
AN ORDER OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

December 20, 2020 | Fourth Sunday of Advent

First United Methodist Church

601 North Cedar, Abilene, Kansas 67410 | 785-263-2623 | www.AbileneFirstUMC.org

A Church of Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors.

GATHERING

Gathering of the Congregation

Greeting and Announcements

Prelude

CALL TO WORSHIP

Tell the timid to take heart.

The Lord our God will come!

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Opening Prayer

PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE

Scripture Reading — Luke 1:26-38 (NRSV)

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸

Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

HYMN* — *God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen*, WS-3052

1. God rest you merry, gentlemen, let nothing you dismay, for Jesus Christ our Savior was born upon this day, to save us all from Satan's power when we were gone astray. O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy; O tidings of comfort and joy.
2. In Bethlehem in Judah this blessed babe was born, and laid within a manger upon this blessed morn: for which his mother Mary did nothing take in scorn. O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy; O tidings of comfort and joy.
3. From God our heavenly Father a blessed angel came, and unto certain shepherds brought tidings of the same, how that in Bethlehem was born the Son of God by name. O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy; O tidings of comfort and joy.
4. The shepherds at those tidings rejoiced much in mind, and left their flocks feeding in tempest, storm, and wind, and went to Bethlehem straight-way, the blessed babe to find. O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy; O tidings of comfort and joy.
5. Now to the Lord sing praises, all you within this place, and with true love and brotherhood each other now embrace; this holy tide of Christmas all others doth deface. O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy; O tidings of comfort and joy.

— Traditional English Carol, 18th cent.

Children's Message

Special Music — *Mary Did You Know*

Scripture Reading — Psalm 16 (NRSV)

- ¹ Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.
- ² I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord;
I have no good apart from you."
- ³ As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble,
in whom is all my delight.
- ⁴ Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows;
their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out
or take their names upon my lips.
- ⁵ The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.
- ⁶ The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
I have a goodly heritage.
- ⁷ I bless the LORD who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.
- ⁸ I keep the LORD always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.
- ⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;
my body also rests secure.
- ¹⁰ For you do not give me up to Sheol,
or let your faithful one see the Pit.

¹¹ You show me the path of life.
In your presence there is fullness of joy;
in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

HYMN* — *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly*, UMH-229

1. Infant holy, infant lowly, for his bed a cattle stall;
oxen lowing, little knowing, Christ the babe is Lord of all.
Swift are winging angels singing, noels ringing, tidings bringing: Christ the babe is Lord of all.

2. Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping vigil till the morning new
saw the glory, heard the story, tidings of a gospel true.
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow, praises voicing, greet the morrow: Christ the babe was born for you.

— Polish carol; translated by Edith M. G. Reed, 1925 (Luke 2:6-20)

Scripture Reading — Romans 15:7-13 (NRSV)

⁷ Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. ⁸ For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, ⁹ and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.

As it is written,

“Therefore I will confess you among the Gentiles, and sing praises to your name”;

¹⁰ and again he says, “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people”;

¹¹ and again, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him”;

¹² and again Isaiah says,

“The root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles;
in him the Gentiles shall hope.”

¹³ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Sermon

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I commit myself to God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I set my heart upon Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I place my trust in the Holy Spirit,
the holy church universal, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

RESPONSE* — *Glory Be To The Father*, 71

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. — Lesser Doxology, 3rd-4th cent.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Merciful God, we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have failed to be an obedient church. We have not done your will,
we have broken your law,
we have rebelled against your love,
we have not loved our neighbors,
and we have not heard the cry of the needy.
Forgive us, we pray.
Free us for joyful obedience, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

(A time of silent prayers of confession.)

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Hear the good news:

Christ died for us while we were yet sinners; that proves God's love toward us.

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!

**In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!
Glory to God. Amen.**

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A Stewardship Moment/Invitation to the Offering

RESPONSE — *Praise God, From Whom All Blessings Flow*, 95

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise God, all creatures here below; praise God above ye
heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

— Thomas Ken, 1674

THANKSGIVING

Prayer of Thanksgiving

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**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 trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, [Meaning: save us from the time of trial.]
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

GOING FORTH

HYMN* — *Angels From the Realms of Glory*, UMH-220

1. Angels from the realms of glory, wing your flight o'er all the earth;
ye who sang creation's story now proclaim Messiah's birth:
Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn king.
2. Shepherds, in the field 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.
3. Sages, leave your contemplations, brighter visions beam afar;
seek the great Desire of nations; ye have seen his natal star:
Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn king.
4. Saints, before the altar bending, watching long in hope and fear;
suddenly the Lord, descending, in his temple shall appear:
Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn king.

— Words: James Montgomery, 1816 (Luke 2:8-20; Matthew 2:1-12; Malachi 3:1)

Blessing and Postlude

WELCOME TO WORSHIP

Please note that **bold type** indicates congregational participation. “H” stands for *The United Methodist Hymnal* (blue book); “F” stands for *The Faith We Sing* (black book); and “W” stands for *Worship and Song* (green book).

CLOSING CREDITS

Angie Hoerner, Piano
Jack Hunter, Special Music
Darryl Dunham and John Purvis, Liturgists
Cecelia and Joy Clemence, Slides and Sound for Saturday
Tray and Tyler Green, Slides and Sound for Sunday
Braden Adams, Video
Clark Williamson, Director of Music Ministries
Wendy Robinson, Director of Children and Youth Ministries

SERMON NOTES AND DOODLES

The Newsletter

December 20, 2020

First United Methodist Church, Abilene, Kansas

The mission of First United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ as we work together toward our vision of a church of open hearts, open minds, and open doors.

PRAYER CONCERNS

Please note: prayer concerns will be listed in the bulletin for four (4) weeks unless the church office is notified otherwise.

MEMBERS AND FRIENDS: Virginia Hoffman [12/6], Lilian Hoffman [12/20], Betty Cox [12/20], Bob Murnahan [12/20], Steve Crump [12/20], and those grieving the loss of Judy Hilton [12/20].

COMMUNITY PRAYER CONCERNS: Ethan Gustin [12/6], Aubrey Evans (friend of Rachel Gugler) [12/6], Kim Goodman [7/15/2018], doctors, nurses and other health care workers; students, teachers, administrators, school nurses, and other employees of local schools; restaurant and retail employees, postal workers and other delivery personnel; and all others working in essential industries. Those grieving the loss of Terry Mosier (son of Donna Smith) [11/29], Employees and Owners of Small Businesses [12/20]

THOSE WORSHIPING FROM HOME: Gary Donley, Evelyn York, Velma Becker, Joe Clemence, Steve Crump, Walt Hartman, Ray Power, Marla Rutz, Bob Murnahan, Donna Smith, Martha Zutavern, Donna Richards, Dorothy Veach, Darlene Sexton, Melvin Leckron, Dorothy Snider, Linda Chase, Barb Hawk, Verl Eckman and many of us!

THOSE SERVING IN THE ARMED FORCES: Greg Austin, Tim Barns, Kayla Berven, Billy Brockman, Matthew Brinker, Ross Covington, Jessica and James Green, Christopher Griffith, Gavin Hanna, Cameron Hoskins, David Hoskins, Ryan Kriesch, Colby Miller, Samuel Miller, and James L. Wise, Jr.

THOSE IN AUTHORITY: The President, the Governor, the Mayor, the County Health Officer, County Commissioners, the County Attorney, and other elected officials and the judiciary (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

DISTRICT PRAYER CALENDAR: Today we pray for the Haddam United Methodist Church and their pastor, Daniel Norwood.

GENERAL NEWS

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE ON THE RADIO — I'm happy to announce that our Christmas Eve service will be streamed online and broadcast on KABI 1560 at 8:00 p.m. on Thursday, December 24, 2020.

— John Collins, 12/13/20

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES — Because of the popularity of Christmas Eve services and the necessity of social distancing, I don't see any way we can hold enough services in the sanctuary to accommodate everyone who would want to come. For that reason, I plan to have a complete Christmas Eve service available online for streaming. We will broadcast the service on the radio at 8 p.m. and put it on audio CDs for those who don't have access to the internet. The little handheld candles we use when singing "Silent Night" will be made available to the congregation for both pick-up and delivery.

I also know that this is one of the most meaningful worship services of the liturgical year for many of you. For that reason, those who are willing to brave the cold (maybe) and the dark of night (guaranteed) will be invited to join together in the East parking lot at 7:00 p.m. or 11:55 p.m. (there will be two services). There we'll pass the light of Christ and sing "Silent Night" together (while wearing masks and social distancing).

— John Collins, 12/13/20

CHRISTMAS EVE CLARIFICATIONS

To be clear about the plans for Christmas Eve.

1. There will be no in-person worship service in the sanctuary.
2. The regular service, including the hymn Silent Night, will be available for streaming (anytime) and on the radio (KABI 1560 AM) at 8 p.m.
3. We will gather in the parking lot at 7 p.m. and again at 11:55 to light candles and sing silent night while masked and socially distanced.

— John Collins, 12/13/20

CANDLES FOR SILENT NIGHT — The handheld candles that we use when singing "Silent Night" are available for everyone celebrating Christmas Eve at home this year. You can swing by the church office during our regular hours, or you can call 785-263-2623 for delivery.

— Staff 12/13/20

CHRISMON TREE HISTORY— The Christmas tree in the Sanctuary has a unique history. The decorations on the tree are called Chrismons, from "Monogram of Christ". In 1957, the Chrismons were first developed by Frances Spencer and the women of The Ascension Lutheran Church in Danville, VA.

The Chrismons on our tree were hand made by Dorothy Snider, a long time member of our congregation. Dorothy was a member of the United Methodist Women and she served as a District Officer for 11 years. In Kansas City, Dorothy saw Chrismons on a tree that were made of styrofoam. She asked for a pattern and in 2008, she went to Ben Franklin, in Abilene, and bought white felt and white beads. She began to make the Chrismons you see on our tree today. There are numerous Chrismons such as stars, crosses, fish, crowns, mangers, the Alpha and Omega, sheep, doves, Angels, and various symbols of Christ. The Chrismons are the focus of the decorated tree along with white lights.

Take the time to look carefully at the beautiful gift of art Dorothy created for our church. She currently resides at Countryside Home, north of Abilene.

—Pam Jackson, 12/20/20

CONTINUED IMPROVEMENTS IN ONLINE WORSHIP — We continue to improve the quality of our online and radio worship services. The quilts on the pews have cut down on the echos in a mostly empty sanctuary. This week (thanks to a special donation) we're adding an additional Mevo video camera to allow those watching online a better view of the liturgist. Stick with us, it's going to keep getting better.

— John Collins, 11/29/20

I ENCOURAGE YOU TO WORSHIP FROM HOME — I urge everyone who can watch online or listen on the radio instead of coming in-person to do so. I know that worship is important to many of you—it's really important to me too. I understand that the experience of in-person worship is far superior to "virtual" worship. But, because of the increasing spread of COVID-19, Dr. Holmes, Bishop Saenz, and I all urge you to refrain from in-person worship for now. That said, we will have services at 10:30 a.m. on both Saturday and Sunday, we have plenty of extra masks, and I do not intend to turn anyone away.* In our present situation, you are the person best able to weigh your spiritual needs against the risks of in-person attendance. All I know is that the potential danger of attending in-person is both real and dire.

* To comply with #DK11-01, I will reluctantly turn people away in the unlikely event that we have more than 30 people show up.

— John Collins, 12/18/20

RESTARTING THE PRAYER VIGIL — We're restarting the Prayer Vigil in virtual form from our homes. It's a full day of prayer every Thursday from 5 a.m. to 7 p.m. We have the following two slots that remain open: 8 a.m. to 9 a.m., 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. Please email John or call the church office if you are interested in participating

— John Collins, 9/27/20, updated 11/15/20

WORSHIP ON AUDIO CD — Are you having trouble streaming online or listening on the radio? We're delivering audio CDs with the same service that is broadcast on the radio. Contact John Collins or call the church office if you would like one.

— Staff

WEDNESDAY EVENING COMMUNION — We have a Zoom meeting scheduled for the Wednesday Evening Communion Service at 6:00 p.m. Here are the details:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://bit.ly/38bf9qZ>

Meeting ID: 937 0998 7388

Password: 67410

Manually Dial In With a Touch-Tone Phone

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

Meeting ID: 937 0998 7388

Password: 67410

— Staff

INTERESTED IN MEMBERSHIP? — Are you interested in joining the Abilene First United Methodist Church as a member and making a formal commitment to God, the church, and yourself? If so, please communicate with one of the pastors in person or by using the contact information found on the back of the bulletin.

— John Collins, 12/20/20

EMAIL UPDATES — John uses a service called TinyLetter to send out blog posts by email every day or so. This way, you can keep up with their blog at revcollins.com by simply checking your email inbox. You can also reply with an email of your own and let us know what you think. You can sign up at tinyletter.com/jcollins11

— Staff

UPCOMING EVENTS

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19

10:30 a.m. Recording the Online Service/In-Person Worship Service

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20

10:30 a.m. In-Person Worship Service

10:30 a.m. Via KABI 1560 AM / Facebook and Vimeo (abilenefirstumc.org/onlineworship/)

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23

1:30 p.m. Staff Meeting Via Zoom

6:00 p.m. Communion Via Zoom

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24 — CHRISTMAS EVE

5:00 a.m. Prayer Vigil Begins @ Homes

7:00 p.m. Candlelight Silent Night in the parking lot

11:55 p.m. Candlelight Silent Night in the parking lot

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25 — CHRISTMAS DAY — OFFICES CLOSED

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 26

10:30 a.m. Recording the Online Service/In-Person Worship Service

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27

10:30 a.m. In-Person Worship Service

10:30 a.m. Via KABI 1560 AM / Facebook and Vimeo (abilenefirstumc.org/onlineworship/)

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 30

1:30 p.m. Staff Meeting Via Zoom

6:00 p.m. Communion Via Zoom

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

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