

Welcome to the Panther Valley Ecumenical Church

We are glad you are worshiping with us today!



PANTHER VALLEY ECUMENICAL CHURCH

January 8, 2023

*Connecting with the Community,
Growing Disciples, and Serving Jesus Christ*

*Our Worship can be viewed on our website
PantherValleyChurch.org*

FAITH ~ FAMILY ~ FRIENDS

Thank you to Elder Lisa Gray who will be leading today's service.

Lisa retired from the Dept. of Veterans Affairs where she served as a Medical Lab Supervisor. She is a member of the Old Greenwich PC Stewartville, just finishing a term as their Clerk of Session. Lisa is a past Moderator of Newton Presbytery and is currently serving on the Highlands Presbytery Nominating Committee. She's on the Churchwide Board of Presbyterian Women. She lives with her husband Ray and their four cats which try to replace their four grown children.

PRELUDE

We invite you to begin your personal preparation at the beginning of the prelude.

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP (*Psalm 148; liturgy Presbyterian Outlook-Rev Kyle Walker*)

ONE: Sun and moon and all you bright stars!

ALL: Praise God!

ONE: All of you who are messengers and comprise his heavenly forces.

ALL: Praise God!

ONE: Highest heaven and you waters that are above the sky.

ALL: Praise God!

ONE: Let all of these praise the Lord's name because God gave the command and they were created.

All: Let us Worship God!

HYMN #220

Angels from the Realms of Glory

Verse 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

Chorus

Come and worship come and worship
Worship Christ the newborn King

Verse 2

Shepherds in the field abiding
Watching o'er your flocks by night
God with us is now residing
Yonder shines the infant light

Verse 3

Sages leave your contemplations
Brighter visions beam afar
Seek the great Desire of nations
Ye have seen His natal star

Verse 4

Saints before the altar bending
Watching long in hope and fear
Suddenly the Lord descending
In His temple shall appear

CALL TO CONFESSION:

Surrounded by God's everlasting faithfulness, we acknowledge our distress in how we have lost faith, become separated from God and one another. Let us confess our sins to God our loving and merciful redeemer.

CONFESSION: (in unison) (Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude*)

"My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does, in fact, please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore, I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone."

SILENT PRAYER & PERSONAL CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON (Isaiah 63:7-9)

Sisters and brothers, during all our distress, *God* is also distressed, so He sends a messenger who serves him to save us. In love and mercy, God has redeemed us. Amen.

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION (in unison)

Open our hearts, Oh God, to this your Word. May we hear with joy what you would have us hear this day, and may the music of your grace build our whole lives long that we may sing your praises with our whole being.

First Reading: Acts 10:34-43

GOSPEL **ALL STAND**, Matthew 3:13-17

MESSAGE Follow the Star, find your own star!

Elder Lisa Gray

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH - *THE APOSTLES' CREED*

*I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth;*

*I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He
was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.*

*He 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, and is seated at the right
hand of the Father.*

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the
resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.*

Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER (leader)

God of years 2022 and 2023, and of all times and places.

You have journeyed with your people from the very first moment of relationship in that garden, through the events of history, and alongside the events of this last year and the year to come. Show us each day the beauty of your creation, the strength of your human community and the potential of our aspirations.

We are grateful this day for gifts you have brought to us in this life and on this day. Even during times of alienation and exile you still longed to bring your people back to the promise. We still find ourselves in uncertain times, disorienting circumstances and long for restoration of your creation and community.

In that longing and uncertainty, we lift our prayers of intercession and supplication up to you:

+We pray for our newly elected leadership in the United States. May leaders govern with a heart for the welfare of the people of this land and every land. May they find common ground to bring the greater good into the world.

+We pray for the war in Ukraine and Russia. For families ripped apart and grieving the losses of loved ones as well as the trauma of war on their children and future generations.

+We pray for the women of Iran and the Iranian people seeking greater agency, equality, and opportunity for them and for their children.

+We also take this moment to pray for those closest to us we may know by name who need your love and care this day. Draw close to each one in body, mind, or circumstance, Gentle Savior. Work within each situation a knowledge of your divine love and compassion that compels your human family toward justice and love. Teach us where we may become hands and feet that all may know your grace and your powerful love. For we pray this in the name of Jesus Christ whom you sent that we may know the depth of your love and that we may remember the prayer he has taught us all, 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 but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

SHARING OF COMMUNION

Invitation

This is the joyful feast of the people of God. My friends, this is the Lord's table. Our Savior invites all those who believe and trust in him to share the feast which he Has prepared.

The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

One: May the God of new beginnings be with you.

All: And also with you.

One: People of God, lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them to the One who makes all things, including us, new.

One: Children of God, sing praises to the One who gives you new life.

All: We praise the One who continues to surprise us with hope and grace.

Before there was time, Hope of Eternity,
You took a moment to bring creation out of chaos.
You took time to create mountains, and carve deep canyons;
You made the time to fill the oceans and to plant food for all creatures;
You found the time to plow rivers
to water a Garden, and to shape us in Your image.
But we did not have time for You,
preferring to spend our days chasing sin,
and our nights seeking death.
You always made time for us, speaking of Your hopes
through the prophets, sharing Your dreams through the angels.
Then, one day You decided to do a new thing, becoming one of us
as Jesus became human to bring hope and grace to us.

So we join with the saints in heaven, and our sisters and brothers on earth, who
sing of Your glory:

**Holy, holy, holy, God of every time and space.
All creation sings of Your majesty and glory.
Hosanna in the highest!
Blessed is the One who gives us the water of life.
Hosanna in the highest!**

Holy are You, Keeper of our days, and blessed is Jesus Christ,
who is with us in every season of life.

He comes, not to judge us, but to forgive us;

He comes, not to cast us out, but to gather us into the new Jerusalem;

He comes, not to watch us suffer, but to die on the cross, that we might live with
You. As we give thanks for his life, and remember his death and resurrection,
we would talk of that mystery which is our faith:

**Christ died, so sin would have no more power over us;
Christ rose, destroying death's grip on us;
when the new heaven and new earth come,
Christ will make all things, including us, new.**

In these sacred moments, send Your Spirit to sanctify the bread and the cup,
and to open the hearts of those who approach the Table.

As the Bread of Life touches our lips, may we be strengthened to serve
those whom the world has forgotten.

As the Cup of Salvation quenches our thirst for You, may we be enabled to bring
relief to those who wander the desert wastes of our society.

And when all time ends, and all people are gathered around Your Table in
Heaven, we will rejoice in Your presence, and sing your praises forever:
One God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION FOR COMMUNION

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took a loaf of bread, and when he
had given thanks, he broke it and said, "**This is my body that is for you. Do
this in remembrance of me.**"

In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, “**This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.**” For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

This is the bread of life and the cup of salvation. All who are able, please come forward to receive. After receiving, each person is invited to select a star with a word to remember.

(Any who are unable to come forward will be served at their seat.)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

God of expectations, God of promise, God of child-like hope, we have eaten and drunk from your table. May this fill us with hope and joy as we wait for the day when the world will be changed.

PASSING OF THE PEACE

THE OFFERING

May we give our gifts to play our part in the refrain of his story of redemption for our lives and the world. Let us receive our morning offering.

SPECIAL MUSIC

THE DOXOLOGY

(in unison)

*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.*

OFFERING PRAYER, ALL STAND (in unison)

As the Magi followed the star and turned their final corner toward Jesus, as John the Baptist also realized he had found the Messiah, teach us to follow you. May these gifts serve to guide yet others to see Jesus. Amen.

HYMN #254

We Three Kings

Verse 1

We three kings of Orient are
Bearing gifts we traverse afar
Field and fountain moor and mountain
Following yonder star

Chorus

O star of wonder star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading still proceeding
Guide us to Thy perfect light

Verse 2

Born a King on Bethlehem's plain
Gold I bring to crown Him again
King forever ceasing never
Over us all to reign

Verse 3

Frankincense to offer have I
Incense owns a Deity nigh
Prayer and praising voices raising
Worshiping God on high

Verse 4

Myrrh is mine its bitter perfume
Breathes a life of gathering gloom
Sorrowing sighing bleeding dying
Sealed in the stone cold tomb

Verse 5

Glorious now behold Him arise
King and God and sacrifice
Alleluia, alleluia
Sounds through the earth and skies

CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

Go be part of God's crescendo of redemption. Bring the instrument or voice of your life story to play a part in God's chorus and orchestra of love. Bring others into the music so that they too can offer something beautiful to the world God has created.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be and abide with you and all you encounter this week, this year and forevermore. Amen.

DISMISSAL

One: Let us go forth rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

All: Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Credits:

CCLI Song # 31669, Henry Thomas Smart | James Montgomery © Words & Music: Public Domain; John Henry Hopkins Jr. © Words & Music: Public Domain

Announcements & Upcoming Events

Please pray for:

Our Church's subsistence, The Parishioners of PVEC, Our World, Our Families & Friends, Amanda Ort and daughters, JoAnn, Carolyn and Family, Kim and Family, Sally, Lois, Sheila, Jack Jr., The Tonzcos Family, The Likens Family

The Pajama & Book Program to help children in Foster Care is collecting through January-February 2023 until we have enough items to make this donation to CASA SHaW. Sizes needed are from infant through young adult. Please do not wrap them. Thank you for your help!

Coffee/Fellowship is hosted on Sunday after worship by Donna & Penny.

DATES & EVENTS

- Sun. 1/8** New Member Class
Mon. 1/9 Monday night Bible study group "Better Decisions, Fewer Regrets" by Andy Stanley. Contact Terrie Newbold, 908-892-6474 with questions or if you would like to join.
Sun. 1/15 Council Meeting
Sat. 1/21 Craft N' Crop Event 9am-5pm in FH
Sat. 2/11 \$5 Pancake Breakfast sponsored by Youth Squad
Sun. 2/26 Next Council Meeting
Fri. 3/24 Youth Squad Meeting 6-7:30pm

April Spring Rummage Sale:

- Fri. 4/21** 9am-4pm
Sat. 4/22 9am-2pm \$1 Day
Sat. 4/29 9am-2pm Bag Day

(We will need volunteers for set up, clean up, and bake sale please. Donations can be dropped off starting in February.)



PANTHER VALLEY ECUMENICAL CHURCH

1490 Route 517 Hackettstown, NJ 07840

~Welcome—we were built for you!~

Panther Valley Ecumenical Church is a multi-denominational church serving northwest New Jersey since 1969. We are formally affiliated with:

The Episcopal Church, The United Church of Christ,
The Presbyterian Church USA, and The United Methodist Church.

We are a congregation of many Christian traditions who worship together in accordance with Christ's prayer: "that they may all be one."

May God's Blessing go with you this week.

Guest Pastor: Elder Lisa Gray

Music Director: Diane Van Dongen

Church Administrator: Nikki Nicinski

Email: pvecsecretary@gmail.com

Office hours: Mon. – Fri. 9:00am – 2:00pm

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