

WORSHIP AT ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH
December 19, 2021 – 4th Sunday of Advent, LOVE

Welcome to Worship

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

Email sketchingalong4@gmail.com to get the Zoom link.

Prelude

Opening Hymn: VU 9 People Look East, vv. 1, 4, & 5

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.

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 & Announcements

This journey of Advent continues here at St. Andrew's United Church, this fourth week – the traditional theme, LOVE.

Welcome to worship. I'd love it if you could say hello, let us know where you are joining from. Are you new? Let us know who is worshiping today if you are on live stream. Today we have a full slate of music leaders, all keeping distanced within bubbles – Deb and Ralph McIntosh, Anne Pile and Leslie King. We have not seen Leslie for a long time, it is great to have you back. We are so grateful for the blessing of music in our worship. We also have Rhodine White and her granddaughter Amelia. You may remember Amelia from numerous times where she has helped to lead worship.

We also have a Virtual Fellowship time tonight at 7. As always, you can get your Zoom link to join that time of connecting by sending an email to Diane, that email address will be part of the credits after this worship

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.

[lights 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

We begin significant gatherings in the life of St. Andrew's United Church by giving thanks for the land we are blessed with. These lands have been cared for and inhabited by many First Nations people for millennia. Here we are on land where the Robinson Huron Treaty was made in 1850, but governments and churches have not honored our part in that Treaty. We particularly

acknowledge the Wahnapiatae First Nation and the Atikemeksheng Anishnawbek, on whose traditional territory we gather. Thankful for the stewardship of this land by Indigenous and Metis peoples, may we all live in peace and friendship, honouring the treaties, seeking justice, and walking together in the spirit of reconciliation.

Advent Candle Lighting (*Rhodine & Amelia White*)

God is bringing change to our world. Are you ready to take part?

We have come to work for justice, to work for right relations with our neighbours and our earth.

God is bringing change to our world. Are you ready to take part?

We seek God's surprising love at every corner, to help God in bringing a new Realm, a new order on earth.

1: For the child leaping in Mary's womb;

2: for the labour required by you and by me to bring peace,
we light this candle.

1: For generation after generation yearning for blessing;

2: for the will to imagine that, yes, a new world order is possible,
we light this candle.

1: For the fullness of the Holy Spirit;

2: for the work of birth we share at Christmas,
we light this candle.

[Light the fourth candle]

Hymn: VU 7 *Hope is a Star, vs. 4*

Love is a flame that burns in our heart,
Jesus has come and will never depart.

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.

Opening Prayer

Let us pray: Loving God, as the prophet Mary tells us, you sent Jesus into the world to turn things upside down and right side up. As we get ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus help us to remember the message of Jesus: to work for justice and fairness, to share your love with all people, and to make your vision, your kin-dom, come here on earth. Now we pray as Jesus taught...

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: VU 38 *Angels We Have Heard on High, vs. 1*

1. Angels we have heard on high sweetly singing o'er the plains,
and the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strains.

Gloria, in excelsis Deo! Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Time Up Front

Mary and Elizabeth are each going to have a baby and they are very excited to share this good news with each other. Mary sings a song about the wonderful things that God is doing in the world, and she believes that her baby will be a part of those wonderful changes. Ask the children:

“If you were to write a song about some wonderful changes you would like God to bring into the world, what sort of things would you include?”

Dave’s example:

Silent Night, Holy night,
People snuggle, in their tents.
Winter cold, surrounding them
Peace be with you, our prayers too.
Peace be you, beautiful one.
Peace be you, beautiful one.

Draw pictures or write words to record their responses. Then discuss the question, “How could you be part of helping God make that happen?” Perhaps you (or a musician in the congregation) could work the children’s responses into a song for Christmas Eve, using a familiar carol tune!

This is a repeat after me prayer:

God, show us your dream for this world.
Show us how to help you make it happen:
People who are sad given joy.
People who are hungry given food.
People who are lonely welcomed to your banquet of many.
Amen.

Hymn: VU 38 *Angels We Have Heard on High, vs. 3*

3. Come to Bethlehem and see Christ whose birth the angels sing;
come, adore on bended knee Christ, the Lord, the newborn King.
Gloria, in excelsis Deo! Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Scripture Reading (*Jacqueline Warner-Smith*)

Mary Remembers – Based on Luke 1:39–55

As we prepare for Christmas birth, we hear a story we hear every year at this time, but told in a different way. Let us listen for how, again, God’s vision includes surprising heroes, like an unmarried, ordinary, girl living in a rather unremarkable town.

Pilgrims and merchants often stayed overnight in Bethlehem when they were on their way to Egypt. But it was never crowded like this. Camels and donkeys, dogs and wagons clogged the narrow roads that led into town. People were everywhere. Mary and Joseph looked around. It had been a long and tiring journey from their home in Nazareth, and now what were they to do? Where would they stay? Mary would soon have a baby.

Mary decided to sit on a wooden bench and wait while Joseph went from house to house looking for a room where they might stay. While Mary waited, she thought back to the very first moment the angel Gabriel appeared and announced to her that she would have a baby. What a surprise that was! Not long after, she left the city of Nazareth and travelled south to a town in the hill country of Judea. Elizabeth, a relative, was having a special baby, too.

Mary remembered calling out to Elizabeth when she neared her home. And she could still remember Elizabeth’s words and actions when she opened the door and saw her. “Mary,” she cried and hugged her at the same time. “It is so good to see you. I am filled with such joy! I just felt my baby inside me move. It is almost as if the baby had heard your call. God has blessed you. And you are going to have a very special baby.”

A thin ray of moonlight crept across Mary’s face as she shifted on the bench. Memories of her time with Elizabeth brought a smile to her face. For three months, they had shared stories, sang songs, prayed together, and prepared for the birth of their babies. Tears of joy ran down Mary’s face as she hummed the song she so often sang while they sat in the garden...

With all my heart, I praise God. I am so happy! For God has blessed me and done great things for me. How good and wonderful is God! What God has done for me will never be forgotten. Holy is God's name. God feeds the hungry and helps the poor. God remembers our people, our families, our friends. God's promises live in us today. How good and wonderful is God!

"Yes," thought Mary, "I am blessed for sure." And she raised her head to see a loving Joseph coming toward her. She could see in his eyes that it was okay. Soon her baby would be born – her song would have a place in the world.

Let us pray: O God, how amazed we are by your surprising, and revolutionary ways. Open our hearts this Christmas season to sing with Elizabeth and Mary your song of justice and love to all the world. Amen.

Anthem: VU 8 Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

Message:

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

Hymn: MV 120 My Soul Cries Out, vv. 1 & 3

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.

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.

Offering Our Gifts to God

It is the season of Advent, the season of gifts and giving. With love in our hearts, let us worship God with our offerings as we anticipate in wonder the birth of the Christ child.

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 537 *Your Work, O God, Needs Many Hands*

1. Your work, O God, needs many hands to help you everywhere, and some there are who cannot serve unless our gifts we share.
2. Because we love you and your work, our offering now we make: be pleased to use it as your own, we ask for Jesus' sake.

Offering Prayer

Let us pray: In these moments, God who comes, remind us of those who are yearning to be lifted to their feet, those who hunger for hope, those who look for peace, and may our gifts be used to serve them. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Prayers of the Community

God, we believe that you are birthing something new and powerful in us, in our world. Fill us with kindness and compassion. Give us persistence and vision to search you out, especially in the least likely of places as you are found often in Bible stories.

Fill Creation, fill us your expectant children, with hope! May peace be born among us this season, even as the signs we see on the news indicate that peace is out of reach. As we watch, and grieve the losses in our lives and world, inspire us to get our hands dirty, to tend your earthly garden, to care for your children near and far.

Be born among us as joy;
fill this holy place of St. Andrew's
with singing and dancing
as we serve in your way.
Fill your people with joy!
God birthing love,
fill our days with story and memory.
Open us once more to new beginnings
and to as many possibilities as there are stars in the sky.
Fill our lives with love. Amen.

We offer this day all that we are
and all that we will be
(slowly lift your hands).

We receive God's abundance
born in Jesus, God's child
(bring hands to chest).

We give back to God
as we see Christ in all God's children
(raise hands up again).
Amen.

Closing Hymn: VU 48 *Hark! the Herald Angels Sing, vv. 1 & 3*

1. Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King,
peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies;
with the angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King."

3. Hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,
born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

Blessing

I invite you to watch and imitate my actions as Holy Love commissions us to be God's Good News in the coming week.

Wrap yourself in your arms.
Let us feel our warmth – that life within us;
feel our chest fill with air as we breathe –
that life within us;
feel our heartbeat softly thudding – life within you.

Let us go now into the world,
knowing the life God has placed within us.
It is a reason for hope:
God's promise is alive in each of us.

God's love is breathing in you and me,
the world changing with each breath we take.

Let us go, and be witnesses to Holy Love this coming week,
that our world and all of us may be turned upside down –
and right-side up.

Amen.

Benediction Hymn: MV 220 Hope Shines as the Solitary Star, vs. 4

Love 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**, unless 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.

Offering Prayer by Thom Shuman. © 2018 Thom M. Shuman, lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com

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