

Reflection

- John 1:1-2, 14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God...And the Word became flesh...

- Elyse Fitzpatrick

Within the darkness of the virgin's womb, the eternal Word entered an ovum and took to himself from her body chromosomes, blood, flesh, and bone. The Word who was made flesh (John 1:14) gestated within her for nine months. *God relied on a weak young girl to sustain his life.* She ate and drank and nourished this embryo (who is also the Lord of heaven and earth) from the limited resources of her own little body. In his humanity he knew the restraint of living within a womb, completely confined, in deep darkness. He felt it when his mother labored, and although he did not understand the process, like every infant before him, he struggled to be free and to breathe. He was born, placenta and all, as he came forth from the virgin's womb, a strange shrine for our God. He is like us in *every way*; he knows what it is to be born and live our life. We are not alone—you are not alone. "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who *in every respect* has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

- Augustine

He "was" before his own flesh; he created his own mother. He chose her in whom he should be conceived, he created her of whom he should be created. Why marvellest thou? It is God of whom I am speaking to thee: "the Word was God."

INGATHERING

Song of Preparation: *Meekness and Majesty (please see insert)*

Silent Prayer of Preparation

PRAISE

***Responsive Call to Worship**

- based on Luke 1:46-50

Our souls magnify the Lord!

Our spirits rejoice in God our Savior!

The mighty One has done great things for us!

Holy, holy, holy is God's name!

Let us worship God.

For God is our Maker and our Redeemer;

from generation to generation God gives mercy.

***Hymn of Praise #219:** *All Praise to Thee, Eternal Lord*

***Prayer of Adoration**

***Affirmation of Faith**

- from the Heidelberg Catechism Q. #1

What is your only comfort in life and in death?

My only comfort in life and in death is

that I am not my own,

but belong—

body and soul,

in life and in death—

to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood,

and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.

He also watches over me in such a way

that not a hair can fall from my head

without the will of my Father in heaven:

in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.

Because I belong to him,

Christ, by his Holy Spirit,

assures me of eternal life

and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready

from now on to live for him

***Praise**

Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere;

Go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!

RENEWAL

Responsive Call to Confession of Sin - *Ephesians 2:1-10 (adapted)*

Once we were dead in our transgressions and sins,

in which we used to live when we followed the ways of this world

and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now

at work in those who are disobedient.

We were by nature objects of God's wrath.

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,

made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our

transgressions—it is by grace we have been saved.

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us

with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,

in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable

riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

For it is by grace we have been saved, through faith—

and this not from ourselves, it is the gift of God—
not by works, so that no one can boast.
For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good
works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Pastoral Prayer of Confession

***Hymn of Assurance:** *My Heart is Filled with Thankfulness*
(please see insert)

Welcome and Announcements

Please fill out and pass the friendship registration pad.

Offertory Words - *Matthew 2:11*

*They saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and
worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him
with gifts.*

Offertory Music: *Shepherds Awake* - Ron Leaman and Larry Roff

COMMITMENT

Reading of God's Word - *Acts 7:44-53 (Sanctuary Bible, p. 1165)*

Sermon: *Murder of the Righteous One* - Rev. Bill Massey

***Hymn #162:** *Of the Father's Love Begotten*

God's Invitation and Promises - *1 Corinthians 11:23-29*

Prayer of Consecration

Sharing in the Bread and the Cup

Prayers of Thanksgiving, Petition, and 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And
lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the
kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*

***Hymn #529:** *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*

***Benediction**

***Those who are able, please stand**