

The Synod of the Covenant

*First Sunday of Christmas*

*Worship for December 29, 2024*

*Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God*

*-Luke 2:52*

The Synod of the Covenant

First Sunday of Christmas Service

December 29, 2024

*Presented by Leadership and Participants of*

*Cultivating the Gift of Preaching Initiative (CGPI)*

**Prelude**

*Sing We Now of Christmas*

Loretta Dawson, Piano

Peggy Grant, Oboe

*Cincinnati Presbytery*

**Welcome** Matthew Aragon Bruce, Director, CGPI

**Call to Worship**

Christina Jensen, Mentor, CGPI

*Presbytery of Lake Huron*

One: The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all.

**All:** **Glory to God in the highest!**

One: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

**All:** **Glory to God in the highest!**

One: For a child has been born for us, a Son has been given to us.

**All:** **Glory to God in the highest!**

One: He is Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

**All:** **Glory to God in the highest!**

One: To us is born in the city of David a Savior, the Messiah, the Lord.

**All:** **Glory to God in the highest!**

One:  And the Word became flesh and lived among us.

**All:** **Glory to God in the highest!**

One**:** Let us worship God!

**Carol:** *Once in Royal David’s City*

Chancel Choir, Christ Presbyterian Church

*Muskingum Valley Presbytery*

*(Join in on verses 3;4 &5):*

Jesus is our childhood’s pattern; day by day like us he grew;

He was little, weak and helpless; tears and smiles like us he knew;

And he feels for all our sadness, and he shares in all our gladness.

And our eyes at last shall see him, through his own redeeming love;

For that child so dear and gentle is our Lord from heaven above;

And he leads his children on to the place where he is gone.

Not in that poor lowly stable, with the oxen standing by,

We shall see him; but in heaven, set at God’s right hand on high;

When like stars his children crowned, all in white shall wait around.

**Confession and Grace**

Jeff Schooley, Mentor, CGPI

*Maumee Valley Presbytery*

Prayer of Confession:

**God of grace and truth, in Jesus Christ you came among us as light shining in darkness. You grew in wisdom and in divine and human favor. All too often, we don’t worry about growing in wisdom or in grace, and we seek human favor while forgetting that your divine favor is even more important. Forgive us, gracious God, for our refusal to follow in Jesus’ footsteps. We turn from this and all our sin. By the power of your Spirit, sanctify us to be more like him, each and every day. We pray in Christ’s name. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

Jeff: …in the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!

**All: Thanks be to God! Amen.**

Carol of Thanksgiving

*Good Christian Friends Rejoice*

Jordan and Rae Starkenburg

*Mackinac Presbytery*

Good Christian friends rejoice with heart and soul and voice;

Now ye need not fear the grave: Jesus Christ was born to save!

Calls you one and calls you all to gain the everlasting hall.

Christ was born to save!

Christ was born to save!

**Prayer for Illumination** (Authored by John Calvin 1509-64)

Nancy Dederer, Mentor, CGPI

*Scioto Valley Presbytery*

**Old Testament Reading**

**1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26**

**New Testament Reading**

**Luke 2: 41-52**

Bill Fleming, Participant, CGPI

*Mackinac Presbytery*

**Reflection**

Jim Bennett, Participant, CGPI

*Eastminster Presbytery*

**Reflection**

Ajah Hales, Participant, CGPI

*Presbytery of the Western Reserve*

**Carol**

*Gentle Mary Laid Her Child*

Seung-ah Kim, Violinist

Michelle Shin, Pianist

*Cincinnati Presbytery*

Gentle Mary laid her child lowly in a manger;

There he lay, the undefiled, to the world a stranger.

Such a babe in such a place, can he be the savior?

Ask the saved of all the race who have found his favor.

Angels sang about his birth; wise men sought and found him;

Heaven’s star shone brightly forth, glory all around him.

Shepherds saw the wondrous sight, heard the angels singing;

All the plains were lit that night; all the hills were ringing.

Gentle Mary laid her child lowly in a manger;

He is still the undefiled, but no more a stranger.

Son of God, of humble birth, beautiful the story

Praise his name in all the earth

Hail the King of glory!

**Reflection**

Orlando Totobesola, Participant, CGPI

*Presbytery of Lake Michigan*

**Reflection**

Chip Hardwick, Synod Executive

**Statement of Faith: Philippians 2:6-11 (CEB)**

Illiana Levenson, Participant, CGPI

*Presbytery of the Western Reserve*

**Though Jesus was in the form of God, he did not consider being equal with God something to exploit. But he emptied himself by taking the form of a slave and by becoming like human beings.   
When he found himself in the form of a human, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God highly honored him and gave him a name above all names, so that at the name of Jesus everyone in heaven, on earth, and under the earth might bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

**Response of Giving**

Mary Lloyd, Participant, CGPI

*Presbytery of Detroit*

**Offertory**

*O Holy Night*

Anthony Davis

*Presbytery of Miami Valley*

**Pastoral Prayer**

Fran Lane-Lawrence, Synod Stated Clerk

**Carol:** *Go Tell it On the Mountain*

Loretta Dawson, Piano

Cyara Thompson, Singer

Peggy Grant, Oboe

*Cincinnati Presbytery*

*(chorus)*

Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere;

Go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!

While shepherds kept their watching o’er silent flocks by night,

Behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light.

*(chorus)*

The shepherds feared and trembled when lo above the earth

Rang out the angel chorus that hailed our savior’s birth.

*(chorus)*

Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born,

And God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn.

*(chorus)*

**Benediction**

Chip Hardwick

**Postludes**

Postlude on*Hark! the Herald Angels Sing*

Heather Cooper

*Muskingum Valley Presbytery*

*In a Land by Death O’ershadowed*

Nexus Band

The Presbyterian Church of Traverse City

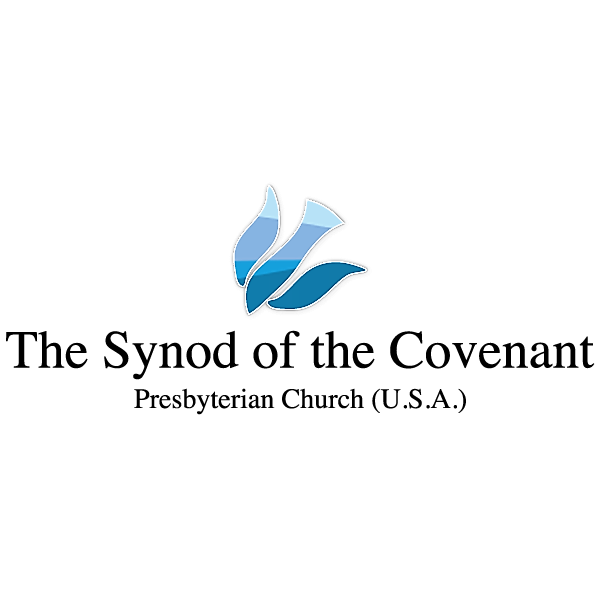
*Mackinac Presbytery*

*The Holly and the Ivy*

Loretta Dawson, piano

Peggy Grant, Oboe

*Cincinnati Presbytery*

**Many Thanks to Cliff Haddox, video producer, and Heather Johnston, Synod office manager, for their leadership in bringing this service to fruition.**

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The purpose of the Cultivating the Gift of Preaching Initiative is to identify, train, and provide ongoing support to emerging preachers. The eleven presbyteries of the Synod include numerous church leaders who are called and gifted to preach the good news. The aim of the Initiative is to cultivate these gifts through rigorous training in biblical interpretation, reformed theology, and sermon preparation. The Initiative aims to add 140 trained preachers across Synod over four 18-month training cycles, beginning in June of 2024 and concluding in 2028.

Applications for the 2025-26 cycle are available at [www.synodofthecovenant.org/cultivating-the-gift-of-preaching](http://www.synodofthecovenant.org/cultivating-the-gift-of-preaching).

For more information, contact director Matt Aragon-Bruce at [matt@synodofthecovenant.org](mailto:matt@synodofthecovenant.org).

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*In our synod we’ll try anything to equip leaders who attend to God’s creative, emerging future.*