

## ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH

December 13, 2020 – Advent 3

Welcome to Worship

Join us for a Zoom Virtual Coffee Time at 7:00 p.m.

Email [sketchingalong4@gmail.com](mailto:sketchingalong4@gmail.com) to get the Zoom link.

### Prelude

#### Hymn: VU 9 *People, Look East*

1. People, look east. The time is near of the crowning of the year.  
Make your house fair as you are able, trim the hearth and set the table.  
People, look east and sing today: Love the guest is on the way.
2. Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare, one more seed is planted there:  
give up your strength the seed to nourish, that in course the flower may flourish.  
People, look east and sing today: Love the rose is on the way.
3. Birds, though you have long ceased to build, guard the nest that must be filled;  
even the hour when wings are frozen God for fledging time has chosen.  
People, look east and sing today: Love the bird is on the way.
4. Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim one more light the bowl shall brim,  
shining beyond the frosty weather, bright as sun and moon together.  
People, look east and sing today: Love the star is on the way.
5. Angels, announce with shouts of mirth Christ who brings new life to earth.  
Set every peak and valley humming with the word, the Lord is coming.  
People, look east and sing today: Love the Lord is on the way.

### Welcome

Welcome – both people in sanctuary and those at home joining worship **LIVE** through our video. Those at home, if you are new here, note that our contact information is at the end of the video, and you might want to visit our website or Facebook page, or email our office manager so you can receive our weekly e-newsletter called the NEWS. We also have a Virtual Fellowship time tonight at 7:00.

Now we prepare for worship – we breathe ... we give thanks to our Creator for the gift of this moment, this sacred space to find connection – with one another, with the Source of Love. Let us worship.

### Acknowledging Traditional Territory

This morning we offer our gratitude for the land we are worshipping on. We acknowledge that these lands have been cared for and inhabited by many First Nations people from time immemorial to the present. We gather as a treaty people of Robinson-Huron. We acknowledge the Atikemeksheng Anishnawbek and Wahnapiatae First Nation, who along with Métis people, have called this territory “home”. We give thanks for the current and historic contributions these and other Indigenous peoples continue to make and we pray that we may live in peace and friendship, honouring the treaties, seeking justice and walking together in the spirit of reconciliation. Amen.

### Lighting the Christ Candle

The Psalmist sings: May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.

Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves. [Ps 126 verses 5,6]

**As we light this candle to symbolize Christ-presence, may we be filled with grace, and may we share it wherever we may go.**

## Call to Worship & Advent Candle Lighting – JOY

God be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them up to God.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

### ***(Advent 3 Candle-Lighting – Donna and Abi/Alex Mese lead)***

One: We are now three-quarters of the way through Advent. In the last two weeks, we lit the candles of hope and peace.

*(The first two candles are lit, Hope and Peace.)*

One: In our culture, this is a time of consumer frenzy and, often, frazzled nerves. Perhaps some people are beginning to wish this season were already over. Here, in sacred space, we keep time to a different kind of music.

One: Joy is the theme of this day.

**All: What does joy look like?**

One: Joy has many faces. You can notice it at the Centre de Sante and YMCA now on these colder days, where people who can't afford a nourishing meal can find a brief, warm, place to eat and get warm. Kind volunteers, a few minutes of warmth and company safely distanced.

One: Joy shines in the eyes of children for whom the world is an adventure-filled with wonder. Sometimes joy shows up at a nursing home where they sing Christmas hymns, tired toes tapping. Joy can also be there as a family gathers to say goodbye to one who has loved them, now family loves them as they enter God's peace.

One: Joy abides even when the heart is breaking, for it is deeper than the troubles of a moment and it is stronger than grief.

**All: What does joy feel like?**

One: Joy is not exactly happiness. We are happy when things are going our way and life is sweet. When things are not going our way and the taste of life is sour, we can be unhappy, but Joy is tough, resilient, and in the face of tribulation, finds a reason to get up in the morning.

One: Joy feels like the wonderful surprise that keeps us from sleepwalking through our lives and waits for us at the end of our days.

**All: What is it like to live in joy?**

One: Joy is often quiet; it doesn't demand attention. It doesn't force itself on others. Joy loves company but can thrive in solitude as well. Joy changes things. It makes ordinary things special and ordinary people remarkable. Joy will sing with angels and with the out-of-tune person sitting beside you.

One: Today we light the candle named Joy.

*(The third candle is lit, Joy)*

### **Opening Prayer: MV 220 Joy Shines as the Solitary Star**

Joy shines as the solitary star.

Faith is the inner light.

You and I together mirror the Light of Lights,  
and illumine the pathway home.

## The Prayer Jesus Taught

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kin-dom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kin-dom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

## Hymn: MV 120 *My Soul Cries Out* (vs. 1)

1. My soul cries out with a joyful shout that the God of my heart is great,  
and my spirit sings of the wondrous things that you bring to the ones who wait.  
You fixed your sight on your servant's plight, and my weakness you did not spurn,  
so from east to west shall my name be blest. Could the world be about to turn?

My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the fires of your justice burn.  
Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near, and the world is about to turn.

## Time up Front – White Gift Story

The tradition of White Gift Sunday has its roots in a small Methodist church in Ohio in 1904. What began as a humble way to reflect on the love and devotion of the giver and not the value of the gift has grown into today's white gift services in many churches around the world. Gifts wrapped in white paper.

Have you ever been at a family Christmas gathering where gifts are exchanged and one member of the family always seems to give rather expensive gifts, and you feel like yours worth less? What do you think Jesus might say about that if he were here? I think it would be something like the money value of the gift doesn't matter, but it does matter if you put some thought into the gift.

The story goes that a minister's wife initiated the idea to solve the problem of inequity of gifts given at the Sunday School Christmas party. Instead of focusing on receiving gifts, the focus shifted to bringing gifts to Jesus that could in turn be shared with people around the world who did not have much. All the gifts would come wrapped in plain white paper, so that no one would know which was an expensive gift and which was a more modest one. No one would feel ashamed of their gift and everyone would share in the joy of giving to others.

Many churches including St. Andrew's have often held White Gift Sunday in Advent with more child-centred themes. So, we are keeping to the spirit of that tradition, and even though we don't have children physically in the building today, we celebrate the gifts. You can bring a gift next week if you forgot this week, or contact Rev. Catherine to make your donation.

## Hymn: MV 120 *My Soul Cries Out* (vs. 3)

3. From the halls of power to the fortress tower, not a stone will be left on stone.  
Let the king beware for your justice tears ev'ry tyrant from his throne.  
The hungry poor shall weep no more, for the food they can never earn;  
there are table spread, ev'ry mouth be fed, for the world is about to turn.

My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the fires of your justice burn.  
Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near, and the world is about to turn.

## Scripture Reading (*Debby Laporte*)

### Luke 1:39-56 (New International Version)

*A bold and prophetic message from young Mary. A passage we have heard many times, but may we hear it with fresh and open ears this morning.*

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears,

the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!”

And Mary said:

“My soul glorifies the Lord  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
for he has been mindful  
of the humble state of his servant.  
From now on all generations will call me blessed,  
for the Mighty One has done great things for me—  
holy is his name.

His mercy extends to those who fear him,  
from generation to generation.

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;  
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

He has brought down rulers from their thrones  
but has lifted up the humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things  
but has sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel,  
remembering to be merciful  
to Abraham and his descendants forever,  
just as he promised our ancestors.”

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

### **Response Prayer**

Holy God, help us to give voice to the wonderful news: you, yourself are coming to dwell among us! Quicken our imaginations to find new and creative ways to proclaim:

**Be awake, Christ is coming! Amen.**

### **Message: *Elizabeth and Mary – Prophets***

*Not available at time of printing.*

### **Hymn: *VU 8 Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming***

1. Lo, how a rose e'er blooming from tender stem hath sprung,  
of Jesse's lineage coming, as seers of old have sung.  
It came a blossom bright,  
amid the cold of winter, when half spent was the night.

2. Isaiah 'twas foretold it, the Rose I have in mind,  
with Mary we behold it, the virgin mother kind.  
To show God's love aright  
she bore for us a Saviour when half spent was the night.

### **Minute for Mission (*Debby Laporte*)**

#### **Experiencing Magic at Camp McDougall**

There is no place like camp for campers and staff alike to live life to the fullest, experience the beauty and wonder of creation, and build meaningful relationships. Thanks to your gifts for Mission & Service, campers can continue to have meaningful experiences at camps like Camp McDougall in Thessalon, Ontario.

The Camp McDougall staff strive to have a positive effect on the lives of the young people spending time there, and they recognize the importance of their role in this experience and

provide guidance, entertainment, leadership, example, and friendship. Making the most of this opportunity creates the ultimate camp experience for everyone.

As a United Church camp, Camp McDougall is an entity both rich in tradition and dedicated to encouraging new ideas. Throughout the years, many people have contributed a great deal of time and effort to make the camp what it is today. Board members, staff members, counsellors, and even campers have the potential to contribute to the ongoing development and success of this organization.

Camp McDougall is blessed with the raw materials for a great summer: a fantastic location on the shore of Lake Huron near Thessalon, Ontario; an enthusiastic and capable staff; and most important, lots of excited campers ready to experience the magic.

If Mission & Service giving is already a regular part of your life, thank you so much! If you have not given, please join me in making Mission & Service giving a regular part of your life of faith. Loving our neighbour is at the heart of our Mission & Service.

### **Offering Moment**

If you also offer yourself, your time and talent, towards God's work here at St. Andrew's – thank you. Thank you even more for taking time to fill out this Response Card, to review what you offer as a partner in ministry here at St. Andrew's – a hearty thank you.

If you are newer here, not quite sure how you would like to contribute, either your money or your volunteer time. Take time. Pray about it. Consider what God has done for you in your life, in this world, and whether you would like to commit yourself to God's work at St. Andrew's. Let us know how we can help in your prayerful discernment.

Let us pray: Accept, O God, this money offered, these gifts given, the goodwill of our hearts, that disappointment may be turned to hope, and worry may be turned to anticipation, as we await with wonder the birth of Christ. Amen.

### **Offering Hymn: VU 543 *We Give Thee but Thine Own***

We give thee but thine own, whate'er the gift may be;  
all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O God, from thee.

### **Prayers of the Community**

God of comfort, God of promise, as we come in worship, we carry our thanks in grateful hands. We thank you for the beauty of these winter days, for Christmas lights and decorations which bring their joy, for phone calls and emails and all the ways we are finding to stay connected to one another. We thank you for the richness of our relationships, for in the voices and words and eyes of our friends, we know your love. We feel your peace. We carry our concerns in seeking hands. We pray for the brokenness of the world, for the hungry and the hurting, the disappointed and the angry. We pray for your healing and restoration.

As your church, we carry our commitment and our longing. Help us to be involved in creating communities that actively care for the broken. Help us find good ways to walk alongside those who mourn and live with grief. May we be a presence and solace.

And many of us are carrying heavy burdens. We lift to you the discouragements we have experienced this week, when family times missed the mark and we longed for better relationships with those we love the most, when work felt heavy, or we carried the acknowledgement that we were not your people, and certainly not our best this week.

We lift to you, O God, the things that drag us down.

And now, we pray for restoration. Restore our faith in your leading, in ourselves and in each other. Bring us comfort this week. Plant the good news deep within our hearts in ways that cannot be shaken by anxiety or fear. Help us to see your restoration of the world in a young child, and in the

stories aunts and uncles and grandparents tell. Together, in community, we hold the ones we love in our prayers.....(names from the prayer sheet or emailed in). As we grow in faith, we pray for the ability to rejoice in all things, trusting that the one who calls is faithful now and always. Amen.

**Hymn: VU 62 *Once in Royal David's City***

1. Once in royal David's city stood a lowly cattle shed,  
where a mother laid her baby in a manger for his bed.  
Mary was that mother mild, Jesus Christ her little child.
2. He came down to earth from heaven who, with God, is over all,  
and his shelter was a stable, and his cradle was a stall.  
There among the poor and lowly lived on earth our Saviour holy.
3. For he is our lifelong pattern; daily, when on earth he grew,  
he was tempted, scorned, rejected, tears and smiles like us he knew.  
Thus he feels for all our sadness, and he shares in all our gladness.
4. And our eyes at last shall see him, through his own redeeming love;  
for that child who seemed so helpless is our Lord in heaven above;  
and he leads his children on to the place where he is gone.

**Commissioning**

The God who makes everything whole,  
**sends us forth to bring healing to the broken-hearted and to comfort the mourners in our midst.**

The Christ who comes to be with us,  
**sends us forth to stand with the oppressed, to release those held captive by sin, to invite the lonely into our lives.**

The Spirit who calls you to faithfulness,  
**sends us forth to proclaim the gospel that today is God's moment, the day when all people will be blessed.**

**Advent Benediction: VU 884 *You Shall Go Out with Joy***

You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace;  
the mountains and the hills will break forth before you;  
there'll be shouts of joy, and all the trees of the field  
will clap, will clap their hands!

And all the trees of the field will clap their hands, (*clap, clap*)  
the trees of the field will clap their hands, (*clap, clap*)  
the trees of the field will clap their hands (*clap, clap*)  
while you go out with joy.

**Postlude**

---

**Offering Prayer** from *Celebrate God's Presence: A Book of Services by The United Church of Canada*, United Church Publishing House © 2000.

**Commissioning** © 2020 Thom M. Shuman <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>

---