

## **Order of worship on January 28, 2024**

(CCLI: License Number #3156883) (Welcoming Elder: Dr. Robert Revington)

### **We Gather**

- Welcome and Announcements
- Responsive call to worship
- Praise song – BOP 433 All creatures of our God and King
- Prayer for worship and Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Praise song – BOP 349 My hope is built on nothing less
- Prayer for children

### **We Listen**

- Prayer for illumination
- First reading: Deuteronomy 18:15-20
- Second reading: Psalm 111 (Refrain 1)
- Third reading: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13
- Sermon: Stumbling block for God
- Praise song – BOP 461 Be thou my vision
- Prayer for the people

### **We Respond**

- Special Song – Ed Webster
- Offering, Doxology (BOP 830) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey – BOP 801 From ocean unto ocean

### **We Serve**

- Benediction

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### **Responsive Call to Worship**

God's praise endures forever,

**and eternity meets us in fleeting moments.**

God's praise endures forever,

**and glory bursts into ordinary activities.**

God's praise endures forever,

**and faith is steadfast in the midst of change and challenge.**

**Let us worship the Eternal God who calls us to this time and place.**

### **Praise song – BOP 433 All creatures of our God and King**

### **Prayer For Adoration and Confession**

Loving God, you are the wisdom behind all mystery, the glory hidden in all that makes us wonder, the strength in all that nourishes. With eyes open and spirits alert, we experience your glory around us. Scattered throughout the earth, smoldering deep inside us and radiating in acts of love, sparks of your glory reside. We feel joy each time we encounter you. So we gather to express our praise and gratitude for all the good we have experienced, knowing, it all comes from your hand, for you are Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit, Ever Three and Ever One.

Gracious God, we confess that there are many times we forget you. We focus on what troubles us and ignore the help you offer. We seek wisdom and meaning in the wrong places. In thoughtless moments, we harm the earth and each another. Forgive us. Remind us to live each day focused on your purposes revealed in Christ who loves us.

**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**

Hear the good news: Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. The old life has gone. New life has begun. Thanks be to God that we can make a new start, forgiven and set free. **May the Peace of the Lord be with you.** Let us take few moments to greet each other and share our peace.

### **Praise Song: BOP 349 My hope is built on nothing less**

### **Prayer for children**

#### **Prayer for Illumination:**

Source of Wisdom, still our minds as we listen to the Scriptures. Send your Holy Spirit to keep us alert and attuned to your life-giving Word this day. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

- First reading: Deuteronomy 18:15-20
- Second reading: Psalm 111 (Refrain 1)
- Third reading: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

### **"This is the word of the Lord / Thanks be to God."**

### **Sermon: Stumbling block for God**

A German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche said that "God is dead."  
Many people take this as an attack for Christianity. But, when we continue to listen to him, we might nod. **"God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murders? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world had yet owned had bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves?"**

Regardless Nietzsche's intention or his belief, just looking at this thought, as Christ followers, we get that. God is dead and we have killed him. One said, the church becomes the grave for God.

The average churches spend 10% of their annual budget for mission and evangelism. 90% is spent for maintaining buildings and supporting ministers. 90% of the time, Church survives to survive. This is how church uses money, which shows where we focus the most.

What about our time? How much time do we spend for God?

When I was in my high school, I fully focused on studying from Monday to Friday afternoon. And, from Friday evening, when we had youth group gathering to Sunday evening, I was at church except the time I slept at home. Now, we do not have the opportunities to spend our time at church like that. If someone might say, that was for friends or for fun, okay. Yes, but, for me, that was the time with God and with God's people. How are we spending our time with God?

This is many pastors' dream to preach the whole Bible by book by book. So, I planned to preach Genesis from January. But, in order to do so, there should be many changes. There is a certain value in following church calendar, just like we are doing right now, so I decided to go through the Bible with Wednesday Life Connect Group. I asked the participants to read the Bible 1 chapter a day from Genesis. Sometimes, they tell me where they are and they are doing great.

Reading one chapter of the Bible takes around 5 minutes. Praying to God in the morning as soon as we get up takes about less than 20 seconds. "Good morning God, be with me today." "Good morning God, I want to glorify you today." "Good morning God, help me get through this day." Or we can make some specific requests such as, "God I have an important meeting today. Be with me. Give me courage."

When you leave home for work, meeting, school, grocery shopping, or anything, imagine this. God the Father is sending you off with a blessing, with full of love and care for all the things happening to you.

If we lose our focus from God, then we are killing God and we are making God remain dead like the claim of Nietzsche.

**As church, what would you say the most important thing we should never stop?  
If you have to choose only one thing, then what would this be?**

The Christ-followers of the first century, they were scattered because of the persecution. When they were scattered, they displayed love and kindness and diligence in their daily lives. They proclaimed the love of God and they showed the love of God through their lives. Their words and their lives are the same.

**Acts 11:26, "... they associated with the church and taught a great many people, and it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called 'Christians.'"**

They didn't call themselves Christians, but they were called Christians by the people in Antioch. The people in Antioch stands for non-believers, just people in the city.

WHY? What did people see in them? What did they display? **As the followers of Christ, what did they have in their lives?** What did they show to their surroundings through their daily lives?

In Aurora, thankfully, we have Welcoming Arms. This is an ecumenical and evangelical church association to help out the community of Aurora. There are six different churches. Welcoming Arms provides meals and supplies to the people in need. For example, there is Wednesday dinner, called Welcome Table. We do not teach the gospel through Bible studies or having a teaching session before meal or make them memorize a Bible verse before providing meals. We just share food and smile. This is how God's love is displayed. Our church has Martha's Table. Every Thursday lunch, people come to our church building and enjoy hot meal. This is sharing and spreading the love of God to the community. Even though I have not been showing up to the

Martha's Table too much, I am deeply grateful for our church's involvement of sharing and showing the love of God right in the heart of Aurora.

Also, I have to mention this when speaking about our church's ministry. Our rental committee is very very generous that we do NOT consider renting as our main source of income, like running a business. Instead, we are helping numerous groups by letting them inside our building providing their meeting space and safe environment. We could have charged them much more than what we are charging right now. Whenever I see some renters, I feel very proud of our church, for our renting ministry.

Through today's passage, I want to encourage you. Although the number is not growing every week, although we have piled up some fatigue making everything running smoothly. But, still we are not making God dead. **We are showing God's life and love through our ministries,** through our kindness, through our generosity, through our good intentions for the renting groups, and for the people in the community.

What today's passage is saying is clear. The people in Antioch ate meat after they gave offering to foreign gods. **If you are a Christian, would you eat that meat which was offered to foreign gods** or would you reject eating something offered to other gods?

This was a very important issue for the first century Christians. They didn't want to defile themselves by eating something from foreign gods. It was considered as participating worshipping foreign gods or accepting them as gods. So, if a pastor eats that meat, then others would think that the pastor is accepting the authority of the foreign gods. If an elder enjoys the meat, then who just came to faith in our God might wonder if they could serve two gods. But, Paul is clearly claiming that **any food cannot make anyone less sacred.**

Anything we do is acceptable if you do that in the love of God.

**St. Augustine said, "Love God and do what you will."**

This is what we are permitted to do. We have our freedom to do what we want to do. But, here, Paul is saying that if we eat the meat that was offered to some foreign gods and if that makes anyone stumble, then he would stop eating that meat even if it is totally fine before the eyes of God. **For the sake of the people who have weak faith, Paul didn't hesitate to give up his right.** Paul sacrificed the delicious meat. If here are meat eaters, we know how difficult to give up delicious meat. But, in order to build up the faith of others, Paul was able to give up that much.

How are we doing? Through Martha's Table, what do we sacrifice? What do we give up? Many of us here give up time. There are people come to church early in the morning and prepare food, set up the tables and chairs. They give up the sweetest morning sleep. Their Thursday morning equals to Martha's Table.

Also, through giving renters low rates, we are helping them build their communities. Especially for churches in the morning and afternoon, we are building the kingdom of God together with them. We are helping them build their churches and do their ministries without worrying about rent too much. We try to remove some stumbling blocks for other people.

There are very remarkable things our church is doing for many communities, removing some stumbling blocks for them.

I will finish today's message with a question.

**Then, in our personal life, how are we removing the stumbling blocks for God or for God's people?**

Like the examples of Paul, giving up meat, like the examples of St. Andrew's Aurora, providing Thursday lunch and providing good rates to renters, giving up our time and our money, we are serving God. Then, how can we in our person life?

This is the message of the Lord for us today.

**Praise song – BOP 461 Be thou my vision**

**Prayer for the people:**

God, there is a children song called God's not dead. God's not dead, No! He is alive. God's not dead, No! He is alive. God's not dead, No! He is alive. I know he's living in me.

Looking at today's church and maybe some of the days of our own lives, can we actually sing this song? Living God, live in me. We want you to live in us. We want to see your church displaying your life, your power, your glory, your love, your mercy, your goodness. How are we doing, God? Help us face ourselves honestly and help us stand before your presence whether we are shameful to come to you or we have something proud. Whichever conditions we are, it doesn't matter to you. You just love in the way we are. Thank you.

We pray for our church. Up until now, we didn't say names, but praying for each individual is what you do, so we are going to say names and needs from now on. Fill our hearts with love and care, so we embrace each other and remember and pray for each other.

We pray for Carol who broke her ankle and staying at home. First, encourage her heart and soul. In your presence and love, she might be filled with the joy of your salvation. And, be with her recovery process. Heal her and make her mobile again.

We pray for Anna. This coming Thursday is her 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday. Bless her heart God. Encourage her with your love and grace. Accept her as the way she is. Fill her heart with your overflowing love, so that she may bless her surroundings through her overflowing love and joy. Bless her especially this week, so she may celebrate her birthday with many people, with love.

We pray for niece of our member. She's only in her 20's and she was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. Merciful God, help her. Hold her in your loving arms. How would she feel! God, pour out your love upon her. Pour out your peace and encouragement upon her and her family and extended family. Heal her and through this event, teach them how you are powerful and how you are merciful and how you are amazing. Glorious God, heal her and show your love we pray.

God, we could pray for many more, but week by week, we will pray for emergent prayer needs. There are others who are struggling with their physical illnesses. Place your hands upon their bodies. With your aching heart, with your love, help them. Heal them. Be with them in the process of recovering. Comfort them and embrace them in your arms.

God, there could be some sensitivity in praying with names. Help us discern which names we can say in public and help us discern and understand the need and the intention of praying with names. May this encourage people and may this opportunity be received as blessing.

Give life to your church. All the churches are purchased by your precious blood. You are the Lord and you are the Owner of church. Be praised and be worshipped through our daily lives, so people may call us Christians and the world may see the LIGHT through us. With love and gratitude, we pray these things in Jesus' precious and glory name. Amen.

**Invitation to the offering:** Jesus' ministry was filled with challenges and choices. We face challenges and choices as we follow Jesus. The invitation to make an offering week by week is a

challenge. The gifts we choose to offer continue his ministry of healing and hope. Take the challenge and give as God has blessed you. Let us praise God and honour him with the Doxology (BOP #830.)

**Offering prayer:**

Lord Jesus, we bring our gifts to you, asking you to bless them so that they may accomplish more than we can ask or imagine. Bless us, too, so that our lives speak of our choice to follow you, offering others the healing and hope you have offered us. Use us. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

**Song for the Journey BOP 801 From ocean unto ocean**

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world. From ocean unto ocean, the entire land shall call God Lord. In this amazing movement, where are we going to stand? Do we want to join in this? Imagine someone comes back to God through you. Let us release what we are holding onto. What we try to hold on to could be stumbling block for the gospel. Let us follow God and let God work through us freely without any hindrances.

**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.