

**Liturgy for the First Sunday of Christmas**  
**December 29, 2013<sup>1</sup>**

CALL TO WORSHIP<sup>2</sup>

One: Come now, all who thirst,  
**All: and drink the water of life.**  
One: Come now, all who hunger,  
**All: and be filled with good things.**  
One: Come now, all who seek,  
**All: and be warmed by the fire of love.**

HYMN 84 *Creator of the Stars of Night*<sup>3</sup>

POEM – *Touched by an Angel*, by Maya Angelou

We, unaccustomed to courage  
exiles from delight  
live coiled in shells of loneliness  
until love leaves its high holy temple  
and comes into our sight  
to liberate us into life.

Love arrives  
and in its train come ecstasies  
old memories of pleasure  
ancient histories of pain.  
Yet if we are bold,  
love strikes away the chains of fear  
from our souls.

We are weaned from our timidity  
In the flush of love's light  
we dare be brave  
And suddenly we see  
that love costs all we are  
and will ever be.  
Yet it is only love  
which sets us free.

BIRTH, Luke 2: 6-7 – When they were in Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to have her baby. She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guestroom.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Assembled by Carla Pratt Keyes and Doug Brown, Ginter Park Presbyterian Church, Richmond, VA

<sup>2</sup> From the Iona Abbey Worship Book

<sup>3</sup> All hymns are from *Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal*

HYMN 110 *Love Has Come*

NEWS, Luke 2:10-11 – The angel said, “Don’t be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you – wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David’s city. He is Christ the Lord.”

*Hymn 147 The First Nowell, verses 1 and 2*

JESUS, Luke 2:21 – His parents named him Jesus. That was the name given to him by the angel before he was conceived.

GIFTS – *The proper name Jesus comes from the Hebrew Yeshua or Joshua. It means Yahweh saves/is salvation/is my help. Every Sunday in Advent we lit candles traditionally associated with Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love – gifts Christ brings to the world. Take a few moments to ponder which of those gifts – Hope, Peace, Joy, or Love – you need most in your life right now. And which of those gifts do you feel you are most called by God to share with others in their lives right now?*

*There are markers in each pew. Find the marker in your pew. (If you have company in your pew, you’ll want to share the marker.) Write the word/gift you’ve chosen on the star tucked into your bulletin.<sup>5</sup> Take the home and put it somewhere it will remind you of God’s desire to give you Hope, Peace, Joy, Love.<sup>6</sup> After a few minutes we will sing.*

HYMN 137 *He Came Down*

TEMPLE, Luke 2:22b – In accordance with the Law of Moses, they brought Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.

HYMN 148 *Mary and Joseph Came to the Temple*

SALVATION, Luke 2:28-32 – Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God. He said, “Now, master, let your servant go in peace according to your word, because my eyes have seen your salvation. You prepared this salvation in the presence of all peoples. It’s a light for revelation to the Gentiles and a glory for your people Israel.”

PRAYER – *W.H. Auden – from “For the Time Being: A Christmas Oratorio”*

One (Simeon): And because of [God’s] visitation, we may no longer desire God as if [God] were lacking: our redemption is no longer a question of pursuit but of surrender to [God] who is always and everywhere present. Therefore at every moment

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<sup>4</sup> The Common English Bible translation is used throughout (and will not be printed in bulletins at GPPC). We envision one worship leader reading all the scriptures from the chancel. The other poems and prayers will be read by members of the congregation, perhaps from their seats.

<sup>5</sup> These will be made of old blue hymnal pages.

<sup>6</sup> Activity inspired by <http://stealourstuff.wordpress.com/2012/12/13/advent-prayer-stations/>

we pray that, following [Christ], we may depart from our anxiety into His peace.

**All: Its errors forgiven, may our Vision come home.**

*Silence.*

PROPHECY, Luke 2:33-35 – His father and mother were amazed by what was said about him. Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “This boy is assigned to be the cause of the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that generates opposition so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your innermost being, too.

HYMN 94 *Now the Heavens Start to Whisper*

MAGI, Matthew 2:1-2 – After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the territory of Judea during the rule of King Herod, magi came from the east to Jerusalem. They asked, “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We’ve seen his star in the east, and we’ve come to honor him.”

HYMN 151 *We Three Kings of Orient Are*

BLOODSHED, Matthew 2:3, 16b – When King Herod heard this, he was troubled, and everyone in Jerusalem was troubled with him . . . He sent soldiers to kill all the male children in Bethlehem and in all the surrounding territory who were two years old and younger.

HYMN 784 *By the Waters of Babylon*

ESCAPE, Matthew 2:14b-15a – Joseph took Jesus and his mother to Egypt. They stayed there until Herod died.

HYMN 154 *Jesus Entered Egypt*

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

OFFERING

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND THE LORD’S PRAYER

HYMN 545 *Lord, Bid Your Servant Go in Peace*

CHARGE – *Christmas Poem, by Jim Strathdee*

When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the magi and the shepherds  
Have found their way home,  
The work of Christmas begins:  
To find the lost and lonely one,  
To heal the broken soul with love,  
To feed the hungry children with warmth  
and good food,  
To feel the earth below, the sky above!

To free the prisoner from all chains,  
To make the powerful care,  
To rebuild the nations  
with strength and good will,  
To see God's children everywhere!  
To bring hope to every task you do,  
To dance at a baby's new birth,  
To make music in an old person's heart,  
And to sing to the colors of the earth!

BENEDICTION  
THE PEACE