

**ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH**  
**November 29, 2020 – Stewardship Celebration Sunday**  
**St. Andrew's Sunday**

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 651 *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah***

1. Guide me, O thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land.  
I am weak, but thou art mighty, hold me with thy powerful hand.  
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more,  
feed me till I want no more.

2. Open now the crystal fountain, whence the healing stream doth flow;  
let the fire and cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through.  
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer, be thou still my strength and shield,  
be thou still my strength and shield.

3. When I tread the verge of Jordan, bid my anxious fears subside;  
death of death, and hell's destruction, land me safe on Canaan's side:  
songs of praises, songs of praises I will ever give to thee,  
I will ever give to thee.

**Welcome**

Welcome – both people in sanctuary and those at home joining worship 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 take time, create space for the holy in our hearts – breathe gently, noticing how you are filled with life-giving oxygen. Let us worship.

**Acknowledging Traditional Territory**

This morning we offer our gratitude for the land we worship 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 Metis 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**

This is holy space, whether the sanctuary is St Andrew's or in your home, we connect in liminal space that transcends distance or time. We are together.

**Christ light shines from the inside out – shines through us, to illuminate hope in our world.**

**Call to Worship & Advent Candle Lighting - HOPE**

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.**

***(Bert and Kathy Brankley)***

This is the First Sunday of Advent. Through Advent we always hear the biblical prophets calling us to dream of a broken world healed. We will sing the songs of longing and we will wait in hope.

**HOPE is the theme of this day. What does HOPE look like?**

Sometimes, hope looks like a refugee family arriving at the airport full of fears and misgivings, wondering if they can make it, but they know that they have to try. Maybe hope looks like the school kids marching in a call for action on the climate crisis. They know that planet Earth is in danger and that the future looks grim, but they will not be silent, and they are not giving up.

Hope looks like the front-line hospital worker caring for a COVID 19 victim – feeling exhausted, but determined to keep working.

Hope also looks like you and me, here in worship, being open to new ways of being together, safely.

**What does hope feel like?**

Hope feels like the winter coming; it is going to get cold and the days are shortening – but hope tells you that there is beauty in winter's chill, and spring will come.

Hope feels like a door that has always been locked and barred moving when you push it – you wonder, “Do I have the strength to open it?”

That barrier has become a possibility.

**What is it like to live in hope?**

Hope always looks up, always strains to see the first glimmer of light along the horizon. Hope always listens – always listens to the angel voices of kindness and mercy. Hope doesn't believe the haters and the doomsayers. Hope trusts God and how much God loves all Creation, including us.

We light the candle named “hope”. May its light help us find our way. ***[Light the first Advent candle]***

**Opening Prayer: MV 220 *Hope Shines as the Solitary Star***

Hope 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 27 *Creator God You Gave Us Life (vs. 1)***

1. Creator God you gave us life, your image formed within our souls,  
yet through the mist of time and space, we search for that which makes us whole.

Through hands that paint majestic skies, and voices chanting melody,  
with words that reach beyond the page, we comprehend your mystery.

## Time up Front

How many of you have made pottery before? What a wonderful art form! The process looks something like this (*picture of a potter at the wheel*). Well, moulding pottery is not as simple as I thought. I even took some pottery classes. My friend James, who is now an engineer, has also enjoyed being a potter who sells his pieces. He learned. For me, it was a wrestling match. Cold, wet clay in my hands, it just never felt right. I would collapse it and start again. Over and over. One of my problems was that I didn't relax, didn't trust the process. Here is one of my masterpieces (*picture of pottery Dave made, a little "misshapen"*).

We are going to hear a story about Isaiah in a moment. He used the metaphor of Yahweh (God) being the great Potter, moulding the people. The people of Israel have gone through losing their homes. Being strangers in strange lands, or living in occupation in their land, feeling like aliens. They might feel like I did, faced with that clay in my hands; very much a work in progress – they had to trust the potter. They were returning home, a new normal, but it wasn't normal. What will life be like? What is God creating in us? *Does this feeling sound familiar to anyone?*

Remember my very rough pottery piece? Here is what it should look like (*picture of a beautiful pottery chalice*). Bert, a dear friend and potter, created this chalice for me that I cherish. When things are uncertain, maybe we should take a breath, relax, and trust our potter, our God, who is making something new in us.

## Hymn: MV 27 Creator God You Gave Us Life (vs. 3)

3. When with our hearts, our hands, our minds, we share our gifts with all the world,  
our spirits soar beyond the veil, to touch the very face of God.

Through hands that paint majestic skies, and voices chanting melody,  
with words that reach beyond the page, we comprehend your mystery.

## Scripture Readings (Kathy Brankley)

### **Mark 13: 24, 25, 32-37 (NRSV)**

*Our first reading is one of the many "end times" passages from the Bible. It reflects our collective yearning for something new emerging out of the old, unjust realities in our world. It reminds us, though, not to become complacent, to be spiritually awake to what is going on.*

"But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened,  
and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken...

"But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

### **Isaiah 64: 1-9** (*Storytelling version from Seasons of the Spirit, Isaiah's Message to the People.*)

Down the road walked Isaiah – down the road to the city of Jerusalem. Isaiah had a message from God. Now he wanted to give that message to the people. But would the people listen?

Many of the people shook their heads. "No," they replied. "Does God still care about us? Everything has crumbled around us. Our places of worship have been destroyed. Our homes are no longer here. All our dreams are gone. We are left with nothing. Life is so difficult, and God has forgotten us," they said.

Isaiah knew that was not true. God had not forgotten them. Isaiah could see the sadness in the people's eyes. He could hear sorrow in their voices and how they longed for things to be different. The people were living in scary times. They had returned to Jerusalem with great hope of rebuilding their nation again. But things were not as they expected. They felt abandoned. They felt as if God was hiding from them.

"Listen," Isaiah said, "God cares about you. God loves you. Just imagine a potter holding a piece of clay. The potter moulds and shapes the clay gently with strong hands. God is like that potter. God lovingly shapes us and cares for us. We are God's people. God will never abandon us."

"But what do we do while we wait through this terrible time?" the people asked.

"There are two things that God wants you to do," replied Isaiah. "Keep on loving God and keep on loving each other. And always, always remember that we can feel God everywhere. Never give up hope. Someday soon, we will feel love and joy all around us. And we will feel at peace."

The people looked at each other and thought, "Life may be difficult now, but with God's help, perhaps it will get better. We must trust God."

The people wanted to believe Isaiah's message. They waited and hoped for peace and love and healing in their land. And with tearful prayers to God, they waited and hoped for the time when they would feel happy and full of joy again.

### **Response Prayer**

Gracious God, in this season of gifts and giving, help us to accept with joy the great gift of sacred scripture. As we unwrap the readings for today, bless us in our receiving of the wisdom of our ancestors in faith. Amen.

### **Message: *That's how the light gets in***

*Not available at time of printing.*

### **Hymn: VU 2 *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus***

1. Come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free:  
from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.
2. Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art,  
dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.
3. Born thy people to deliver; born a child and yet a king:  
born to reign in us for ever; now thy gracious kingdom bring.
4. By thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone;  
by thine all-sufficient merit raise us to thy glorious throne.

### **Offering Moment**

Thank you. Simply said, thank you. 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: You gift us, Loving God, not so we will hoard, but so that we share with others; not so that we accumulate, but instead to give to those who have so little. In the waiting, may we realize the wanting; in the listening, may we hear the brokenness, in the watching, may we see the weariness, and pour out our gifts, our lives, and our hearts on others. In the spirit of Christ we pray. Amen.

### **Offering Hymn: MV 191 *What Can I Do?***

What can I do? What can I bring?  
What can I say? What can I sing?  
I'll sing with joy. I'll say a prayer.  
I'll bring my love. I'll do my share. (*repeat twice more*)

### **Prayers of the Community**

Hear our prayers, God, as we make ourselves ready for the journey of Advent. We pray for this to be a deepening time in our relationship with you. We are standing now on the threshold, and we dare to ask that our faith and hope and love will be renewed. We need to experience these gifts, especially this year, now more than ever.

You call us with ancient scriptures, words of hope, and into our thoughts, you come with dreams, that we might live as a hopeful, candle-lighting people this week. Help us, in spite of the cracks that carry, to be bold enough to light our candles. May we ask questions with curiosity, sparking imagination. May we see the world through the eyes of wonder, finding light. May we offer a message of hope and compassion to those we meet. With all that we are, loving perfection and carrying brokenness, once more remind us that we are your people and you dare us to let the light shine.

This Advent, more than any other, we pray that you will come and shine upon our shadowed world. We pause, and pray that you will make your home in our hearts.

Hear our prayers... we pray for (*names on prayer list*).

We pray for our city, for the vulnerable, and those who are searching. Shine your light.

We pray for our leaders, our teachers and students, our friends in long term care, the business owners, health care providers and first responders, the lonely, the forgotten. Shine your light.

We will light our candles and we will be your people. That's how the light gets in and makes the world just a little bit brighter. We pray in the name of the one who called himself the light of the world; in Jesus' name we make our prayers. In your love, answer. Amen.

### **Hymn: MV 126 *Are You a Shepherd?***

1. Are you a shepherd, good shepherd who leads us,  
safely through danger while calming our fears?  
Are you a father who shelters and feeds us,  
shares in our laughter and wipes away tears?

Yes, you are shepherd, parent and teacher,  
but you are greater than all that we know.  
Holy and living, loving and giving,  
God, you are with us wherever we go.

2. Are you a mother, good mother who bear us,  
comforts, protects us and helps us to rest?  
Are you a teacher who daily prepares us,  
challenging students to offer their best?

Yes, you are shepherd, parent and teacher,  
but you are greater than all that we know.  
Holy and living, loving and giving,  
God, you are with us wherever we go.

3. Great, gentle shepherd, forever beside us,  
lead all your children in paths that are right.  
Great, loving parent, wise teacher you guide us.

We want to love you and bring you delight.

Yes, you are shepherd, parent and teacher,  
but you are greater than all that we know.  
Holy and living, loving and giving,  
God, you are with us wherever we go.

### **Commissioning**

On this pilgrimage of uncertainty,  
**may we remember God has walked  
this road many times before.**

As we live through these endless moments,  
**may we remember Jesus shares hope  
with us every day, every day.**

In this season filled with isolation from others,  
**may we remember that the Spirit  
knows our loneliness and cradles us in love.**

### **Advent Benediction: *Love Your Neighbour Song***

You gotta love your neighbour who doesn't look like you.  
You gotta love your neighbour who doesn't think like you.  
You gotta love your neighbour who doesn't love like you.  
Loving your neighbour is what you gotta do.

You gotta love your neighbour who doesn't speak like you.  
You gotta love your neighbour who doesn't pray like you.  
You gotta love your neighbour who doesn't vote like you.  
Loving your neighbour is what you gotta do.  
No exceptions! (*spoken*)

### **Postlude**

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**Call to Worship** adapted from John Moses, "What does it look like?" *Gathering*, Advent/Christmas 2020, pages 68-70.

**Isaiah 64:1-9** reading from *Seasons of the Spirit, Fusion*, Advent. © 2020 Wood Lake Books Inc.

**Response Prayer** written by Susan Ivany. *Gathering*, Advent 2020, page 32. Used with permission.

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