

December 27 – The Shepherds and the Stranger

Welcome

Opening Words:

God the Stranger and the strange,
we keep asking: who are you?

**You—the mysterious and awesome God,
but also the unpredictable and unfathomable God.**

You were welcomed by strange nomadic shepherds,
and by strange Magi kings from different backgrounds and places.

**We are learning to look for you
in all the wrong places.**

Perhaps we have to be in all the wrong places
to really know you.

**Help us this morning to worship you and welcome you,
You, our God who is beyond all knowing but loves us beyond all
understanding.**

Opening Song: O Come All Ye Faithful

God's Greeting

Greet Each Other

Song: Holy God We Praise Your Name (Henk Wikkerink - Dec. 21)

Prayer of Confession

Lord God, if we are honest, we don't always like your ways! You come to a group of shepherds, poor farmers, to tell the good news of your Son's birth and yet, we live in a world where people are chosen and recognized for their wealth, the size of their barn and home. We live in a world where people are chosen based on how well they speak or how they look. We look at academic success, wealth, and athletic ability to determine people's worth, their value. We admit we seek power and prestige and yet Father, that is not your way. Forgive us for seeking our worth and value in what we own, in our abilities, in the knowledge we possess. We ask for your forgiveness for our proud and arrogant hearts!

Assurance and Pardon

The good news is that you are a God who knows us, who loves us with a love that is beyond our understanding. You know all about us, inside and out. You heal us! You restore us! You have rescued us from the pit of hell! You are so kind and tenderhearted to us and so patient when we fail you. Your love is so great that we cannot even fathom it. We bow in wonder to your masterful plan of continuing to call your child forth to serve you in extraordinary ways. We love you, Holy God.

**We thank you for choosing people like us to further your kingdom.
During this Christmas season we celebrate with joy and expectation.
We celebrate God the stranger, Immanuel, God is with us.**

Prayers of the People

Children's Blessing

Prayer of Illumination

Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12

Sermon: The Shepherds and the Strangers

Time of Praise: Sing We the Song of Immanuel

Silent Night (Henny Spelt - Dec. 21)

God's parting blessing

Joy to the World

Postlude: Glory (Let There Be Peace) or Prince of Heaven