

*** OPENING PRAYER**

God of Grace, God of Peace, we join your angels in praising you accepting the peace you so generously offer. It is because of your grace that we have been made your people. Amen.

*** OPENING HYMN**

"O Come All Ye Faithful"

Blue Hymnal #41

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qcIIZpnZPgo>

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Faithful God, we confess that we have not led lives of holiness. We suffer from impatience, apathy, and greed; we have not been at peace. We have lost the joy that knowing you brings. We repent of these offenses and turn to you in love. Forgive our iniquity and pardon our sins, that we may walk in righteousness to the glory of your name.

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS

People of God, hear the Good News! God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Amen.

*** GLORIA PATRI**

Blue Hymnal # 579

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUBxpypSblw>

*** SHARE THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

One: Peace be with you!

All: And also with you!

One: As God's forgiven people, share the peace of Christ with each other (from your seats, please).

Hear the Word of God

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Light of the World, illuminate our darkened hearts, brighten our dull senses, and awaken us to see as you see in your light. Amen

OT READING

2 Samuel 7: 1-11

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+sam+7.1-11&version=NIV>

PSALM READING

Psalm 89: 1-4,15-26

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+89%3A+1-4%2C15-26+&version=NIV>

CHORAL ANTHEM

"The Lamb"

Choir

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZO2Knv1gAw>

NEW TESTAMENT READING

Romans 16: 25-27

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+16%3A+25-27&version=NIV>

GOSPEL READING

Luke 1: 26-38

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A+26-38&version=NIV>

December 19, 1999

[RCL: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Canticle 3 or Canticle 15 or Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38](#)

[Marie Phillips](#)

It's a strange scene to be sure. How well thought out does this plan seem? How weird does it strike you that God's plan of salvation should depend upon the willingness of a young woman living in an obscure village of a remote province to trust a vision that tells her God wants her to conceive a child?

Does it strike you as at all odd that Mary's response was to ask the troubled question: "How shall this be?" It's not the way anyone would have imagined it. We know about Rome; we even know about Jerusalem; but what and where is Nazareth? We know about Augustus Caesar; we even know about old King David of ancient Israel; but who are this Mary and this Joseph? They are nobody special from nowhere in particular-why they're no more important than you or me!

And that is exactly the point. God acts through ordinary human beings like you and me, ordinary human beings that trust God enough to undertake extraordinary missions beyond their capabilities or imaginings. But we don't want God to act this way. We want God to appear in person, unmediated by anyone else, even by angels as awesome and terrifying as Gabriel, "his wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame." But that is not how God ever does anything. God seldom comes to us directly, except in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and even then it is only as God incarnate, God in human flesh and being, so that he was criticized for being a nobody himself. God always comes to us through creation. To us God comes through the water of baptism, through the bread and wine of the Holy Communion, through the hand of a loved one, or through the hand of a stranger. Mostly, God comes to us in ordinary ways, through ordinary people. It is even true in the case we have this morning. Although God chooses the extraordinary means of sending the Archangel Gabriel, God still announces that the divine plan is to come to us for our salvation through the body of a peasant girl from Nazareth. Of course this plan will work only if she is willing that it be so; only if she can find the courage to surrender to God's will; only if she can find the faith she needs to trust God's preposterous plan.

What a weight hangs in the balance there. What immensity depends on the faith of a young peasant woman? What tremendous secret waits upon the answer, hangs upon her word. And what trust God must have in her. Mary has lived her life in the community of people who believe there is a special relationship between God and them. They have affirmed that the word of God is for them, that the action of God in the world is for us them. They believe that their story, the story of this community, day in and day out, through slavery, wilderness, kingdoms, and exile, is the story of God's working through them to accomplish the divine purposes on earth. God is trusting God's people to have raised Mary in the right way, to have taught her the story of faith, taught her to recognize God's hand at work in her life. Gabriel has made the proposition. The great archangel has announced God's purpose, the heavenly messenger has posed the question-and the girl clearly is troubled. Now heaven and earth wait.

Mary doesn't understand what is going on; the archangel's reply to her question, "How shall this be?" is a mystery. Gabriel only assures Mary that God will overshadow her in the Holy Spirit. But Mary senses the kind of terror that comes from being in God's presence (rather than the horror that comes from being in the presence of evil). She surrenders her assured future as the wife of

a carpenter named Joseph to play the unknowable part God wills for her as Mother of the Savior.

=How many times must we hear this basic Gospel truth to learn it? We have been waiting for so long for God in our lives. We have sung many hymns praying for the advent of God in our lives. But have we yet learned that the word of God addressed to Mary through the Archangel Gabriel, is the same word God addresses to us: "Hail favored one, the Lord is with you." How many of us understand that God is waiting for us to say "Let it be to me according to your word," just as God waited for Mary to say it?

Like Mary, we cannot understand what is going on. Like her we can only remember that we are members of a community of faithful people whose life story is the story of God's action on behalf of the whole world. Like Mary, we cannot foresee what our future will be if we accept God's will. Like Mary we can only know that because we are members of the body of Christ, God has no other hands and hearts and minds in the world but ours. Like Mary we can only know that if God's will is to be accomplished in this world, we must play our part in this preposterous plan.

"Hail favored one, the Lord is with you." For the next week, as we go about our workdays, taking care of Christmas plans and errands, as we go about our daily responsibilities, let us keep Gabriel's greeting in our minds and hearts. Hear Gabriel greet us with these terrifying words of hope and salvation. God is waiting for the Holy Child of Bethlehem to be born in us, and he cannot be born in us unless we are prepared, like Mary, to give over ourselves, our souls and bodies, to him. The Holy Child cannot be born in us unless we, like Mary, find faith and courage.

"Hail favored one, the Lord is with you." Heaven and earth wait. **Amen**

* **HYMN** ***"Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"*** **Blue Hymnal #23**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mz2H1VE7maU>

Respond in Love and Service

*** OUR AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! Amen.

PRESENTATION OF OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

Please, continue to support the life and work of Crestholme. You can mail your tithe pledges and offerings to...

CPC
PO Box 23919
SA TX 78223-0901

Or you can save them and gather them until we meet again. Thank you!

Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice!

* **DOXOLOGY**

Blue Hymnal # 592

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V8TkUuKIh84>

* **PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

God of All Glory and Grace, we share with you what you have shared with us. Take these offerings, these gifts, and bless them, multiply them for the sake of your Son Jesus and your kingdom. Amen.

* **HYMN**

"Heal Our Land"

Red Hymnal #800

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTm_rA54EGw

* **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

God, our Father it pleased you to have all your fullness dwell in Christ Jesus, and through him to reconcile to yourself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. It is for this reason that we enter your throne room of peace and find grace to help in our time of need. Hear our prayers...(speak your specific request to God our Father here). We thank you for hearing us and answering us according to your merciful and sovereign will. We therefore join in praying the prayer taught his disciples to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in 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.

* **CLOSING HYMN**

"Angels We Have Heard On High"

Blue Hymnal #53

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7RIMuRYvndU>

* **BENEDICTION**

Having been made to be at peace with God, go forth in his might and share this glorious peace with all you see. Amen.

The End of this Worship Celebration — The Beginning of Service

Welcome to worship with us this morning! We're glad that you're here! If you do not have a church home, we invite you to become part of our compassionate church family... ask Fred, Dick, or an Elder about meaningful participation and membership!

Please come and celebrate with us in the Crestholme Christmas Eve Worship Service at 11:00 A.M. on Thursday, December 24, 2020. There will be much carol singing and meditations by our three wise men Carlos, Larry, and Fred. Come and welcome our newborn Savior.