

**WORSHIP AT ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH**  
**December 12, 2021 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent, JOY**

Welcome to Worship

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

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

**Prelude**

**Hymn: MV 144 *Like a Healing Stream, vv. 1, 3, 4***

1. Like a healing stream in a barren desert,  
Spirit water bringing life to dusty earth,  
God is trickling through our lives as in a dream unfolding,  
promising revival and rebirth...  
like a healing stream.

3. Like a river strong with a restless current,  
Spirit water rushing on to distant shore,  
God is carving out a channel in a new direction,  
calling for an end to hate and war...  
like a river strong.

4. Like a mighty sea reaching far horizons,  
Spirit water with a love both deep and wide,  
God is working in our hearts to shape a new tomorrow:  
God will always challenge and provide!  
Like a mighty sea, like a river strong,  
like a gentle rain, like a healing stream.

**Welcome & Announcements**

Welcome again to St. Andrew's United Church on the third Sunday of Advent. Yes, we worship together whether we are in person in a sanctuary or joining online. Together in Christ.

I need to thank the music leaders this Sunday Graham and Debby Laporte! Thank you Maureen and Suzanne and Jennifer for your important parts in this worship too.

Our Virtual Christmas Party is at 3pm today (Dec. 12). To get your Zoom link to join, please email Diane at [sketchingalong4@gmail.com](mailto:sketchingalong4@gmail.com). Virtual Fellowship for this evening is canceled due to the Christmas Party.

If you are new here, please note the credits at the end of this worship on screen with contact information – Facebook, our website, email and just a traditional phone call to us to say hello and allow us to get to know you.

As we prepare to worship, let us take a quiet moment ...  
[silence]

**Inviting Holy Light**

We again breathe, as we light this candle. We prepare for worship. We come with Joy, a sense of anticipation of God's Grace. We come seeking Spirit's presence with us. We invite holy light, seeking guidance, wisdom, courage on our journey. *[light candle]*

**Nurturing Safe Space**

We seek Holy Spirit and Love to help us nurture safe space in this place where all can participate in worship and life regardless of age, ability, race, cultural background, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

## **Acknowledging Traditional Territory**

For millennia, this land we live on has been cared for by First Peoples. When Europeans came to this land, and church communities formed, the people already caring for this land had wisdom and spirituality that we did not appreciate. Instead of listening and learning, we imposed our vision of civilization as a condition of accepting the gospel. We are grateful to be allowed to use these lands for growing spiritually and worshipping. We acknowledge and pay respect to the Indigenous, the Métis, ancestors of this particular land, particularly those of the Wahnapiatae First Nation and the Atikemeksheng Anishnawbek. Let us work earnestly for Reconciliation.

## **Advent Candle Lighting (*Jen Bruneau & Sue Nykilchyk*)**

1: God is our salvation; we will trust and not be afraid.

2: Let us rejoice with all of our hearts;

**and again we say rejoice.**

1: We thank our Creator who makes the impossible, possible.

2: Let us rejoice with all of our hearts!

**And again we say rejoice.**

1: Let us worship, let us give our praise in worship.

2: Let us light the third candle of Advent, the candle of Joy,  
to signify the playfulness of the Spirit in this season of preparation.

**We light this candle.**

1: For the wrath we sometimes have to flee from,

2: and for the road we never believed we would ever travel.

**We light this candle.**

1: For the questions and curiosities,

2: and for the fight we didn't know we would need to push on through;  
for ourselves, for others who need a voice.

**We light this candle.**

1: For trust in believing that this is the way,

2: for this journey we share together,

**we light this candle.**

*[Light the third candle.]*

## **Hymn: VU 7 *Hope is a Star*, vs. 3**

3. Joy is a song that welcomes the dawn,  
telling the world that the Saviour is born.

When God is a child there's joy in our song.

The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,  
and none shall be afraid.

## **Praying for Grace and Assurance**

As we prayerfully enter worship, let us consider quietly:

Time and again in the Bible, God's children venture away from their spiritual centre – each time, prophets call them to turn around and to follow God's voice back. When in the past week have we wandered away from our spiritual centre? How did we respond?

*[Silence... play singing bowl]*

**Help us to come home to your love.**

Rejoice! With Joy in our hearts we celebrate how God calls us home.

**God's vision of love calls all Creation home, in justice and peace.**

## The Prayer Jesus Taught

This we pray along with the prayer taught to us by beloved who loved, and called us to love too,

**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 156 *Dance with the Spirit, vs. 1*

1. Dance with the Spirit early in the mornin',  
walk with the Spirit throughout the long day.  
Work and hope for the new life a-bornin',  
listen to the Spirit to show you the way.

## Time Up Front

John was wild, you just never knew what he would say. He spent a lot of time out in the wilderness, way outside of town, teaching about God's ways. He also preached by the water, about how God was coming soon to make things right in the world.

I wonder where he slept. I wonder if he ever got invited to people's houses. What do you think?

The water (splash in water of the font/or fountain). He had big crowds as he baptized people – down into the water. People were nervous when they went into the water with John. Down they would go, take a deep breath. Up – We are new. Have you ever gone under water? Do you remember when you first held your breath and went under? You come up and think – I did it!

Such excitement in the crowd. Do you think people gossiped about John? I wonder what they would say. What would you ask John if you could ask him a question? What do you think John would say to us, here, about living in God's way?

This is a repeat after me prayer:

God of surprises:

You call us to love;

You call us to be fair, to share;

You call us to listen for your voice.

Make this world right, God.

May we be your helpers. Amen.

## Hymn: MV 156 *Dance with the Spirit, vs. 2*

2. Move with the Spirit early in the mornin',  
walk with the Spirit throughout the long day.  
Work and hope for the new life a-bornin',  
listen to the Spirit to show you the way.

## Scripture Reading (*Maureen McGuinness*)

**Voices United 880 (Give Thanks to God)**

***Refrain: Proclaim God's marvelous deeds to all the nations.***

I will praise you, O God,

**for though you were angry with me,  
your anger turned away, and you comforted me.**

Surely God is my salvation.

I will trust and not be afraid,

**for you, God, are my strength and might;  
you show yourself my saviour.**

***Refrain: Proclaim God's marvelous deeds to all the nations.***

With joy we draw water from the wells of salvation.

**Give thanks and call on God's name.**

Make known God's deeds among the nations;

**proclaim that God's name is exalted.**

Sing praises to God, whose work is glorious;

let it be known in all the earth.

**Shout for joy, you who dwell in Zion,**

**for the Holy One of Israel is majestic among you.**

**Refrain: Proclaim God's marvelous deeds to all the nations.**

**Waiting for the Promised One** – Based on Luke 3:7–18

John shouted in the wilderness, hoping that the people would hear. And they did hear. And they came to him in crowds, surrounding him where he made his home, in the wild next to the Jordan River. "It's not that easy, you know!" John shouted. "If you want to change, you need to have something to show for it. It doesn't matter who your family is. It doesn't matter where you come from. Your life is like a tree; if it's not producing fruit for the world to enjoy, then you may as well chop it all down."

The crowds were intrigued. "OK then. If that stuff doesn't matter, then what does? John, what should we do?"

"Do you have extra clothes? Extra food? Give them away!" John said. "Do you collect taxes? Well, don't collect too much; you're not supposed to steal. Do you serve in the army? Then just do your job; don't try to scare people by being cruel."

These answers felt right to the people. They wondered in their hearts if John might be the Messiah, the one God had promised. "No, no, no. I am not God's chosen one, God's Messiah," John said. "I baptize with water, but someone is coming who will baptize with the spirit of God. The promised one will sort everything out, gathering up what needs to be kept and burning away everything that will only get in the way."

The people welcomed this news. But King Herod did not. King Herod shut John up in prison. And the people waited to see when the promised one would appear.

Let us pray: God of rejoicing, we ground ourselves in your promise that righteousness and justice will prevail. Guide us begin another week, trying live lives of love, peace, and integrity. Show us ways to share the good news we hear today with those we meet. Amen

**Message: "Preparing the way for Joy"**

*Message will be posted on the website when it is available.*

**Hymn: VU 94 *Lovely Star in the Sky*, vv. 1, 3, & 4**

1. Lovely star in the sky, banishing the night,  
shine down and hallow us; light our dark path.  
Star shining in the east, be our true guide;  
lead us to worship him, worship the Child.

3. What can we do to show our devotion true?  
Shall we present to him sweet-smelling gifts?  
Far mountain's frankincense, sandalwood myrrh?  
Shall it be precious gold, pearls from the sea?

4. None of these things of price gives God's Child much joy;  
how then, will we express thanks for his birth?  
One present, one alone, he would desire:  
love from our deepest heart, our own best love.

## **Offering Our Gifts to God**

Life is blessing. We know that, sometimes we don't see it easily. As modern-day disciples, let us be the words and actions of our Creator. Let us come to offer our talents, our skills, and our very being as an offering for the call of Jesus to follow... and here we are!

Our gifts are many and varied, depending on the gifts God first gave us. We give locally, our volunteering and our treasures to bless the ministries of St. Andrew's. We give globally, towards ministries in Canada and around the world, through the United Church's Mission and Service. Thank you for all you do, your generosity and joy in giving.

## **Offering Hymn: VU 68 *All Poor Ones and Humble, Refrain only***

Then haste we to show him the praises we owe him;  
our service he ne'er can despise;  
whose love still is able to show us that stable,  
where softly in manger he lies.

## **Offering Prayer**

Let us pray: With joy we gather water from the well of salvation, from the well which never runs dry. Grant that we too may be like wells that never run dry, pouring ourselves out for the sake of your world, trusting in your unending grace. Amen.

## **Prayers of the Community**

God, great beyond our imagination yet close and intimate as the air we breathe. We continue to wait for your birth among us, with all its wonder and inspiration. But not yet. Quiet our minds, Holy One.

When life gets busy, help us to be quiet deep inside of us. So quiet, listening, wondering, waiting, so deeply that no busy noise or problem can disturb.

Help people around our world, near and far, to feel that same quiet, as we journey together towards the birth. May we all be open and prepared, not just for a baby on Christmas Eve, but open to the birth of radical new, peaceful, and loving ways of thinking and acting. May we be born in your love, in a world yearning for radical love, and peace, and justice.

Bless and change those who hurt others with violent actions or words, may they let go of their weapons, and understand the hurt they cause, and learn to love.

We pray for those who worry, those who wander, yearning for something, but they don't know what. Those who are sad because life has been hard, those who have a loved one who is sick or has died. May your peace, maybe even joy, take the place of anxiety in their hearts and minds.

May those who have power in our world, those who have money, use their blessings to especially help those who don't have money or power. Bring peace to those in hospitals, in fire stations, police stations, bless them as they continue to work so hard, and take risks for the community. Bless those who work in stores, so that we can get the food and important things to survive – keep them well.

In silence now we offer our individual prayers for people and situations of concern to us in this silent moment (prayer list?)...

Together we pray, one you, Creator, who loved the world without limit enough to be born among us. Come Jesus come, and make things right. Bring reconciliation and justice, and let us help. Amen.

### **Closing Hymn: MV 78 *Sing till Sundown***

1. Sing till sundown, hum your joy,  
dress in starlight, girl and boy.  
Man and woman climb the hill,  
warmed beyond December's chill,  
reeling, clapping, touch the air:  
is that fragrant music there?  
Come the glory, gone the gloom:  
in a wondrous huddled room.  
Christ the Word we've longed to know  
calls us dancing through the snow.

2. Gladness deepens into grace,  
weaves its light on every face.  
Let us wake the sleeping earth,  
celebrate the sweetest birth,  
pierce the night with festive cry,  
bloom in colours of the sky.  
Bring the flute, the tambourine,  
wave the branch of evergreen.  
Lost we were a grief ago,  
now we're dancing through the snow.

### **Blessing**

Setting aside our fears and worries, we go,  
**as God's people carrying peace, hope and joy with us  
to remind us that God is as close as the heartbeat.**

Setting aside our prejudices and assumptions, we go,  
**as Jesus' followers, to invite the forgotten into community,  
to embrace the lonely as our sisters and brothers.**

Setting aside our expectations and demands, let us go.  
**We will go as those blessed by the Spirit,  
to share with others the water from the deep well of grace.  
Amen.**

### **Benediction Hymn: MV 220 *Hope Shines as the Solitary Star, vs. 3***

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.

### **Postlude**

---

All **Prayers and Responses** (except as otherwise noted), as well as the paraphrase of the Luke reading, come from *Seasons of the Spirit, Fusion*. Advent Year C. ©2021 Wood Lake Books Inc.

**Blessing** written by Thom M. Shuman. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com> © 2018

Thank you to: Graham and Debby Laporte for their musical leadership; Maureen McGuiness for reading the scripture; Sue Nykilchuk and Jen Bruneau for lighting the Advent candle today and for their collaboration, in putting together today's worship.

---