

**First United Methodist Church of Freehold  
Bulletin**

**Sunday, December 31, 2023  
1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas Day – Watch Night / New Year’s Eve**

Announcements: Sharon Shutzer

Prelude

Welcome: Sharon Shutzer

\*Call to Worship: Sharon Shutzer

Leader: God is with us as a new year begins.

**People: We bring our bright possibilities and lingering questions.**

Leader: Like Mary and Joseph, may we trust God guiding us forward.

**People: We bring open hearts and discerning minds.**

Leader: Like God did for Jesus and his family, may God make a home for us.

**People: We bring our relationships and stories, knowing God is in them.**

**All: Let’s pay attention to where God is showing up!**

\*Opening Prayer: (In Unison)

**Almighty creator, we come to shout and rejoice in the wonderful gift of your Son for our world. It is a miracle that fills our lives with your glory. On this last day of the year, may our celebration honor the good we have received from your hand, even as we look forward to walking faithfully with you in the year ahead. As those who came before us, we will not be silent in our love for you; we will not mute our pure joy for what you have brought to our lives. Amen.**

\*Opening Hymn: “All Creatures of Our God and King” UMH #62  
(v. 1, 2, 3)

\*Praise Hymn: “How Great Thou Art” UMH #77  
(v. 1, 2)

Introduction to A Time of Prayer: Rev. Yoseb Jeon

Prayer Hymn: “Away in a Manger” UMH #217

Pastoral Prayer: Rev. Yoseb Jeon  
*[For those joining us online, please submit your prayer requests in the comments on the virtual attendance sheet, or email the church office. Your prayer requests will be lifted up in next Sunday’s service.]*

The Lord’s Prayer: UMH #895

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:22-40 Gilbert Heaton

Friendship Moment and Passing of the Peace

*[For those joining us online, please take a moment to sign the online attendance form:  
[www.freeholdmethodist.org](http://www.freeholdmethodist.org)]*

Message: "Hope for the New Year" Rev. Yoseb Jeon

Wesley's Covenant Renewal (See Insert)

Offering Time: [www.freeholdmethodist.org/give](http://www.freeholdmethodist.org/give)

Offertory: "What Child Is This" 16<sup>th</sup> cent. English Melody  
Mitch Samu, Piano

\*Doxology: "Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow" UMH #95

Offertory Prayer: (in Unison)

**God of love and abundance, as we enter this new year full of possibilities and hope, we give you thanks. We lift up to you our offerings that you would bless them and increase them, so that the good news of Jesus Christ will be spread far and beyond this place. We pray this with committed and hopeful hearts in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.**

\*Closing Hymn: "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" UMH #240  
(v. 1, 2)

\*Benediction: Rev. Yoseb Jeon

\*Postlude "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" UMH #240  
(Reprise)

## Scripture Passage for Sunday, December 31, 2023

Liturgist: Gilbert Heulton

### Luke 2:22-40

#### Jesus Is Presented in the Temple

<sup>22</sup> When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord <sup>23</sup> (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), <sup>24</sup> and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

<sup>25</sup> Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. <sup>26</sup> It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. <sup>27</sup> Guided by the Spirit, Simeon<sup>[b]</sup> came into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what was customary under the law, <sup>28</sup> Simeon<sup>[c]</sup> took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

<sup>29</sup> “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,  
according to your word,  
<sup>30</sup> for my eyes have seen your salvation,  
<sup>31</sup> which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,  
<sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the gentiles  
and for glory to your people Israel.”

<sup>33</sup> And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. <sup>34</sup> Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed <sup>35</sup> so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul, too.”

<sup>36</sup> There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, <sup>37</sup> then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. <sup>38</sup> At that moment she came and began to praise God and to speak about the child<sup>[d]</sup> to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

#### The Return to Nazareth

<sup>39</sup> When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. <sup>40</sup> The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him.

## John Wesley's Covenant Renewal Service

### **The Invitation**

**Leader:** *Let us gathered here before the Lord now in covenant commit ourselves to Christ as his servants. Let us give ourselves to Him so that we may fully belong to Him. Jesus Christ has left us with many services to be done. Some of these services are easy and honorable, but some are difficult and disgraceful. Some line up with our desires and interests, others are contrary to both. In some we please both Christ and ourselves, but then there are other works where we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves.*

*Jesus Christ, we offer You this prayer:*

**People:** **Let me be Your servant. Let me follow your commands. I will no longer follow my own desires. I give myself completely to your will.**

**Leader:** *The power and strength to live as true servants is given to us in Christ. We accept the place and work that He gives us, acknowledging that He alone will be our reward.*

**People:** **I am not my own. I am Yours alone. Make me into what You will. Rank me with those You will. Put me to use for You. Put me to suffering for You. Let me be employed for You. Let me be laid aside for You. Let me be lifted high for You. Let me be brought low for You. Let me be full or let me be empty.**

**Let me have all things or let me have nothing. With a willing heart, I freely give everything to Your pleasure and disposal.**

**Leader:** *Christ is Savior to those who are His true servants. He is the source of all salvation to those who obey. To be His servant is to consent fully to His will. Christ accepts nothing less. Christ will be all in all, or he will be nothing.*

*Now confirm this truth in holy covenant. Make it a reality in your life in these three ways:*

First, set apart time in your day, more than once, to be spent alone with the Lord. Seek to perceive God's special care for you and gracious acceptance of you. Carefully think through the words of this covenant and its conditions. Examine your heart, even if you have freely given your life to Christ. Name the sins in your life. Reflect on whether you are willing to choose Christ's holy laws and strict commands. Be sure you are clear in all of these so you do not lie to God!

Second, uphold a serious spirit of holy awe and reverence.

Third, claim God's covenant. Do not trust in your own strength and power but rely upon God's promise of giving grace and strength. In this way, He will empower you to keep your promise.

Fourth, be determined to be faithful. You have given your heart and life to God. You have opened your mouth to dedicate yourself to the Lord. With God's power, never go back to your former way of living.

And last, be prepared to renew your covenant with God. Fall on your knees. Lift your hands. Open your hearts.

## **The Covenant Prayer**

*Leader: Let us pray together:*

**People:** My righteous God, for the sake of Your Son Jesus Christ, see me now as I fall down before You. Forgive my unfaithfulness when I have not done your will. You promise mercy if I turn to You with my whole heart.

*Leader: God requires that you rid yourself of every idol in your life.*

**People:** From the bottom of my heart, I here and now renounce every idol in my life, covenanting with You that I will not commit any known sin. By turning against Your will I have turned my love toward the world. In Your power I will watch for any temptation that will lead me away from You.

*Leader: Through Jesus Christ, God offers to be your God again, if you allow Him to be.*

**People:** Before all heaven and earth, I here and now acknowledge You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as my Lord and God. I vow to give all of myself, body and soul, to be Your servant and to serve You in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life.

*Leader: Jesus Christ is the only way and means to God. God has given us Jesus as the way and means to salvation.*

**People:** Jesus, I here and now accept You and the only new and living Way. I join myself in covenant with You. I come to You hungry, sinful, miserable, blind, and naked, unworthy even to wash the feet of Your servants. With all my power, I accept You as my Lord and Head. I renounce my own unworthiness, and vow that You are the Lord, my righteousness. I renounce my own wisdom and take You for my only guide. I renounce my own will and take Your will as my law.

*Leader: Christ has told you that you must suffer with him.*

**People:** Jesus, I here and now make this covenant with You and accept whatever comes in life. Through Your grace I promise that neither life nor death will separate me from You.

*Leader: God has given holy laws as the rule of your life.*

**People:** I here and now willingly take on Your yoke and burden. All Your laws are holy, just, and good. I accept them as the rule for my words, thoughts, and actions, promising I will strive to order my whole life around your direction. I will not allow myself to neglect anything I know to be my duty.

*Leader: The Almighty God searches and knows you, even the thoughts of your heart.*

**People:** O God, You know that we have made this covenant today in sincerity, without deceit or reluctance. If You find anything false in us, guide us and help us to set it right. And now, glory be to You, God the Father. From this day forward, I shall look upon You as my God and Father. Glory be to You, God the Son. You have loved me and washed me from my sins in Your own blood. From this day forward, I shall look upon You as my Savior and Redeemer. Glory be to You, O God the Holy Spirit. By Your almighty power, You have turned my heart from sin to God. From this day forward I shall look upon You as my Comforter and Guide. O mighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you have now become my Covenant Friend. And I, through Your infinite grace, have become Your covenant servant. You are mine and I am Yours. So be it. May this covenant that I have made here on earth be ratified in heaven. Amen.

**Opening Hymn:**  
**“All Creatures of Our God and King” (v. 1, 2, 3)**  
**UMH #62**

**Verse 1**

All creatures of our God and King,  
Lift up your voice and with us sing,  
    O Praise ye! Alleluia!  
O brother sun with golden beam,  
O sister moon with silver gleam!  
O Praise ye! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

**Verse 2**

O brother wind, air, clouds, and rain,  
By which all creatures ye sustain,  
    O Praise ye! Alleluia!  
Thou rising morn, in praise rejoice,  
Ye lights of evening, find a voice!  
O Praise ye! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

**Verse 3**

O sister water, flowing clear,  
Make music for thy Lord to hear,  
    Alleluia! Alleluia!  
O brother fire who lights the night,  
Providing warmth, enhancing sight,  
O Praise ye! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

**Praise Hymn:**  
**“How Great Thou Art” (v. 1, 2)**  
**UMH #77**

**Verse 1**

O Lord my God!  
When I in awesome wonder  
Consider all the worlds  
Thy hands have made,  
I see the stars,  
I hear the rolling thunder,  
Thy power throughout  
The universe displayed.

**Chorus**

**Then sings my soul,  
My Savior God to Thee;  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!  
Then sings my soul,  
My Savior God to Thee;  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!**

**Verse 2**

When through the woods  
And forest glades I wander,  
And hear the birds  
Sing sweetly in the trees;  
When I look down  
From lofty mountain grandeur  
And hear the brook,  
And feel the gentle breeze;

**Chorus**

**Then sings my soul,  
My Savior God to Thee;  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!  
Then sings my soul,  
My Savior God to Thee;  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!**

**Prayer Hymn:**  
**“Away in a Manger”**  
**UMH #217**

**Verse 1**

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,  
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.  
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay,  
The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

**Verse 2**

The cattle are lowing, the Baby awakes,  
But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes;  
I love Thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky  
And stay by my cradle 'til morning is nigh.

**Verse 3**

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay  
Close by me forever, and love me, I pray;  
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,  
And fit us for heaven to live with Thee there.

**Doxology:**  
**“Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow”**  
**UMH #95**

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise him, all creatures here below:  
Praise him above, ye heavenly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.  
Amen.

**Closing Hymn:**  
**“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” (v. 1, 2)**  
**UMH #240**

**Verse 1**

Hark! the herald angels sing,  
“Glory to the newborn King;  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled!”  
Joyful, all ye nations rise,  
Join the triumph of the skies;  
With th'angelic hosts proclaim,  
“Christ is born in Bethlehem!”  
Hark! the herald angels sing,  
“Glory to the newborn King!”

**Verse 2**

Christ, by highest heaven adored;  
Christ, the everlasting Lord;  
Late in time behold Him come,  
Offspring of a Virgin's womb.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;  
Hail th'incarnate Deity,  
Pleased with us in flesh to dwell,  
Jesus, our Emmanuel.  
Hark! the herald angels sing,  
“Glory to the newborn King!”