

Willow Springs Worship, Sunday, December 24, 2023. 9:30 am

Simulcast on Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4743450556>

Meeting ID: 474 345 0556 Dial by your location +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

Hosted by Elaine Good

Fourth Sunday of Advent: Throughout the biblical story, we often see that the people who are the most ordinary are the ones through whom God chooses to work – Mary, Elizabeth, Joseph, the Shepherds. In our humility, we sometimes ask “Why me?” when God invites us to participate. We might just as well ask “Why not me?” We’re so ordinary, will God really work through us? Today we ponder how God’s light shines on ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

Welcome and Call to worship – Esther Johnson

Call to worship

Leader: God sent the angels to Mary and the shepherds.

High voices: But Mary was perplexed by Gabriel’s words, and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

Low voices: The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, for you have found favor with God.”

Leader: An angel of the Lord appeared to shepherds, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

High Voices: The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid.”

Low Voices: “I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.”

People: Like Mary and the shepherds, we’re also ordinary. Will God really work through us?

(pause)

All: Together we ponder.

Songs - Ellen Davis Zehr

Children’s time – Connie Krabill

Scriptures – Isaiah 61:10, 62:2; Luke 2:1-20

Sermon - The Gaze - New Light and Lavished in Love

Song

Sharing/Pastoral prayer After prayer times “Lord, in your mercy” respond with “hear our prayer.”

Song

Announcements:

The globe banks as a reminder of all of us doing our part in world hunger. The 50 Cent offering will be shared with the Bureau County Food Pantry and Mennonite Central Committee. Children can drop coins in the globe bank as they walk to the Children's time. Adults can place their offering in the bank before or after the worship service.

Our church building desperately needs a new roof sooner than later. We plan for a new steel, hidden fastener roof to last for decades to come! If you would like to the project, please mark your check – Building Fund.

CALENDAR

Dec. 24 Fourth Sunday of Advent

Dec. 25 Christmas Day

Dec. 31 Candlelight Communion Service, 7:30 pm

Sending:

Leader: Together we ponder. The Light shines!

People: We're so ordinary. Will God really work through us?

Leader: Do not be afraid! Nothing is impossible with God.

Go forth in the Light, for the mighty one has done extraordinary things, and Holy is God's name!

Online giving option: <https://tinyurl.com/donateWSMC>

Isaiah 61:10 I delight greatly in the LORD;
my soul rejoices in my God.

For he has clothed me with garments of salvation
and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness,
as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

Isaiah 62:2 The nations will see your vindication,
and all kings your glory;
you will be called by a new name
that the mouth of the LORD will bestow.

Luke 2:1-20 The Birth of Jesus

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. 8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,
14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one other, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Write down “a way you have shown or been shown love in an extraordinary way.” Reflect on the extraordinariness of this love, and how it made them and you feel.

A gaze is a fixed look, steadily and intently: a look of wonder, eagerness and adoration.

The Light of Christ Shines!

Have a Joyous Christmas!