

January 4- Written Service

Special Music- Lindsay Hunter

Praise team- Lindsay Hunter,

Pianist- Laura Garred

Prelude

Welcome

Call to Worship

Leader: "O Lord, our Lord, the majesty of Your name fills the earth! Your glory is higher than the heavens."

All: We gather to praise you!

Leader: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth...

All: And God saw that it was good.

Leader: We gather today to celebrate our God.

Song: How Majestic is Your Name

O Lord, our Lord,

How majestic is Your name in all the earth.

O Lord, our Lord,

How majestic is Your name in all the earth.

O Lord,

We praise Your name.

O Lord,

We magnify Your name:

Prince of peace, Mighty God;

O Lord God Almighty.

O Lord, our Lord,

how majestic is Your name in all the earth.

O Lord, our Lord,

How majestic is Your name in all the earth.

O Lord,

We praise Your name.

O Lord,

We magnify Your name:

Prince of Peace, Mighty God;
O Lord God Almighty.

Prayer

Song: Shine, Jesus, Shine

Lord, the light of Your love is shining,
In the midst of the darkness shining;
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us,

Set us free by the truth
You now bring us;
Shine on me,
Shine on me.

Shine, Jesus, shine,
Fill this land with the Father's glory.
Blaze, Spirit, blaze;
Set our hearts on fire.

Flow, river, flow,
Flood the nations
With grace and mercy.
Send forth Your Word, Lord,
And let there be light.

As we gaze on Your kingly brightness
So our faces display Your likeness,
Ever changing from glory to glory;

Mirrored here, may our lives
Tell Your story;
Shine on me,
Shine on me.

Shine, Jesus, shine,
Fill this land with the Father's glory.
Blaze, Spirit, blaze;
Set our hearts on fire.

Flow, river, flow,
Flood the nations
With grace and mercy.
Send forth Your Word, Lord,
And let there be light.

Announcements

Special Music: Thou Art Worthy sung by Lindsay Hunter

Congregational Prayer

Song: #182- For the Beauty of the Earth

VERSE 1

For the beauty of the earth,
For the glory of the skies,
For the love which from our birth
Over and around us lies;

CHORUS

Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This our hymn of grateful praise.

VERSE 2

For the wonder of each hour
Of the day and of the night,
Hill and vale and tree and flow'r,
Sun and moon, and stars of light:

VERSE 3

For the joy of human love,
Brother, sister, parent, child,
Friends on earth and friends above,
For all gentle thoughts and mild:

VERSE 4

For the church that evermore
Lifteth holy hands above,
Off'ring up on ev'ry shore
Her pure sacrifice of love:

VERSE 5

For the joy of ear and eye,
For the heart and mind's delight,
For the mystic harmony
Linking sense to sound and sight:

VERSE 6

For thyself, best Gift Divine!
To our race so freely giv'n;
For that great, great love of Thine,
Peace on earth, and joy in heav'n.

Offering/Offertory

Offering Song: Glorify Thy Name

Offering Prayer

Children's Message

Scripture: Genesis 1: 1-26

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. ³ And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

⁶ And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." ⁷ So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. ⁸ God called the vault "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

⁹ And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good.

¹¹ Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. ¹² The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶ God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷ God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, ¹⁸ to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

²⁰ And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.” ²¹ So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.” ²³ And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

Message

Series intro-calendar

Every year, the earth travels in an oval around the sun
The new year signifies one trip around the sun
But it's an oval, we could have picked any day to start the calendar
There's no astronomical significance to January 1

So how did this get chosen?

Our calendar is largely Roman, Julius Caesar picked January to be the first month
Because it was named for the God Janus, god of doorways/transitions/new beginnings
He had 2 faces, one looking back on the year before and one looking ahead at the year to come

I'm not advocating Janus or any of the other gods reflected in our calendar names
Instead, what I want to look at is that intent for a new year

New beginnings

Looking ahead
Like an oval, we can begin anew at any point
But it's never more in focus than now, there's never a better time than today
We're going to start this year looking at examples of new beginnings from the Bible
In the hope that we can begin this year well
And God can use this opportunity to do something new and amazing in each of our lives and in the life of this church

Scripture-Genesis 1:1-26

What was already there?

Class in college where a professor made us list all of the things that were present when the curtain goes up in Genesis

A formless and empty earth, darkness, water (the deep), God
God existed in a dark, chaotic void

This is where our story (not His) begins

God's work

And then God speaks in darkness and chaos
His words themselves have an order to them
Something with purpose and meaning
Brings light, order, life
Little by little, bit by bit
Something new bursts forth
God creates something good and very good
Doesn't start by just making a finished product all at once
Could have
But He starts with light
With order
With a place to stand
Then begins to fill the spaces with fish, birds, lizards, worms, and tigers
And people

Here is something new

As we start this new year and we think about new beginnings
This is the ultimate example of a new beginning
A fresh new creation
Beauty, order, and life where before had been only a dark emptiness

Us at the beginning of this year

What do we bring with us into 2026
We might bring some things/some baggage in from previous years
Our years may be starting like today's passage did
With darkness and chaos
In all likelihood, our year doesn't start off miraculously fully formed and perfect
Maybe it doesn't even start off looking "good"
But God has something He wants to do, somewhere He wants to start
As we begin this new year, we need to allow God to speak

Temptation to create by ourselves

Familiar with Lord of the Rings and the Hobbit
But Tolkien wrote a bunch of other books, including the Silmarillion which opens
with a creation story for the literary world where Tolkien set his stories

Opening of Silmarillion (summary from Nerdlist.com)

Life in Middle-earth began with music, distinct harmonies woven together by one being. It all began with Eru, the One, also known as Ilúvatar. This being created Arda. At first, it was only him. But from his thoughts, he made the Ainur. Ilúvatar put themes of music in their mind and the Ainur sang. Each of the Holy Ones listened closely to Ilúvatar and brought their own thread to the song and they all slowly harmonized to create a powerful melody. Their voices like

instruments, the Ainur brought something out of nothing. They made Ilúvatar's great theme and it flowed into the previously empty Void.

But soon a discordant note rose in the music. Belonging to the Ainur known as Melkor, the errant music captured Ilúvatar's attention. Melkor, in jealousy of his creator, wanted to exert his own will in the music and put himself above the other Ainur. Ilúvatar tried to stop Melkor's dissonance with a new theme twice, but Melkor kept making his own music, regardless of the other Ainur.

As we think about what new things may come in the new year, we face the same temptation as Melkor

To create for ourselves

To bend things to our plans and our desires

And to forget about God's plan, His will, the creation He has in store for us

It can be easy for us to make our New Year's resolutions with no thought of God or direction from Him

Just like Melkor's impact in spoiling the song of creation, focusing on our own plans often keeps us from experiencing the good and very good that God intends

How we allow space for God to work

How do we let God speak in the void?

It begins with accepting that His creation will be better than anything we could plan or enact

So we seek His will and guidance

It begins in prayer, asking God's direction

Asking Him to bring order to the parts of us that are in chaos

To bring light in our darkness

As the year unfolds, we continue to look for where God is at work creating something

Little by little, bit by bit, one word, one day at a time

The year ahead may be difficult at times, but that doesn't limit God's ability to grow beauty and strength in you

It's a new year, a new beginning

A random point on our oval around the sun

But the new year is a good reminder for us to look again at new beginnings and new opportunities

Each new year is a blank slate

Nothing is written yet

What will God create in your year?

Song: #128- I Sing the Mighty Power of God

I Sing the mighty power of God

That made the mountains rise,

That spread the flowing seas abroad,

And built the lofty skies.

I sing the wisdom that ordained
The sun to rule the day;
The moon shines full at His command
And all the stars obey.

I sing the goodness of the Lord
That filled the earth with food;
He formed the creatures with His word
And then pronounced them good.

Lord, how Thy wonders are displayed
Wher-e'er I turn my eye:
If I survey the ground I tread
Or gaze upon the sky!

There's not a plant or flower below
But makes Thy glories known;
And clouds arise and tempests blow
By order from Thy throne;

While all that borrows life from Thee
Is ever in Thy care,
And everywhere that man can be,
Thou, God, art present there.

Benediction

Postlude