Babylonian exile. People of God, Israelites, went through the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. They spent decades in Babylon. Many of them concluded that their God had abandoned them. That is the emotion of the people of God at that time.

To them, the prophet Isaiah is giving today’s message. It starts with “HOW BEAUTIFUL are the feet!” The identity of the messenger is not important. The important things are announcing of peace, bringing good news, and announcing salvation.

To the people who are depressed and nearly gave up their hope, this message was proclaimed. Let us look at this message closely.

Peace proclaimed here is not only the end of warfare but also the presence of God and all the conditions that inhere when God is present. Justice, right relationship, forgiveness, and newness of life. The good news is that all of these things are now made possible in our day as God is present in Jesus Christ. The Word has become flesh. Salvation might be understood as what happens in us as well as in the world, as we respond to this good news. In short, the King is back.

However, what was the atmosphere of God’s people at that time again?

Discouraged. Miserable. Sad. Not willing. Hopeless.

V9, Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem.

To the people who lost joy, to the people who lost hope, to the people who might think they are miserable, God is telling them **to sing**. The prophet is so certain that God will restore everything. Isaiah used present perfect tense out of his certainty! He is calling out the decisive action from the people.

“Your God reigns” in v7 is a counterclaim to Babylonian belief in the superiority of their supreme deity, Marduk. They claimed “Marduk is king!” But, too bad for them.

THE REAL KING IS BACK. YOUR GOD REIGNS!

V10, The Lord has bared his holy arm. Before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.” Message translation, “God has rolled up his sleeves. All the nations can see his holy, muscled arm. Everyone, from one end of the earth to the other, sees him at work, doing his salvation work.”

To the people of Israel, this command might seem incongruent. Maybe this might be conflicting to some people who live in fear of violence and in grinding poverty with broken homes and communities, to sing praise. However, these are the people to whom prophet Isaiah cried out to

sing. The child who is born and the promise of God's coming kingdom are for all who live among ruins.

On this joyful Christmas morning, listen to the message of what God is saying to you.

"You ruins of Jerusalem, break forth together into singing, for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. He has rescued you.

Whether or not we have feelings of joy and gladness, sing to the King for the Lord is comforting each and every one of us in all our situations.

This is the message of the Lord for us today. Let us pray.

Prayer for the people of God

Your God reigns. The King is back. The Lord God has comforted all his people. Glorious God, now we have clear reasons to be joyful whether or not we like our situations and circumstances. Whatever happens in our lives, you are the Lord and you are the King! Thank you.

Many times, it is not easy to sing at times of difficulties and limitedness.

However, our Lord and Master God commands us to be joyful and to sing His name because God will work in our lives. God is reigning our lives.

Precious God, we remember our weakness, limitedness, sufferings. We also remember the people who are having difficult times even now. Shine your light upon us. Speak to our souls. Speak to our inner beings to sing to you, to be joyful only because of you. You are the ultimate source of joy. Help us see the true reality beyond our understanding and our circumstances.

And we pray for our next year 2023. Thank you and we praise you for guiding us and taking good care of us all through 2022. Lord God, we lift up our lives upon your strong and mighty arms. In your power, hold our hands and guide our lives and walk with us.

God, continue to be the Head of our church. Live each of our heart and connect us, so we may share your love abundantly. Help us remember each other and pray for each other. Encourage each other and support each other. Through our love, show the world your love. May our church become a safe haven for all the members and for the community of Aurora.

Be at the centre of our hearts and be praised through our daily lives. You are our Lord and God. Thank you. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering: This is the time for offering. Christmas celebrates the miracle of God's love, born for us in Christ Jesus, to change the world with acts of mercy and generosity, hope and healing. Share in that miracle by giving what you can, knowing God can do more than we can ask or imagine with our gifts. As we offer our gifts, let us praise God.

The Doxology (Tune of BOP 830)

Praise God with songs that never cease, praise God who fills the earth with peace, praise God for love and joy within; the Holy Child is born again!

Offering prayer:

Generous and loving God, your gift to us in Christ Jesus still draws us to the manger and opens our hearts with wonder. Bless our gifts in his name, so that they may draw others to your love and the blessing we have found in the One born for us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Song for the Journey BOP 141 Good Christians, all rejoice

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world. It is our time to sing to the Lord our God. Our feelings are sometimes like ruins of Jerusalem. We might have some unpleasant situations and limitations in our lives. God is calling us out. I am at work. I am in reign. Be joyful. God became one of us that we may become restored in God's likeness.

Benediction: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, And the Love of God, And the intimate fellowship of the Holy Spirit, Be with us all, now and always. Amen.