

ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH

December 5, 2021 – 2nd Sunday of Advent, Sacrament of Communion

Welcome to Worship

Join us for a Zoom Virtual Coffee Time at 7:00 p.m. Sunday, November 8th.

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

Prelude

Hymn: VU 18 *There's a Voice in the Wilderness, vv. 1, 2, & 4*

1. There's a voice in the wilderness crying, a call from the ways untrod:
prepare in the desert a highway, a highway for our God!
The valleys shall be exalted, the lofty hills brought low;
make straight all the crooked places where God, our God, may go!

2. O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up to the heights and sing!
Proclaim to a desolate people the coming of their King.
Like the flowers of the field they perish, like grass our works decay;
the power and pomp of nations shall pass, like a dream, away.

4. There's a voice in the wilderness crying, a call from the ways untrod:
prepare in the desert a highway, a highway for our God!
The valleys shall be exalted, the lofty hills brought low;
make straight all the crooked places where God, our God, may go!

Welcome and Announcements

Good morning, and welcome to our worship for the Second Sunday of Advent. We are so grateful to have you worshipping with us, whether you are in physically in the sanctuary, or joining via the virtual sanctuary. We are one in Christ.

Welcome to our musician today, Tracey LeGrand. Thank you to Jeannine Zadow for setting up the Communion elements. Also, thank you to our readers, Tracey, Sophia, and Benjamin.

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. 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.

For online congregation: gather Communion elements and type first name only in the comments box for Prayers of the Community.

Let us worship [*silent moment*]

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

Long before European settlers immigrated to this land, many nations of people already lived on the land, cared for it. We recognize them as the First Nations, Today, here at St Andrew's, we are worshipping on the traditional territories both of the Wahnapiitae First Nation and the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek. Whose traditional territory are you worshipping on today? We recognize the long history of our First Nations and Métis peoples in Ontario, we give thanks for their stewardship of the land throughout the ages. Let us, all of us, Treaty people, commit ourselves anew to the work of healing, justice and reconciliation.

Inviting Holy Light

As we prepare for worship, we breathe. In... Out.

Creator, Sustainer, Spirit, be with us, welcome us into community. Open our hearts to welcome in all who seek. Open our minds to radical transformation this Advent.

We invite Holy Light as we prepare for worship. *[Dave lights candle]*

Call to Worship/Advent Candle Lighting

We gather, longing for gentleness among all:

peace is the home we seek.

We gather, longing for healing where there has been harm:

peace is the home we seek.

We gather, longing for peace in our homes and around the world:

God is the home we seek.

1: For the robe of righteousness we are certain does not fit;

2: for the messengers and prophets encouraging us to prepare,

we light this candle.

1: For our tired feet exhausted by pacing up and down, back and forth;

2: for the landscape that has already changed,

we light this candle.

1: For the refining and purifying of what could be;

2: for the acceptance we now feel that things are not as they should be,

we light this candle.

[The second candle is lit.]

Opening Prayer for Grace

Let us pray:

For times when greed overtakes compassion; when fear overtakes reason we silently ponder these moments in our lives. *(silence)* God,

turn our hearts in wonder, to you.

When despair overtakes hope and when hatred overtakes understanding, *(silence)* God,

turn our hearts in wonder, to you.

When indifference overtakes concern; when deception overtakes truth, *(silence)* God,

Turn our hearts to wonder, to you.

Words of Assurance

God's grace and peace is in that still, small voice, calling to our hearts at all times and in all places. We say, "Thank you God."

Hymn: VU 7 *Hope is a Star, vs. 2*

Peace is a ribbon that circles the earth,
giving a promise of safety and worth.

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.

Scripture Reading (*Le Grands*)

Video Link: <https://youtu.be/PGVY2oGZms0>

Singing in the Temple, Shouting in the Wild

A paraphrase based on Luke 1:68–79 and Luke 3:1–6

Zechariah knew what was happening, but it was still kind of hard to believe. After spending years serving as a priest in the temple, one day an angel showed up out of nowhere to deliver a message:

“Don’t be afraid, Zechariah,” the angel said. “You have waited a long time, and finally your wife Elizabeth is going to have a baby. But he won’t be just any baby. His name should be John, and he will help turn people back to God and to help them love each other better.”

Zechariah didn’t believe it. “How will I know you’re telling the truth?”

The angel was annoyed. “You will know because I am a messenger sent from God to give you good news. But because you didn’t listen to me, until the baby is born, you won’t be able to talk.”

And so it was. Zechariah hadn’t said a word since that day. And now at long last, Elizabeth had a baby, and it was time to choose a name. The relatives tried to name the baby after Zechariah, but Elizabeth insisted his name was John. When they turned to see what Zechariah thought, he wrote out the same words Elizabeth had spoken, “His name is John.”

And then suddenly, Zechariah felt something open up in his mouth. His tongue felt looser, freer. And after all these months of silence, Zechariah felt the Holy Spirit welling up inside of him, and in a voice that was clear and true, Zechariah started to sing:

“Blessed be our God, who smiles, and we are saved. God has raised up someone to save us, someone from the family of David.

Just as God’s messengers have told us, we shall all be saved. God has compassion; God keeps promises, God keeps us safe; God draws us close. And we will serve God for all of our days.

And you, child, will be one who speaks the words of God. You will go ahead of God. You will prepare the way. You will teach us how God’s forgiveness can heal...

The child was named John, and he grew. And grew. And grew, until he was a grown man, who lived in the part of the land that nobody had yet tamed.

All around the river, John shouted, “Someone will come shouting in the wild, ‘Prepare the way of God! Make crooked paths straight, make valleys rise up, make mountains flat, make the rough ways smooth. For everyone, everyone, everyone will get to see the healing that comes with the forgiveness of God.’”

The father sang in the temple. The son shouted in the wild. But no matter who they were listening to, the people could still hear God’s voice!

Let us pray: Wonderful are you, God, for the gifts of children and future – and for the time you entrust into our hands to be stewards of these gifts. Help us to understand your call to each of us today. May we speak well, in word and deed, about your saving grace for us, and may we inspire others to hear your call, to feel your grace too. Amen.

Message: “Peace, not Control”

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

Minute for Mission: Building Bridges of Peace (Le Grands) – A video is shown first

December is one of the holiest months of the year. Along with Christmas, there's the Jewish festival of Hanukkah, winter solstice rituals, as well as spiritually significant days for Buddhists, Muslims, and Zoroastrians. That makes this month a good one to remember what unites us.

And it's important we do. In October, Global Affairs Canada stated that, worldwide, the right to practice, choose, and change one's religion or belief is increasingly under attack.

Chaplain John Dowds said in this trailer: "I think we have a great lack of understanding of other faith traditions. Lack of understanding breeds contempt and fear. The more we understand and the more we talk, there's a greater opportunity to break down some of the walls of fear."

The film is produced by the Edmonton Interfaith Centre for Education and Action, a Mission & Service partner. Your gifts through Mission & Service support the centre—the first of its kind in Canada—to hold interfaith celebrations, dialogues, and learning events.

To quote an Indigenous Elder, "Look at my veins, they're blue... when we don't share who we are as individuals, the different cultures, it creates fears... All of us have blue veins. That tells me we're all royalty. We're all equal."

Thank you for your generosity through Mission & Service. Your gifts support organizations that remind us there's more that unites us than divides.

Offering Moment

Now may our God prepare us to serve our sisters and brothers. We will devote ourselves to walking with others to Bethlehem. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ steer us into all the places we do not want to go. We will throw ourselves into the mission of feeding the hungry, into the privilege of learning from the poor. Now may the Holy Spirit move us to increase in love for others. We will take up the cause of justice in every corner of our lives, we will help to bring the kingdom of hope near to everyone around us.

Dedication Hymn: VU 468 Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ, vv. 1 & 3

1. Let us talents and tongues employ,
reaching out with a shout of joy:
bread is broken, the wine is poured,
Christ is spoken and seen and heard.

Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,
pass the Word around: loaves abound!
Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,
pass the Word around: loaves abound!

3. Jesus calls us in, sends us out,
bearing fruit in a world of doubt,
gives us love to tell, bread to share:
Go (Immanuel) everywhere!

Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,
pass the Word around: loaves abound!
Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,
pass the Word around: loaves abound!

Dedication Prayer

God of mercy, when what we offer seems small, help us remember we are part of something larger. Help us remember that every gesture of kindness magnifies holy love's reach. Amen.

Sacrament of Communion

As we come to this table, we are reminded that this is the table of Jesus Christ, a banquet prepared for everyone. All who seek to be nourished and sustained in the journey of faith, all who seek wholeness and compassionate paths to peace and justice, are welcome here.

God be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift our hearts in prayer.

Let us give thanks to God.

It is good to give God thanks and praise.

Let us pray:

Blessed are you, Breath of peace, Giver of all life,

Source of love that knows no boundaries.

Your song of wisdom rang out before the world began;

throughout the ages, your song of liberation has infused us

with your hope for a world where:

those considered last and least are first and most;

violence is overcome by the power of your ancient love; and,

all siblings work together for peace.

You bring our longings to birth, and send prophets to awaken us
to your approaching Advent among us.

We thank you for those who, like Mary,

have the strength and courage

to give birth to your love in the world;

for those who, like the shepherds,

dare to seek out the Child of Bethlehem;

for those who, like the wise ones,

actively challenge violent and oppressive powers.

We praise you that your everlasting light is shown to us

in womb and tomb,

in cradle and cross,

in tenderness and compassion.

We join in the Advent prayer of all your people,

“O come, Emmanuel.”

And, as we wait and watch for your coming among us,

we proclaim your goodness.

Prayers of Community

At this time, we remember all those with whom you call us share your feast.

We pray for all who are in sorrow or in pain...

all who are ill or alone...

all who are close to our hearts...

all our sisters who live with fear, oppression, or hunger...

all whose lives have been blighted by violence, racism, or poverty...

for all whom the world counts as last and least.

We pray for the church and its many ministries, for nations as they strive for peace and justice.

We remember the tragic killing of 14 women in Montreal on December 6, 1989 – we pray for all

women and girls who live in violent situations, who face daily barriers to equity. We pray for all people who are marginalized, because of culture, the colour of their skin, gender orientation. for an end to violence against women.

In silence we pray for the situations, the individuals, for whom we are concerned today. *[silence]*

Let us pray now, with the words Jesus taught us, saying...

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.

God of hope, make this bread the means of our rebuilding,
this wine the medium of our transformation,
this table the foundation of our renewal,
and this community the place of our rebirth. Amen.

At this time, we remember Jesus, who on the night before he died,
took a loaf of bread, gave you thanks, broke it, and said,
"Take and eat; whenever you do this, remember me."
Likewise, after supper, he took the cup, saying,
"This is the new covenant; remember me."

Gracious God, Breath of peace, Source of love, we pray for your Spirit.

Make us, while many, one.

Make us, though broken, whole.

Make us, despite death, alive.

And so we pray:

Come, Holy Spirit, come.

The body of Christ, (Breaks bread)
the Bread of life.

The lifeblood of Christ, (Pours cup)
the cup of blessing.

Let us eat and drink together for our strengthening in the faith,
and for the sake of the world. Join in the banquet, for all is ready.

The bread broken, (Dave and all take bread)
and the cup poured, (Dave and all drink)

Prayer After Communion

We thank you, God, for breaking into our world and pouring into our lives and our experiences. We thank you, God, for this meal of thanksgiving and the stories of love, grace, and hope that it tells. Amen.

Closing Hymn: VU 47 Still, Still, Still

1. Still, still, still: the night is calm and still.

The Christ-child in his crib lies sleeping,
angels round him watch are keeping.

Still, still, still: the night is calm and still.

2. Sleep, sleep, sleep: sweet Jesus, softly sleep,
while Mary sings and gently holds you,
safely in her arms enfolds you.
Sleep, sleep, sleep: sweet Jesus softly sleep.

3. Joy, joy, joy; glad tidings of great joy!
For through God's holy incarnation
Christ is born for our salvation.
Joy, joy, joy: glad tidings of great joy!

Blessing

God sends us now to be messengers of this holy season.

We go to share God's grace in the shadowed places of our world.

Jesus sends us as messengers of his gospel.

**We go to share the good news of justice;
in the way we treat each person we meet,
loving our neighbours who are like us,
and especially those who are utterly unlike us.**

The Spirit sends us as messengers of peace.

**We go to share the gifts of hope and reconciliation
which have been placed in our hearts. Amen**

Blessing Hymn: MV 220 Hope Shines as the Solitary Star

Peace 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 indicated, adapted from *Seasons of the Spirit, Fusion*.
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