

The heavens were opened . . .

There's something about lying under the stars that makes us wonder. The sky above us—endless, ancient, bright with silent fire—draws us into questions and thoughts too deep for words. Whether we're laughing with friends or singing softly in the dark, stargazing invites a quiet awe. It reminds us how small we are—and sometimes, how far away God can seem.

But in Matthew's telling of Jesus' baptism, something shifts: the heavens open.

Not with thunder. Not with judgment. Not with fear.

They open with a voice of love.

"This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

The God who set stars in their courses and galaxies spinning does not stay far away. Instead, that same God draws near—to a riverbank in the wilderness, to a man soaking wet in muddy waters, to a people longing to be seen and known.

In that moment, the voice from heaven reveals what many Brethren have long cherished: *relationship is at the center of God's heart*. Before Jesus has preached a sermon or healed a wound, he is named as beloved. And through Christ, that blessing reaches us, too.

We are not just dust under a distant sky. We are claimed. Known. Loved.

The heavens open—not to separate the divine from the human, but to show they are connected. Not to dazzle, but to *draw us into communion*. The voice that speaks over Jesus still echoes through time and space, whispering over each of us:

"You are my beloved."

Beneath the stars, may we hear it.

And may we let it change everything.

—Madalyn Metzger
Bristol, Indiana

"And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly *the heavens were opened* to him and he saw God's Spirit descending like a dove and alighting on him" (Matthew 3:16, NRSVue). **Today's Bible readings from the lectionary:** Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 29; Acts 10:34-43; Matthew 3:13-17.

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THE HEAVENS WERE
OPENED

all who work for justice and peace on our behalf, that they may not grow faint or be crushed by opposition. May the oppressed find healing, the discouraged receive hope, and those who are bound discover freedom, through and beyond our efforts. Amen.

SHARING OUR JOYS, CONCERNS, AND HOPES

Please remember our worship is also on YouTube and our website.

Please do not share any personal information you do not want to be made public.

An usher will hold the microphone for you while you share.

CALL TO PRAYER #349 “Spirit of the living God”

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

SPECIAL MUSIC

“Rest”

Soloist, Wendy Browne

Psalm 62:5-8

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 3:13-17

NT 3

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw God’s Spirit descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from the heavens said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

MESSAGE

“Jesus was Baptized”

Pastor Twyla Rowe

*HYMN #502

“Spirit of God! Descend”

[Verse 1]

Spirit of God! descend upon my heart. Wean it from earth, through all its pulses move.

Stoop to my weakness, mighty as thou art, and make me love thee as I ought to love.

[Verse 2]

I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies, no sudden rending of the veil of clay, no angel visitant, no op’ning skies, but take the dimness of my soul away.

[Verse 3]

Hast thou not bid us love thee, God and King? All, all thine own, soul, heart and strength and mind; I see thy cross, there teach my heart to cling. O let me seek thee, and, O let me find!

[Verse 4]

Teach me to feel that thou art always nigh. Teach me the struggles of the soul to bear, to check the rising doubt, the rebel sigh; teach me the patience of unanswered prayer.

[Verse 5]

Teach me to love thee as thine angels love, one holy passion filling all my frame; the baptism of the heav’n-descended dove, my heart an altar, and thy love the flame.

*BENEDICTION

After the Benediction, you may be seated.

Please continue in a spirit of worship as we listen to the Postlude music.

POSTLUDE

“Christ, Whose Glory Fills the Skies”

(Mansfield)

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\*Please rise — in body or spirit — as an act of worship

Thank you for joining us in worship today.

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Hagerstown
Church of the Brethren
15 S. Mulberry Street,
Hagerstown, Maryland
21740
301-733-3565

Office: Tuesday—Friday
Flexible hours
(appointments welcome/
call ahead)

Morning Praise Worship
at 8:30 AM
Sunday School at 9:30 AM
Worship and YouTube Live at
10:45 AM

www.hagerstowncob.org

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@hagerstowncob](http://www.youtube.com/@hagerstowncob)

Twyla Rowe
Pastor

Allyson McPeak
Administrative Assistant

Burton Young
Director of
Music Ministries

Don Rowe
Interior Esthetics
Technician

*We welcome you to our church and
Rejoice in your participation with us in
worship. It is our prayer that you will
experience the presence of God's Spirit and
that it will equip you for service and ministry
in the week ahead. Our Pastor, Deacons, and
Cluster Leaders are available after worship
and during the week to listen and assist you in
your Christian pilgrimage.*

THE ANNOUNCER January 11, 2026

If you placed someone on the prayer list and they are now celebrating a recovery and would like their name taken off the list, please contact the church office.

If you or a loved one has surgery scheduled, is hospitalized, or would like a visit from the pastor, please notify the church.

"Take A Moment" Let this be our daily Take a Moment prayer for the week beginning Sunday, January 11 - Spirit of God, speak to me now as I seek your will for me this day. Pour over me your presence that encourages me as I long to know you are near; and then blesses me with affirmation of your acceptance and love for me. Fill me with your breath and light and send me into my day with faithfulness to be a light of your presence and hope to others. With gratitude and praise rising in my soul, I will focus my heart to be in tune with you in all that I say and do. Amen.

Attendance. Please sign the attendance rosters found at the end of your pew, or possibly in the hymnal rack, and pass it down the row so everyone can sign.

Our thanks to Amy Hardy for being our worship leader today and to Wendy Browne for special music this morning.

The flowers on the altar this morning are given to the Glory of God, and in loving memory of husband, Mike Hovis, and daughter, Joni Kline, given by Nancy Hovis and family.

We will be taking down Christmas decorations around the church today after the 10:45 Service. Volunteers are needed.

Junior Church will be held today for children ages Kindergarten through the sixth grade. **We will gather in the Children's Church Room (Room #203).** (Parents may, of course, opt to keep their child in worship with them especially if the child is uncertain about going.) Parents/grandparents should pick up their children afterward at the stair/elevator area outside the sanctuary in the west entrance. If you'd like to volunteer, please contact Tina Mills. **Junior Church is held the second and fourth Sunday of each month.**

Newsletter Deadline—All articles should be submitted to the Administrative Assistant **on or before January 15th.** You can submit articles by email or leaving a note in Allyson's mailbox. Thank you!

New Year Update—I am so thankful to everyone that participated with the Children's Birthday cards, Over 80, and Homebound list. If you do not wish to continue participating with these ministries, please contact Mary Means.

Fellowship Time—We are in need of volunteers to provide goodies for Fellowship Time, held the first Sunday of each month. Goodies may be your favorite recipe or a delicious store bought treat. Suggestions include cookies, muffins, or doughnuts (3-4 dozen of whatever you choose) and may be dropped off in the Mullendore Room (the room behind the wing of the sanctuary) that morning. Beverages and paper products are provided. Please sign up on the sheet located in the west entrance, or contact Kristal Bricker or Amy Hardy. Thank you for helping to make Fellowship Time possible!

Volunteer Needed—The Flower and Altar committee is looking for a volunteer for the month of January. If you're interested, please contact Cinnamon Shay.

2026 Altar Flowers—If you would like to place flowers on the altar in memory, celebration, or honor of a loved one, the Flower and Altar Committee have the following Sunday dates available in 2026: **May 3, August 30, & November 29.** If you are interested, please contact Cinnamon Shay at 301-730-8499 or email cinnamongirl@myactv.net

NEEDED—New or gently used pots and pans for a woman previously homeless, who has just found an apartment. If you can help, please see Jan Young.

It's time to sign up for a Patron ad for in the 2026 Mid-Atlantic Disaster Response auction booklet. Patron ads are for those individuals who want to support disaster relief. The annual auction is the district's largest fundraiser for this. Patron ads can be purchased for ten or more dollars. Please contact Daryl Long or Arn Platou to place your ad, but do it quickly. We have an early deadline this year and all checks and forms need to be in Elgin before **February 6th** to be included in the booklet. Checks need to be made out to HCOB.

Valentine's Bread & Soup Luncheon—The Spiritual Nurture Team invites you to a luncheon in the Fellowship Hall on Sunday, February 15th directly following the late service worship. If you would like to attend, please see the sign up sheet in the west entrance and Fellowship Hall. Sign up to bring a soup, bread, or dessert as well.

SAVE THE DATE! HCOB's week to volunteer at the REACH Cold Weather Shelter is March 8-15. For those of you who plan to volunteer, please make a note of these dates. More info to come in the new year. Thanks!

Cash for Causes/Martin's Gift Card Program. Purchase Martin's gift cards to take to the store to pay for your groceries or gas, and 5% of the face value of the gift card is a donation to the church and goes toward your yearly charitable contribution. To purchase a card, please contact Donnie Maas (240-866-1077). We can make arrangements to leave cards in your church mailbox or mail them to you.

Inclement Weather Policy—If inclement weather is forecasted, be sure to:

- * Check your email—we will send out a group email as quickly as possible if the decision to cancel in-person worship is made.
- * Check our Facebook page—Hagerstown Church of the Brethren (facebook.com/hagerstowncob) we will post updates there as well.

If we do hold in-person worship, and if you are uncomfortable driving in bad weather, please join us on YouTube Live. Be safe first and check your email!

We're in the season for high heating costs. We remind everyone to please keep doors closed to the sanctuary, fellowship hall, church entrances, hallways, and church office. All classroom doors (2nd and 3rd floor) should stay open. Thank you for your awareness and cooperation.

Church mailboxes. Everyone is welcome to use the mailboxes. If you would like to be added or taken off the list, please contact Mary Means. If you have a mailbox, we ask that you be willing to monitor it. Any mail that is left in the mailboxes after a three-month period will be disposed of. The mailboxes are located in the hallway of the church office.

Because winter weather is here, we'd like to pass along a gentle reminder to drive slowly in our parking lot, especially when it's snow-covered or icy. Always be on alert for children, pedestrians, dogs, cats, and those less mindful than you are of the pavement surface conditions.

Please remember to keep the administrative assistant updated on when and where meetings/events are being held. Please email or call the Administrative Assistant with information that needs added to the church calendar. **301-733-3565 or secretaryhcob@gmail.com.** Thank you!

CALENDAR

Sunday, January 11

Junior Church

8:15 am Parish Nurse Blood Pressure Screenings
8:30 am Morning Praise Worship/Fellowship Hall
9:30 am Sunday School, individual classrooms
10:15 am Parish Nurse Blood Pressure Screenings
10:45 am Worship, Sanctuary & YouTube Live (www.youtube.com/@hagerstowncob)

Monday, January 12

Church office closed

Tuesday, January 13

6:00 pm Search Committee Meeting/Mullendore Room

Wednesday, January 14

Administrative Assistant/Work from home

12:00 pm Deadline for bulletin announcement submissions

Thursday, January 15

12:00 pm Newsletter deadline
5:30 pm Praise Band Rehearsal/Fellowship Hall
6:30 pm Brethren Bells/Choir Room
7:30 pm Temple Choir/Fellowship Hall

Friday, January 16

8:00 am Bulletin prep/Church office
1:00 pm Islamic Center/Use of Parking Lot (1-3pm)

Saturday, January 17

Pastor Twyla's day off

Sunday, January 18

8:30 am Morning Praise Worship/Fellowship Hall
9:30 am Sunday School, individual classrooms
10:45 am Worship, Sanctuary & YouTube Live (www.youtube.com/@hagerstowncob)

Remember our weekday schedule is subject to rapid change.

You may mail your offering to
15 S. Mulberry Street,
Hagerstown MD 21740
OR
you can make a secure offering
donation on our website using
Breeze www.hagerstowncob.org

The church calendar is online at
www.hagerstowncob.org.
Click the calendar tab.