

WORSHIP SERVICE PLAN**(Traditional & Online Service)** (White/Gold)

December 28, 2025 • First Sunday in Christmas • New Year's Eve

Luke 2:25-40*"Jesus Grows Up"*

A very human Jesus had to do some very human growing up. So do we.

(online only) Preparation for Worship

Gather these items for worship. If an items unavailable, fret not:

- a piece of **white** cloth
- an end table or stand
- a plate
- a cup
- a glass or bowl
- a lighter/match
- an **advent wreath**
- a onesie or article of toddler clothing
- a computer or internet-accessible device
- a thank you card to God for something this week



For each item you have, thank God for the provision. For each piece you do not have, thank God you don't need it. Place the table/stand in the area you plan to worship. If more than one person will be present, place the table in the middle of where you will be seated. Drape the cloth over it. Arrange the cup, plate, glass of water, and other items on the table. Keep the Bible in front of you. Have enough elements for each person in your household. Light all the candles on the wreath.

Questions for the announcement loop*In preparing for Worship, consider the following:*

- Do you think you actively resist growing?
- Why do you think God set us up to have to take time to grow? Why not make faith more instant?
- Do you think you give yourself enough space to grow in your faith? Or are your expectations unreasonable?
- Where do you imagine God thinks you should be in the growth of your faith?

Opening Sentence**Luke 2:40-47 (CEB)**

The child grew up and became strong. He was filled with wisdom, and God's favor was on him.

Welcome to this service of Worship, We are glad you are with us! We have a few Community Notes for you to consider as we worship throughout the week...

Welcome Visitors!

We are glad you are here! Our nursery is in the Education Building and our restrooms are in the buildings other than this Sanctuary.

Embrace Christmas

The story of the Nativity, of the birth of Jesus, is a remarkable affirmation of our common humanity. Not only has God not given up on us, God has embraced us intimately, with humility and vulnerability. This is NOT a usual position in which we like to live...at all. But nevertheless, God entrusts the Christ Child to us...to *all* of us. The story of the Nativity (and of all of Jesus' life) is not just meant to encourage us, it's meant to empower us. Y'all, the story has been entrusted to us. What are we *doing* with it? What do you imagine is God's will for us in giving us this story? In following God's example this week and in the year to come, let us embrace God back by embracing our fellow humanity. And let us do so with intimacy, humility and vulnerability, in other words, with the true love of God.

Year-End Giving

Thank you for your faithfulness to Hawfields through your generous giving. As a reminder, all contributions for 2025 must be received by Monday, December 29th. We recommend that contributions be placed directly in the offering plate or made online.

David's Surgery

A complication related to the hardware installed in the Pastor's foot requires further surgery. Let's be clear: David's surgery is not anymore important than anyone else's. Yet because of his responsibilities it's important for us to plan. With that, the Session is taking a bit of a high profile with leading our worship services. Since he will not be incapacitated but immobile only, some things will continue as usual. But expect to see different faces in the pulpit in the first several weeks of January. If you wish to help with leading worship, writing liturgy, or specifically with helping with the audio/visual tasks, please do reach out the members of the Spiritual Life Committee (Mandy Ealy, Caroline Massey, Sandy Muller, Tammy Karnes, Sam Beaudry, Rachel Ealy and Alice Ray). The surgery is January 6th.

Linking Lives Is Pausing...

We will be taking a pause on the Linking Lives program for the month of January due to Pastor David's having surgery. His recovery will limit his ability to meet with families for prayer and to record the Linking Lives podcast. We plan to resume the program in February. No families will be skipped, we will pick up with the alphabetical list in February.(10am only)

With some feedback we've received, we want to note that each piece of the program (the prayer time, writing and submitting profiles, participating in the podcasts) are all voluntary. Doing one or more pieces doesn't commit you to another. So for example, if the podcast makes you nervous, don't do it! We do, however, encourage you try all aspects of the program as each piece (in their individual ways) are designed to help us connect with each other.

(10am only) Greet one another in Christ!

(10am only) Gathering Song

"O Come All Ye Faithful" GTG #133

(10am only) Prelude:

"Joy to the World" arr. Melody Bober

A very human Jesus had to do some very human growing up. So do we.

In this moment, let us stand, take a deep breath, silence our devices, and continue in worship. Let us make use of the Call to Worship that is before you...

(10am only) Call to Worship

Over the depths of the oceans

Over the heights of our spires

Throughout the lands and over borders

In every heart God can find

Jesus is the King who is coming

Jesus' kingdom has arrived

Sing:

"Once In a Royal David's City" GTG #140

Prayer of Confession/Preparation

Sometimes we forget we're still growing and don't space for that for ourselves or others. It's not good that we do that. It's important to talk about our shortcomings so that we're ready to hear what God has to say. Let us begin with silent prayer...

(Please pray silently...)

Pray: Holy Jesus, as much as we celebrate your divinity, help us remember and recover your humanity. Help us not forget that you had to grow, had to learn, had to work at being who God called you to be. Forgive us for forgetting we must do all of that as well. May we come to reflect your generosity as enthusiastically as we receive it. Thank you for listening, God. Amen.

(10am only) Assurance of Pardon

God's love can change everything, even the power of our sins over us. God's will that we have this power:

In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

The Peace of Christ be with you

And also with you.

(10am only) Gloria Patri (Glory to God)

Glory be to the Father and to the Son

And to the Holy Ghost

As it was in the beginning

It is now and ever shall be

World without end: Amen, amen.

Reading of Scripture

Say: God's Word is a gift. And good gifts are meant to be opened. Our hearts and minds are gifts. And good gifts are meant to be opened. God offers to help us open our presents by God's own Spirit. Let us take God up on that offer and ask for help to understand. Let us pray...(everyone sings)

Pray/Sing: "Love Has Come" (verse 1)
GTG #110

**Love has a come a light in the darkness!
Love shines forth in the Bethlehem skies.
See, all heaven has come to proclaim it;
Hear how their song of joy arises:
Love! Love! Born unto you, a Savior!
Love! Love! Glory to God on high.**

The story of Jesus growing is very short and lacking details. And yet the Spirit yet has lessons to teach us about our faith with what we DO know. Listen closely to the Word of God to us all and our ongoing place in God's story...

Read: Luke 2:25-40 (CEB)

Prophets and...Jesus Grows Up

²⁵ A man named Simeon was in Jerusalem. He was righteous and devout. He eagerly anticipated the restoration of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶ The Holy Spirit revealed to him that he wouldn't die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷ Led by the Spirit, he went into the temple area. Meanwhile, Jesus' parents brought the child to the temple so that they could do what was customary under the Law. ²⁸ Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God. He said,

²⁹ "Now, master,
let your servant go in peace
according to your word,
³⁰ because my eyes have seen your salvation.
³¹ You prepared this salvation
in the presence of all peoples.
³² It's a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and a glory for your people Israel."

³³ His father and mother were amazed by what was said about him. ³⁴ 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 ³⁵ so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your innermost being too."

³⁶ There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, who belonged to the tribe of Asher. She was very old. After she married, she lived with her husband for seven years. ³⁷ She was now an 84-year-old widow. She never left the temple area but worshipped God with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸ She approached at that very moment and began to praise God and to speak about Jesus to everyone who was looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

³⁹ When Mary and Joseph had completed everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to their hometown, Nazareth in Galilee. ⁴⁰ The child grew up and became strong. He was filled with wisdom, and God's favor was on him.

One: For the Word of God in Scripture, for the Word of God among us, for the Word of God within us...

All: Thanks be to God!

Children's Sermon

Adults, you'll need:

- some seeds
 - alternatively: https://youtu.be/5_kjdnWkskg?si=ES6zjPRyxheXWd0U (clip from *A Bug's Life*)
 - Make space for questions if you get them
- "Grow Up"*
- (if you use the video, please make use of the notes in parentheses below)
 - What are these?...They are seeds! And do you know what kind of seeds?...Yeah, it turns out that, even if you knew what kind of seeds these are, you still have to let them grow to see what they really are. To really enjoy what they are meant to be.
 - Do any of you like apples? What about bananas? Anyone like broccoli? How about bread? Do you like writing or drawing on paper? For all of that and more we have to wait for the seeds to grow.
 - Our faith is like that. Just like baby Jesus, we have to wait for our faith to grow in order to really enjoy what we are meant to be.
 - (So do you think Flick thinks Dot is going to become a really big tree? No! But he is saying that Dot has to wait. She has to grow her wings. She has to grow taller. Her voice will change.)
 - (Our faith is like that. Just like baby Jesus, we have to wait for our faith to grow in order to really enjoy what we are meant to be.)

I THINK I AM ALWAYS MOST MOVED BY THE HUMANITY OF BABY JESUS. THAT JUST LIKE MY SON, HE HAD EAR INFECTIONS OR CRIED WHEN HE WANTED TO BE HELD OR WAS HUNGRY. I THINK IT IS SO NEAT THAT MARY AND JOSEPH GOT TO HOLD HIM. THAT IS JUST SO COOL TO ME. THAT ALWAYS GETS ME: NOT JUST THAT HE WAS SO PERFECTLY HUMAN, BUT ALSO SO PERFECTLY GOD. IT ALSO MOVES ME THE WAY HE WAS BORN. THAT HE WAS BORN IN A MANGER, INTO A WORKING-CLASS FAMILY AND HE WAS ALSO THE SON OF GOD. THAT PART IS WILD. THE STORY OF BABY JESUS CALLS ME TO REMEMBER NOT JUST THE IMPOSSIBLE, INCREDIBLE, RESILIENT LOVE OF A MOTHER (AND FATHER), BUT ALSO THAT GOD WILL ABSOLUTELY SHOW UP IN ALL OF THE EVERY DAY, WORKING CLASS, MANGERY PARTS OF MY HEART AND MY LIFE.

—Stephanie Herndon, theologian

- So when you're around the people who care about you, ask them what they are doing to help you grow up.
- Don't forget to pray!

(10am only) Anthem:

"King Jesus Is His Name" arr. Jack Schrader;
Soloist: Noah Melton

"Jesus Grows Up"

A very human Jesus had to do some very human growing up.

Sometimes we get in our own way. We actively work against our own interests. Now, by interests, I'm not talking merely about what we want but rather what we need. I'm talking about what we need to be all that God hopes for us.

I imagine Mary and Joseph started well enough.

They were in a mode where they were just absorbing everything, especially Mary. Not a lot went according to plan. Her pregnancy was not conventional. Her relationships, even with her with Joseph, were not conventional. When the news of the census came down, I'm sure they hadn't planned to be in Bethlehem. And when they got to Bethlehem, they surely didn't count on the manger. How many times over the course of the pregnancy do you think they had to say to themselves, "Well... this didn't go according to plan." Jesus is born and everything is a mess. Mary swaddles Jesus, maybe like Elizabeth taught her. Then the shepherds arrive with their news. I'm sure THAT wasn't part of the plan. And in all of those moments when things went sideways, how often did they have to remind themselves to turn to God for advice? For guidance?

The truth is actually not complicated: we don't start out fully faithful.

We don't even come to the end of our lives that way. We are ever working on and working out what it means to be a follower of the living God.

I remember in youth group a long time ago having it explained to me this way. It's the difference between being **justified and sanctified**. We are justified in our relationship with God instantly the moment we accept Jesus as Lord. And that the work of the Spirit from that point on is being sanctified: literally "being made holy." I went with that for a while. As I have grown up, as I have attended the university of Life itself, I find myself thinking a little differently. I believe God has been trying to sanctify me AND justify me well before I even knew about God.

I mean, **Mary didn't go seeking out God** to say, "Hey God, I'd like to carry the Christ Child through the power of the Holy Spirit...thanks." And Joseph didn't ask to have his vision of their engagement to be upended the way it was: "Hey God, if you have a moment, would you personally get Mary pregnant? Oh, and set it up so that we can't even have your child be born around our family or in a familiar place. That would be great, thanks."

They had to stretch, grow, *become* throughout this process. As faithful as they might have been when this all started, God was going to require more. And it wouldn't end with the birth.

Read: Luke 2:25-40 (CEB)
Prophets and...Jesus Grows Up

So, wow. That's a lot. With the arrival of the shepherds and we know the Magi in Matthew's Gospel, and God only knows who else, **Mary and Joseph get these reminders** that this child, this mission of theirs, is much, much bigger than them. Here they are, trying to just get through being good parents, and people keep reminding them that this is not an ordinary child. What if it's God changing plans because they aren't good enough after all? What if they mess this up? **What were they THINKING?** Simon and Anna both are using language that is incredibly grandiose: presence of ALL people, revelation to the Gentiles, glory for Israel, redemption of Jerusalem. They just want to get through his circumcision and naming ceremony. They want to get through colic and diaper changes. They want to get him on a regular sleep schedule. I love how theologian Stephanie Herndon puts it:

Don't you imagine that their hearts and minds were in that tension of remembering God's calling and role in all of this and getting their heads around just helping their new son get to the next stage.

We ask about God's will. They asked, surely. For all the big language and dreams surrounding this child, at the end of the day, the task before was actually simple (though not simplistic): **grow**.

Jesus needed to grow. Mary and Joseph need to grow, as a couple and as a family. Jesus' cousin, John, needed to grow. The disciples needed to grow. The country needed to grow. The world needed to grow.

And we still do. We still need to grow. But I think we get in our own way and expect ourselves to be fully faith-formed, expect others to be fully faith-formed.

I think about a child's ordinary experience moving through preschool through the rest of their

educational life. No one on the planet—no matter the culture, country or philosophy—no one expects that preschool child to have all the knowledge, all the skills, all experience required to just navigate life, much less to fulfill a destiny. No. One. On. The. Planet.

And yet we can get in our own way by expecting to know more than we do, to live up to standards we haven't rehearsed, to be the kind of Christians lots of people might say we need to be, rather than living up to God's actual expectations. As I think about the arguments he would later get into with the leadership and authorities, it occurs to me that we would be much further along if we kept in mind that **we are all growing**. Those times when God's grace doesn't make sense, growth to the rescue. Those moments when we beat ourselves up for not taking that chance, growth to the rescue. Those times when we make a mistake or mess things up royally, growth to the rescue. Those times when Mary and Joseph got overwhelmed by what everyone was saying about Jesus, growth to the rescue. Those moments when the disciples wouldn't get it, wouldn't do it, and absolutely WOULD abandon Jesus, growth to the rescue.

Those times when we as a congregation wonder about our own future, those times the economy of the world is tanking, those times when the morality of our leaders is questionable (to be kind), growth to the rescue.

God has set up everything in Creation to point in this direction. Even dead things decompose and lend themselves to the singular task of all of life: growth. God cares so much about this for us that God didn't send an instant Jesus. God sent us BABY Jesus. **Verse 40 can** seem like a throw away verse but we need to tape it to everything, display it everywhere, and remember it always: "The child grew up and became strong...."

Jesus didn't say one sermon and then do a cosmic mic drop. **A very human Jesus** had to do some very human growing up. So do we. And thanks be to God, God's hopes, God's love, God's joy, God's peace make it more than possible. God's Spirit makes it inevitable.

Just to drive the point, take a moment and listen to Brandon Heath's song "I'm Not Who I Was." In particular the lyrics towards **the end of the song:**

*Well, the thing I find most amazing
In amazing grace is the chance to give it out
Maybe that's what love is all about*

In the name of Baby Jesus, may we grow up.
Merry Christmas!

Song of Reflection

"O Little Town of Bethlehem" GTG #121

Offering

God chooses to love us, abundantly. We should respond by choosing to be loving, abundantly. This is why we should give and share what we have and who we are. Let us reflect together on what has been given...

(10am only) Offertory

"Angels We Have Heard on High" arr. Carol Tornquist

(10am only) Doxology

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise God all creatures here below.
Praise God above ye heavenly hosts;
Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

Blessing

(text is for the ONLINE service)

Let there be no doubt, Great God: you love us. And we are grateful. Let there be no doubt, Great God: we should be loving in turn. As we receive the gifts you provide, may the gifts we are meant to be emerge. In the great name of Jesus Christ, we pray this together. Amen.

Prayers of the People

- Say: The Lord be with you...and also with you. Let us pray...
- "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear (verse 4)"
GTG #123

**And you beneath life's crushing load, whose
forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way with painful
steps and slow,
Look now, for glad and golden hours come
swiftly on the wing:**

**O, rest beside the weary road, and hear the
angels sing.**

- Holy God, without a doubt the birth of Jesus is a joyous and remarkable event! It speaks to so much: your trust in us, your belief in us, your love for humanity. You also promise to be with us and you do so in the flesh. You also take a chance on how we will receive you (or won't) and how we will celebrate you (or won't). It is amazing on its face that the Creator of the Universe would behave in this way. But it doesn't hit us all at once. You have set things up to take time while our technologies, our philosophies, our politics, our family lives all seem to press toward an impatient future. Teach us patience, Lord, and help us care more about growing. Help keep pace with your desires and not just our own. Help us reflect a Spirit of Christmas that takes its time and chooses to grow rather than a holiday and a life driven by what we can consume. Thank you for giving us so many chances to get there.
- It couldn't have been easy for Jesus. For all that Mary and Joseph had to endure, growing up with stories of his destiny and heritage had to present unique challenges. Help us live through our hard times knowing that you are the author of our story. Teach us to rest easy in your hands since we live there anyway.
- Thus, let us be Godly people. Let us make a habit of compassion and consolation. Let us make second nature your grace and mercy and sense of justice. Let us set aside safety and embrace risk-taking with you. May your healing balm reach through us to those around us, especially those on our prayer lists and those we will come to know. Help us love and give love. Help us value mercy as you do. Despite our collective answer of violence, of disdain, of division, of cynicism, to your love, may we truly be washed by you and embrace hope instead...(take time to name your own prayers)
- Thank you for believing in us, Thank you for transforming us. Thank you for teaching us, even how to pray when words fail us, saying,
- **Pray: 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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For**

thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Hymn of Sending

(10am) "Go, Tell It on the Mountain" GTG #136

Sending & Benediction

Let us say together our benediction...

A very human Jesus had to do some very human growing up. So do we.

(raise your hands and say) "Get up, take heart, Jesus is still calling you..."; Go, and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding guide your hearts and minds this day and forever more. Amen!

Sing: "Jesus, Jesus, O What a Wonderful Child"
GTG #126

**Jesus, Jesus, O what a wonderful child.
Jesus, Jesus, so holy, meek and mild;
New life, new hope the child will bring,
Listen to the angels sing:
"Glory, glory, glory!" Let the heavens ring.**

(10am only) Postlude

"Good Christian Men Rejoice" arr. Victor Labenske