

GATHERING

Prelude

Welcome

Welcome to worship with FPC! We are glad you are here this morning.

If you are new here, we invite you to fill out a welcome card or email secretary@fpcmissoula.org with your information so we can get connected with you.

This is the day that the Lord has made: let us rejoice and be glad in it!
Let us prepare our hearts and minds to worship and encounter our living God.

Call to Worship

One: The Lord is my light and my salvation—

All: whom shall I fear?

One: The Lord is the stronghold of my life—

All: of whom shall I be afraid?

One: I am still confident of this:

All: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

One: Wait for the Lord;

All: be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.

One: Grace, mercy and peace to you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

All: The Lord is my light and my salvation; the Lord is the stronghold of my life.

Gathering Song: Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn



A - wake! a - wake, and greet the new morn, for
To us, to all in sor - row and fear, Em -
In dark - est night his com - ing shall be, when
Re - joice, re - joice, take heart in the night, though



an - gels her - ald its dawn-ing, sing out your joy, for
manu - el comes a sing-ing, His hum - ble song is
all the world is de - spair-ing, as morn - ing light so
dark the win - ter and cheer-less, the ris - ing sun shall



soon he is born, be - hold! the Child of our long - ing.
qui - et and near, yet fills the earth with its ring - ing;
qui - et and free, so warm and gen - tle and car - ing.
crown you with light, be strong and lov - ing and fear - less;



Come as a ba - by weak and poor, to bring all hearts to -
mu - sic to heal the bro - ken soul and hymns of lov - ing
Then shall the mute break forth in song, the lame shall leap in
love be our song and love our prayer, and love, our end - less



geth - er, He o - pens wide the heav'n - ly door and
kind - ness, the thun - der of his an - thems roll to
won - der, the weak be raised a - bove the strong, and
sto - ry, may God fill ev - 'ry day we share, and



lives now in - side us for - ev - er.
shat - ter all ha - tred and blind - ness.
weap - ons be bro - ken a - sun - der.
bring us at last in - to glo - ry.

Marty Haugen***

PRAISING

Prayer of Adoration

Let us pray.

Lord of yesterday, today and tomorrow,
we gather here this first Sunday of the New Year,
in a mixture of hope, anticipation, fear, excitement, and expectation.
We do not know what the year holds for us.
There are things we are afraid of... and there are things we look forward to.

Lord God, the coming year is full of both uncertainty and hope.
Whatever the year holds for us, we trust You, and we place every day of this year
in your care, knowing that, as in the past, You are with us,
caring for us with constant love.

And so, Lord, we place ourselves into your keeping and dedicate our lives to your service
through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Savior. Amen.

Angels, From the Realms of Glory

Angels, from the realms of glory, wing your flight o'er all the earth;
You, who sang creation's story now proclaim Messiah's birth:
Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn King!

Shepherds, in the fields abiding, watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing, yonder shines the infant light:
Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn King!

All creation, join in praising God the Father, Spirit, Son,
Evermore your voices raising to the eternal Three in One:
Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn King!

James Montgomery and Henry Thomas Smart***

BELONGING

Kids on the Steps

Prayer of Confession

Let us come before God and one another in a time of confession, hearing "cast your light on our darkness," and responding with "and forgive us, God of love."

We thank you, God, that you know what it is to be human,
fragile and vulnerable, searching for ways to stay alive in dangerous and complicated times.
We thank you that you know the struggles and temptations of living in darkness.
And we thank you for the light you give to the world.

We confess that sometimes it's easier to stay in the shadows,
where things can stay hidden, where people can't see our cracks and flaws.

One: Cast your light on our darkness,

All: and forgive us, God of love.

We confess that we have, at times, brought darkness
into the world by our anger, our selfishness, our violence.

One: Cast your light on our darkness

All: and forgive us, God of love.

We confess that we are sometimes skeptical of light,
and find it easier to trust its absence.

One: Cast your light on our darkness

All: and forgive us, God of love.

Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness

One: We know in faith that God restores and renews,
and that our sins are forgiven.

All: Thanks be to God!

STEWARDING

Invitation to Offering

Song: The First Noel

The first Noel the angel did say was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep, on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Refrain: Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, born is the King of Israel.

They looked up and saw a star shining in the east, beyond them far;
And to the earth it gave great light, and so it continued both day and night. *Refrain*

And by the light of that same star, three wise men came from country far;
To seek for a king was their intent, and to follow the star wherever it went. *Refrain*

This star drew nigh to the northwest, o'er Bethlehem it took its rest;
And there it did both stop and stay, right over the place where Jesus lay. *Refrain*

Then let us all with one accord sing praises to our heav'nly Lord;
That hath made Heav'n and earth of naught, and with His blood mankind hath bought. *Refrain*

Traditional Christmas Carol**

FORMING

Sermon: Luke 2:41-52

Growing Up Wise

-Happy New Year! Tracey and the boys and I just got back from a family trip to Washington this week where we got time with both boys, both sets of parents, and both of our brothers' families, first in Seattle, then in Anacortes. There were dinners and puzzles and walks and naps and conversations. A good time. Not to say an altogether *uncomplicated* time (or else how could you stand me?) But a meaningful time for sure.

Today as a church we begin our new year with the story of a family trip. Our reading for this first Sunday in January is from the gospel of Luke, 2:41-52:

⁴¹ Now every year [Jesus'] parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. ⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. ⁴³ When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents were unaware of this. ⁴⁴ Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously looking for you." ⁴⁹ He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be [about my Father's affairs]?" ⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he said to them. ⁵¹ Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them, and his mother treasured all these things in her heart.

⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years and in divine and human favor.

Let's pray: *Lord, in this new year, we ask that you would find us in just the right place to get hold of us, and that as we grow in years, we might also grow in your wisdom and grace.*

-OK. **To Jesus' parents, this is a story about a lost child**

Anyone here temporarily lose their child before?

This story will likely forever remind me of the time I lost Caz in Bonner Park...
...for 10-15 minutes. Turned my attention to baby Colter in the amphitheater. Little Caz disappeared behind a row of trees. I scouted down the row of trees, thinking him hiding, saying 'Oh, I wonder if Caz is behind this tree.' But he wasn't there. Then I was running frantically, picking up speed, scanning the playground, shouting his name, knowing I had searched everywhere, now scanning the streets, the cars, wanting to call Tracey, not wanting to call Tracey, wanting to call the police, my phone now dead, interrogating men along the streets. A woman asked me what he was wearing. And then...Caz peeked out from behind a stand of trees at the far end of Bonner Park where he had hidden.

When I ran to meet Caz, I was overcome with gratitude and what else?...the *anger* of guilt. Not: 'How could I have lost you?' But 'How could you do this to me?'

Jesus' parents join pilgrims from their trusted Nazareth community of friends and extended family. They travel yearly to Jerusalem to reenact this central touchpoint of their faith: the Passover. They celebrate God's liberation of his people from slavery and suffering. It's a pilgrimage. A commemorative feast. A spiritual practice to recall who God is and what matters most. *God sets you free; so put God first.*

After the festival and meal, they set out with their friends and neighbors, their pilgrim community, to walk back to Nazareth – at least several days journey away.

After a day they discover that Jesus is missing. Fear.

They forgot to do the headcount.

Mary thought Joseph knew. Joseph thought Mary knew.

Anyway. They make a day's return travel.

They search frantically for Jesus.

And when they find him on the third *day* of his absence,

How do they feel? Overcome with joy...and *anger*.

There Jesus sits among the teachers of Israel in the Temple.

People are ooing and awing. But Mom and Dad are not impressed.

They could only figure he had been kidnapped or had come to some terrible accident.

But the fact that he is well is almost more insulting.

Here Jesus sits, insensitive to their fears.

'What were you thinking?! We've been searching everywhere.'

Jesus is pure adolescent. All clarity.

What's obvious to him should be obvious to all.

'Why were you searching for me? How could you not know that I must be about my Father's business?'

They want to say: 'What's obvious to *you* is obvious to *you*.'

Parents of all ages will be heartened to know that even Jesus exasperated his parents by failing to communicate, then blaming them for not being omniscient like his birth Father.

-To the boy Jesus, this is a story about coming of age

I recall that my first weeks of intense college pressure were also a time of spiritual vitality. God was getting hold of me. Pointing me to what was most central. *God sets you free; put God first.*

I remember exuberantly reporting my new discovery to my parents: 'It turns out my grades don't even matter; my worth is already a gift given by the grace of Jesus!' My Dad responded with something like: 'Now, I know we took you to Sunday School and all, but let's not get carried away here.' (And I thought: Clearly he just doesn't get it.)

Jesus has been raised in this surround of faith and practice. The teaching and traditions that make the commandments of God the very air he breathes. The yearly pilgrimages and observations of feasts that give his people their identity: *God sets you free; put God first.*

And now Jesus is coming of age.

An old soul at age 12, becoming a Jewish man means greater independence and moral responsibility

It's hard to know what Jesus came to understand about who he was to become and when. I appreciate NT Wright's sense that

Jesus' self-understanding emerged as a sense of calling, a growing sense of vocation that he was to inhabit the role of Messiah and Lord

So what we see here is an adolescent awakening of passion to be 'about his Father's affairs' – to be 'about the things of his Father.'

Consider all that that these words encompass.

He's 12 years old. He has big questions and dreams. *God is getting hold of him.*

He's not a baby anymore. He knows his way to Nazareth. Why *wouldn't* he just stay a few days and sit with the teachers in the Temple?

And so why this big reaction from his Abba and Ima? As if it's a big deal to stay in Jerusalem and dig into the Truth, Beauty and Wisdom of God for a few days!

Children of all ages will be glad to know that even *Jesus'* parents exasperated him when they couldn't get the tension between Jesus' pleasing his elders and pursuit of his calling.

-So. Not an *uncomplicated* family trip. To Jesus' parents, a story about a lost child. To the boy Jesus, a story about coming of age. And we can be grateful for the earthy frustrations of both parents and youth. Grateful that something spiritually vital may happen even in the muddled midst of children and adults all being grown up together.

(While writing this, my sons checked in to tell me about both sliding the Subaru across the ice into a curb and making an A in English.)

Because notice: This is indeed a story about a lost child – but a lost child *found right where we'd hope him to be*. Surrounded by a community of caring adults willing to dialog about their own questions of faith with kids. And notice: This is indeed a story about coming of age – but a coming of age *to take steps of maturity, to be about the affairs of the Father, a vocation that includes honoring mother and father*.

Despite the frustrations of parents and son, then, this is a success story for Jesus' intergenerational faith community. This family, this pilgrim people from his village, with their weekly Sabbath and Synagogue worship and yearly practice of pilgrimage for Passover – they've all shaped Jesus. And so right at the critical moment when biology, conscience and Spirit open him to the big, bright questions about Who God Is and Who He's Meant to Be, the One who might have been lost is *found - right where God can get hold of him*.

-Do you hear analogies for a church family of kids and adults? How through faith-centered relationships and the spiritual practices of years – worship, Scripture reading, Christian community, rest, work, prayer – adults and kids shape one another for a vocation that is about the affairs of God the Father? About the kingdom?

I remember someone telling me and Tracey that what's key to cultivate as parents is a community of Christians around our children, so that, when they run from us, as they will (and have), they can be found in the arms and counsel of a circle of teaching we could only hope them to experience. So that at just the right time(s), they'd be found in just the right places for God to get hold of them.

-Friends, where will you be found in 2025? Who will be your pilgrim community? With whom will you practice your faith? So that you might be growing up in just the place where God can get hold of you?

Mike McKay just lost his father this last week. And he reminded me of the truth that when a moment of crisis comes, when we feel lost, and we will, we want to have already invested years in real relationships, so that in the moment of crisis, we can be *found* practicing our faith in an authentic community of disciples that holds us up in the Father's love, that keeps growing us and encouraging us for a vocation of belonging to Christ.

-In the sacrament of Baptism, we Christians make promises to God, to children, to adults, to our whole faith community.

And what we *promise* is to guide and encourage one another in everything we say and do, with love and prayer, so that we all of us have every chance to know and follow Christ, to grow in relationship with body of Christ, and to participate in God's mission of saving love for all.

We promise to be a pilgrim community for one another, friends and relatives on a journey. Practicing our faith. We promise to be friends and teachers for when some of us get lost. We promise to patiently wait and watch for the days when God will get hold of each of us and surprise us with a sacred calling.

And as we do, we believe God will get hold of us *all*, again and again, to grow our passionate commitment to be about our Father's work.

If Baptism is our initiation into the pilgrim community, the Lords' Table is our regular Passover pilgrimage. Where we, children, youth and adults of all ages, are fed upon grace to grow in wisdom as we grow in years. To put the Lord first because his grace sets us free from our slaveries to what is less than God.

Celebration of the Lord's Supper and Receiving of Star Words

-Today we come to the Lord's table celebrating Epiphany. The word means 'revelation.' An epiphany is an Aha moment. It's associated with the star that the Maji followed. Bringing their gifts. Searching the sky. Longing for renewal. The star led them to the Aha moment of discovering Jesus. To the revelation of the God who would set them free and make them new.

As you come to the Table of Christ, you will know the Lord has come close to reveal his love, to get hold of us in body and blood, to nurture our community for growth in the affairs of God.

Another way we celebrate the revelation of God in his Son is to receive 'star words.' You will pass by a basket as you go from the table. And without looking, you will choose – you will receive - a star with a word written on it.

The word is not magical. But you are invited to ponder what significance this word might have in your life, how God might speak to you through this simple message. Perhaps to offer you a gift, a revelation, a word for the new year written on a star that might point to Jesus.

That is the point, of course. A word for the new year that might find you in just the right season and point you to Jesus in unexpected ways.

We hope you will receive this star word prayerfully and wonder in what way it might reveal the One who has power to renew your life...

Let's pray.

Lord, we come hungering and thirsting for you to get hold of us and grow us up to be yours. We hunger for a world renewed. For your peace and hope and joy and love to fill the earth. For the gospel of your belovedness to renew hearts.

We come hungering and thirsting for a world put right. We pray for violence to cease. For wars to end. For the protection of the sick and weak. For the healing of your world.

Feed us, Lord, through this Passover meal. Mature us, Lord, in your love as we put you first. Reveal yourself to us in the stars. Amen.

[As you celebrate the Lord's Supper at home, you may either be part of the recorded service (where Pastor Dan will lead) or lead yourself by taking the bread in your hands and saying aloud:

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread.

And when he had given thanks, he broke it.

And he gave it to his disciples, saying, 'This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

Then take the cup in your hands and say aloud:

In the same way, after supper, he took the cup, and said 'This is the cup of the new covenant, sealed in my blood. Whenever you drink of it, do this in remembrance of me.'

Paul says that when we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the saving death of the risen Lord until he comes again. This is not a Presbyterian table. These are the gifts of God for all people!

Will the servers please come forward? (There are both bread and gluten free wafers so that all may participate.)

[To all] This is the body of Christ given for you, and the blood of Christ poured out for you in his love.

Communion Song: Christ, Be Our Light

Longing for light, we wait in darkness. Longing for truth, we turn to You.

Make us Your own, Your holy people, Light for the world to see.

Refrain: Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts, shine through the darkness.

Christ, be our light! Shine in Your church, gathered today.

Longing for peace, our world is troubled. Longing for hope, many despair.

Your word alone has power to save us. Make us your living voice. *Refrain*

Longing for food, many are hungry. Longing for water, many still thirst.

Make us your bread, broken for others, shared until all are fed. *Refrain*

Longing for shelter, many are homeless. Longing for warmth, many are cold.

Make us Your building, sheltering others, walls made of living stone. *Refrain*

Many the gifts, many the people, many the hearts that yearn to belong.

Let us be servants to one another, making Your kingdom come. *Refrain*

Bernadette Farrell***

SENDING

Sending Song: Jesus, the Light of the World

Hark the herald angels sing. Jesus, the light of the world.
Glory to the newborn King. Jesus, the light of the world!

*Refrain: We'll walk in the light, beautiful light.
Come where the dewdrops of mercy shine bright.
Oh, shine all around us by day and by night. Jesus, the light of the world.*

Christ, by highest heav'n adored. Jesus the light of the world.
Christ, the everlasting Lord. Jesus, the light of the world! *Refrain*

Hail the heav'n born Prince of Peace. Jesus, the light of the world.
Hail the Sun of righteousness. Jesus, the light of the world! *Refrain*
Charles Wesley and George D. Elderkin***

Benediction

Leading in Worship This Morning:

Liturgist: Jeremy Flesch
Kids on the Steps: Austin Graef
Sermon: Dan Cravy
Musicians: Chris Caldwell, Emma Thackston,
Joselyn Thomsen, Madison Spencer, Noah Hill
Slide, Sound and Video Techs: Dan McCaffery,
Zane Reneau and Ron Righter

**Reprinted under CCLI license #47079
***Reprinted under Onelicense #A-713782

FPC Ministry Staff:

Pastor: Dan Cravy
Worship Director: Emma Thackston
Children, Youth and Family Director: Austin Graef
Church Operations Manager: Becky Kress
Program Support Administrator: Jo Ruby
Church Secretary: Haleigh Adair
Facility Steward: Robert Miller
Bell Choir Director: Tomi Kent
Parish Associates: Rev. Janet Malone and Rev. Bob Schurr
Preaching Pastor, Blackfoot Church of the Potomac: Natalie Mauer