

Links for the Recording of the Service from January 10, 2021 and the Upcoming Service of January 17, 2021 are at the end of the News Blast.

Dear Members and Friends of Idylwood Presbyterian Church,

News from the Pastor:

The Session learned that the Pastor Nominating Committee has selected the Rev. Maggie Smith to be the new pastor, beginning in February. She will be introduced to the congregation at the annual meeting, which will be after church on January 31. That will also be my last official Sunday, though I will be on vacation and available for the transition during the month of February (and afterward as needed). Thanks are due to the PNC who worked very hard over the last eight months to get to this point.

Please keep in your prayers:

- **Bob Osman's** brother Paul, who just turned 65, was hospitalized last week with blood clots in his lungs after a heart attack/surgery in December. Paul is home now but still needs prayers.
- **Linda Dono's** aunt, Marge Dono Neuberger, who died Sunday, 12-20, of COVID-19
- **Julie Tutwiler's** cousin's son, Jon Pope, in a second round of chemotherapy
- **Kate Untiedt** asks for prayers for her right eye, which is still not right
- **Kate Untiedt's** colleague Nancy with cancer and recent heart attack
- **Linda Dono's** friend, Rev. Tom Wade with leukemia
- **George Petras's** cousin Marlene with lung cancer
- **Richard Williams' uncle** Bill Axline with cancer
- **Danielle Moraes** dealing with a difficult work lawsuit
- **All with COVID-19 or at risk:** medical, delivery, and teachers

Musical Notes:

Doris and Sharon (The Braided Cord) will share their talent with us this Sunday and would like to share the following:

This Sunday, we'll be singing together a song called "Waymaker." It was written by Osinachi Okoro, a Nigerian female songwriter/worship leader/recording artist. She has recorded nine albums and serves as senior worship leader at Christ Embassy (Loveworld), her home church. She lives in Lagos, Nigeria, with her husband and child.

Here is a link to listen to her version of the song. We'll be singing it together after the sermon. After the third verse, please add any kind of rhythm instruments you have— bongos, spoons, tambourines, keys, pencil tapping coffee mug, anything that makes a percussive sound! Hopefully after you hear this, you'll be familiar enough to help us make a joyful noise! — Sharon and Doris

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QM8jOHE5AAk>

Devotions/Reflections from the Pastor:

Gen 1:30 And to all the animals on land, to all the birds of the sky, and to everything that creeps on earth, in which there is the breath of life, [I give] all the green plants for food.” And it was so.

This is one of those passages that would seem to be based on purely wishful thinking. We all are sure that carnivorous animals were always carnivorous. Right? Well, the *NYTimes* reported that crocodiles went through a vegetarian phase! (Cara Giaimo, “Crocodiles Went through a Vegetarian Phase Too” *New York Times*, June 27, 2019.

Jeff and I have been interested to see what our cat, who not surprisingly loves chicken and salmon, will eat. She likes many strange foods, like avocado, and seems to prefer spicy food to plain. Until recently, she has shown no interest in any of the brands of faux hamburgers that we have tried, at least some of which we find quite palatable (some long-time vegetarians find them too meat-like!) Anyway, recently Jeff had bought a brand that I consider second best and we were having them for dinner. As usual we offered Peggy some and to our surprise she snarfed them down. The people who are created the fake meat have not designed it with animals in mind, but it is plausible that if they can make a product that humans like that they may also be able to make one that cats like as well. I don't have dogs, but grew up with them. My memory is that dogs are not very picky, so I expect they will be easy to please.

Gen 1:31 And God saw all that He had made, and found it **very good**. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

After God finishes the divine work most days, a refrain appears, God saw that he had made and it was good. Here at the end of creation, we get this line that rounds out the creation story. I had always thought of it as a stamp of approval on God's final act of creation in verse 27, but Nachmanides (Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman) says that what God is blessing is not any individual species, but the **goodness of the whole creation**:

Gen 2:4b-5 When the LORD God made earth and heaven—⁵when no shrub of the field was yet on earth and no grasses of the field had yet sprouted, because the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth and there was no man to **till** the soil...

The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden, to **work** it. The late Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sachs calls this the **Stewardship Paradigm**. The verb printed here in bold literally mean to “serve.” The first creation story in Gen 1:1-2:4a comes from the source known as the Priestly source. It is the magisterial seven days of creation story in which God speaks everything into being and then rests on the seventh day. In the second story found in Gen 2:4b-3:26, the Yahwist writer tells a very different kind of creation story with characters who come into conflict and ultimately resolve the conflict. It is also a messier story because God makes the first human out of the dirt of the ground, molding *ha'adam* (the human) with the divine hands and blowing breath into the human to bring the creature to life. Later when the divine determines

that this human is lonely God tries to find a companion from the animals and when that fails puts the human to sleep and from a spare part creates a second human, *Havvah*, or Eve, mother of the living.

In this story, the humans' purpose is to work the garden and to guard or keep it. We don't actually see them do that explicitly until after they are expelled from Eden, though. Still, it is clear that this author believes that is the fundamental responsibility of humanity. To work and protect the land. So, in 1:31, we read that the humans are to work or serve the land

Today, most of us are not farmers, but we still have a responsibility to protect the earth. How do we do that? Partly by **not** doing destructive things: avoiding single use plastic containers, plastic bags, driving unnecessarily, especially cars that use a lot of gas and/or are highly polluting, eating foods that require much farmland and resources, especially beef, and by doing some things that are positively helpful like keeping the heat low and the AC high, installing energy efficient appliances when it comes time to replace appliances and autos, and I'm sure you can add other ideas to this list.

Lectionary texts for 1-10-2021:

1 Samuel 3:1-10, (11-20)

3:1 Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

3:2 At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room;

3:3 the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was.

3:4 Then the LORD called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!"

3:5 and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down.

3:6 The LORD called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again."

3:7 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

3:8 The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy.

3:9 Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

3:10 Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

3:11 Then the LORD said to Samuel, "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle.

3:12 On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from

beginning to end.

3:13 For I have told him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them.

3:14 Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever."

3:15 Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli.

3:16 But Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." He said, "Here I am."

3:17 Eli said, "What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you."

3:18 So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, "It is the LORD; let him do what seems good to him."

3:19 As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.

3:20 And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the LORD.

Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

139:1 O LORD, you have searched me and known me.

139:2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.

139:3 You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.

139:4 Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely.

139:5 You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

139:6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.

139:13 For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

139:14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.

139:15 My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

139:16 Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.

139:17 How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

139:18 I try to count them -- they are more than the sand; I come to the end -- I am still with you.

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

6:12 "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are beneficial. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything.

6:13 "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food," and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

6:14 And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power.

6:15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the

members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!

6:16 Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, "The two shall be one flesh."

6:17 But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

6:18 Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself.

6:19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?

6:20 For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

John 1:43-51

1:43 The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me."

1:44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

1:45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth."

1:46 Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

1:47 When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!"

1:48 Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you."

1:49 Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

1:50 Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these."

1:51 And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

- [1 Samuel 3:1-10, \(11-20\)](#)
- [Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18](#)
- [1 Corinthians 6:12-20](#)
- [John 1:43-51](#)

Topic: IPC Worship Recording

Date: Jan 10, 2021 10:30 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Meeting Recording:

<https://zoom.us/rec/share/EfivHTJH2kN480CWpW8DxoU3DqoIrPsCC5sTYGkI0pZzF9dpxMc zJGbTwqqKn-Zv.du5WGzx7ed4-PjJq>

Access Passcode: **GFEkA5+J**

Topic: IPC Upcoming Worship

Time: Jan 17, 2021 10:30 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Every week on Sun, until Jan 31, 2021, 3 occurrence(s)

Jan 17, 2021 10:30 AM

Jan 24, 2021 10:30 AM

Jan 31, 2021 10:30 AM

Please download and import the following iCalendar (.ics) files to your calendar system.

[Weekly: https://zoom.us/meeting/tJMtdu-](https://zoom.us/meeting/tJMtdu-hrTgoGtxB08s_6SDKTEmItyDq2K1M/ics?icsToken=98tyKuCvrjosE9eWshmpRowEAoj4M_PztnZBjbdFvk-9EB8FUSfdAsdPG6ZmNMmC)

[hrTgoGtxB08s_6SDKTEmItyDq2K1M/ics?icsToken=98tyKuCvrjosE9eWshmpRowEAoj4M_PztnZBjbdFvk-9EB8FUSfdAsdPG6ZmNMmC](https://zoom.us/meeting/tJMtdu-hrTgoGtxB08s_6SDKTEmItyDq2K1M/ics?icsToken=98tyKuCvrjosE9eWshmpRowEAoj4M_PztnZBjbdFvk-9EB8FUSfdAsdPG6ZmNMmC)

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Passcode: 531963

Find your local number: <https://zoom.us/u/aeAlYJfilT>

Sermon from 1-10-2021, including Lectionary texts on which it is based:

⁴ John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

⁵ And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

⁶ And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;

⁷ And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

⁸ I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

⁹ And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.

¹⁰ And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:

¹¹ And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Isa 42:1-4
Psalm 2

Epiphany 1B
Mark 1:4-11

Jesus's Baptism

Last week we talked about the story of the coming of the wise men and the escape of the holy family to Egypt due to Herod's rage. This week, our focus changes from the wise men, star, and escape to Jesus's baptism as a young man by John the Baptizer, or as we called him growing up, John the Baptist.

You remember the story. John was out in the wilderness baptizing people in the River Jordan with a baptism in which the water was symbolic of the washing away of sins. According to the text, John was very modest, saying that another was coming who would baptize with spirit rather than water. The evangelists put all the attention on Jesus. But one question is, why did Jesus feel the need to be baptized. We are used to thinking of him as sinless, so why did he go through this ritual?

The gospels speak of Jesus as the son of Mary, never the son of Joseph. There is good reason to believe that Jesus thought of himself as what was called a *mamzer*, a fatherless child (<https://bibleinterp.arizona.edu/articles/2005/10/chi298001>), a category that made him ineligible to marry or even to enter the inner precincts of the temple. He would have been considered a sinner, like prostitutes and tax collectors. As I talked about in my Christmas sermon, it is likely that Mary's pregnancy was irregular in some fashion, which made Jesus an outcast. So, he probably saw John's baptism as a way of getting a fresh start.

At the time of his baptism, Jesus came down to the Jordan, and Mark tells us he had a powerful experience. The text says that he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove upon him. Then he heard a voice, saying, "Thou art my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." We don't have to take this literally to understand that the experience Jesus had was profound. It was an initiation ceremony that moved him into full manhood. The words "You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" expressed for the young man Jesus, who may not have known his earthly father, the powerful sentiment that his lack of a known earthly father didn't matter because God was his ultimate father.

Imagine the young man Jesus, despised and rejected by his peers, struggling to find himself in a broader culture that had little use for Judeans and especially Nazarenes, such as Jesus. Picture being a bright, sensitive, creative young man, as we know Jesus was, for whom the world had little use. As was the case in the sixties and seventies of our own era, there were alternative societies in his time. One of them was led by his cousin John. The Essene community from which the Dead Sea Scrolls come was another. Jesus found a safe haven in John's community and decided to become a follower of the Baptizer. So, one day he went down to the Jordan River where John was baptizing his converts and John baptized him.

We don't know exactly what happened, but it seems to have been a turning point. Jesus must have sensed that his mission was to others like himself, other outcasts. It is not the sinless who are capable of redeeming sinners, but those who fully understand them in all of their humanity. You may have heard of Henri Nouwen's little book, *The Wounded Healer*. Only in our brokenness can we reach the broken.

At that moment, Jesus experienced an irresistible sense of God's blessing upon his life and mission. Only someone who knew what it felt like to be ostracized could fully empathize with sinners. The tension between Jesus's low position in society and the grandeur of the image of the sky being ripped open and the dove descending, along with God's words of approval to Jesus, is quite stunning.

I have no memory of my baptism, my christening more accurately, since I was just a few months old, but I do remember rather vividly the day I was ordained. I was the first woman ordained in my presbytery in NC in 1974, though several others followed quickly after me, as it was that time in the early seventies when women were finding our voices. I remember two things, oddly what I wore, a dark emerald green dress that I made from a Vogue pattern – I still have the dress, though I can no longer wear it, and the powerful feeling that came over me during the ceremony. I had no idea of where my ministry would take me, but I think I had a vague sense that I would be going where others had not gone before. Now, I'm not comparing myself to Jesus except to the extent that I think we all should try to open ourselves to the sacred dimension the way Jesus did at the time of his baptism.

What does the story of Jesus's baptism mean for us today as we go about our everyday lives? First of all, we tend to think of Jesus in very grandiose terms, as the Messiah -- hear the drums roll, the Son of God – listen to the trumpets sound forth, the Christ – now the full orchestra please. All of this may be true, but to focus on titles often is to lose the person Jesus, along with the message he came to preach. Faith is much more than accepting Jesus's honorifics. If our lives have not been touched by the way he lived, by his genuine human caring for the marginalized, the poor, for the outcasts of his day, and his sparring with the ecclesiastical authorities, then just calling out to him, "Lord, Lord," as people do in Matt 7:21, will not benefit us now or ever. So, in this New Year, let us read between the lines of our Bibles and read the lines themselves to hear the age-old story of Jesus afresh. Let us open ourselves as Jesus did, standing waist deep in the water, arms wide open, dripping wet, vulnerable, listening, and allow the sacred dimension into our lives to take us wherever the Spirit wills.

And if we never have a grand epiphany ourselves, we can still recognize the prophets of the past, including Jesus, and heed their voices. And we can be open to the prophetic voices of today and be ready to discern where the spirit is moving in our midst. As Amos said, "A lion has roared, Who can but fear?" (Amos 3:8) We have only to listen to hear and look to see. Amen.