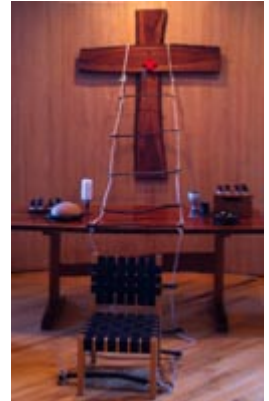


# Epiphany 2012 – The Heavens Are Open

## GATHERING



## ENTRANCE

## REFLECTION

When we can identify the kingdom of heaven sown around us it's not just an FYI kind of thing; it's a subversion. It's God peeking through the curtain and letting us know that there is a deeper reality present in the world – a reality in which God gets God's way.

Nadia Bolz-Weber, pastor of House for All Sinners and Saints, Denver, Colorado. From a sermon titled "The Kingdom of Heaven is like . . ." Aug. 8, 2011

## CANDLE LIGHTING

## CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: The time is fulfilled,  
and the kingdom of God has come near.

Voice 1: Come and see what our God has done.

Voice 2: We proclaim the amazing mystery  
that the Holy One became human, like us.

Leader: Jacob dreamed of a ladder between earth and heaven,  
and the angels of God were going up and down on  
it.

Voice 1: Jesus said, "You will see heaven opened, ...

Voice 2: ... and the angels of God ascending and descending  
upon the Son of Man."

All: Jesus, the Holy One become human,

is the bridge – the way, the truth, and the  
life.

## **INVOCATION**

## **HYMN**

## **WORD FOR THE CHILDREN**

## **SILENCE**

## **PRAYERS**

### **COMMON CONFESSION**

Leader: Holy One, we've heard the news that heaven is open,  
and yet so often we're too busy to notice.

Voice 1: I have my teeth and fists clenched,  
frustrated by so many things.

Voice 2: I want the world to be a better place,  
better in ways we all can see,  
but I've shut my eyes to avoid the bad news.

Voice 1: We catch glimpses of your Holy presence,  
peeking through the curtain of reality  
in stories of hope and justice and peace.

Voice 2: And yet, the cries of anger and greed,  
of hunger and need drown out the whispers  
of your Good News.

All: O holy maker of this reality,  
we're pulling back from your invitation  
to find heaven open here and now.

## INDIVIDUAL PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

### ASSURANCE

Leader: The Holy One,  
the loving maker of all creation  
who has known us and loved us since the  
beginning,  
is ready to welcome us home.  
Look, the curtains are blowing in the wind:  
the heavens are open.  
We are forgiven.

## PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

### PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

All: O Holy One, we come today  
to claim our relationship with you.  
We pray for the commitment to grow together,

sharing the gifts you give us with others  
here and in the wider world.

Forgive us for the hurt we have inflicted,  
and help us forgive those who have hurt us.

Give us strength and discipline

to nurture our relationship with you;

to care for every part of your creation;

to foster justice and be in solidarity with  
those in need;

to work to end all war, and violence, and  
discord;

and to respond joyfully when you call,

freely giving our selves as you have shown the  
way.

We open our hearts to you and your creation

in the name of Jesus, who is the Christ. Amen.

**HYMN**

**THE WORD**

**SCRIPTURE**

**SERMON**

## **SILENT REFLECTION**

## **OFFERING**

## **COMMUNION**

## **GREAT THANKSGIVING**

Leader 1: God of love and hope  
                  we are grateful that you let us know  
                  there is a deeper reality present in the  
world.

People: Our hearts are thankful that the heavens have opened  
                  and that Christ's presence in the world is  
renewed.

Leader 2: Our spirits are refreshed as we know,  
                  with awe and wonder, the power of your Spirit.

People: Our lives are enriched  
                  as we come together as your church,  
                  the place where the reality of your presence  
among us  
                  touches our pain and our joy.

## **BLESSING THE ELEMENTS**

Leader 1: Christ invites everyone to eat the bread of life,  
                  to drink the cup of the new covenant.

Leader 2: Jesus said, I am the bread of life.

You who come to me shall never hunger,  
You who believe in me shall never thirst.

Leader 1: On the night of his arrest, Jesus took bread,  
and after giving thanks to God, broke it and  
said,

This is my body,  
broken for the healing of the world.  
Whenever you eat it, do so remembering me.

Leader 2: After supper, Jesus took the cup and said,  
This is the cup of the new covenant,  
poured out for you and for all.  
Whenever you drink it, do so remembering me.

## **SHARE THE ELEMENTS**

## **PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION**

All: God of abundance and mercy,  
we give joyful thanks  
for your eternal love and healing presence

in our celebration of bread and cup.  
Bless this body of Christ  
that we may attend faithfully  
to our call to be your servants,  
with each other and throughout the world.  
Amen.

## **SHARED REFLECTIONS**

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

## **HYMN**

## **BENEDICTION**

Leader: The curtain of heaven has parted;  
Jesus our savior reveals  
the kingdom of heaven around us.  
Opportunities abound  
to be subversive doing God's work.  
Go forth, knowing Christ is with you.

All: Amen.