

Sudbury Shared Worship, Boxing Day 2021

A service pre-recorded with contributions from Copper Cliff, Trinity (Lively), St. Peter's, St. Andrews (Sudbury), St. Mark's, Grace, All People's, St. Stephen's on the Hill, St. James in the Valley, Trinity (Capreol), Larchwood Memorial and St. John's United Churches. This worship celebrates our shared Mission & Service in the United Church of Canada, and is adapted from original material by Trisha Elliott, Stewardship and Gifts Officer, United Church of Canada. We are grateful to editor Mary Maroyos for her time and talents in producing the video of this worship, available on St. Mark's United Church YouTube channel:

<https://youtu.be/DnvYWhook3A>

Prelude: "Like a River Glorious"

Musician: Janet Evans, Copper Cliff United Church

Welcome and Acknowledgment of Traditional Territory

Heather Mitchell, St. Stephen's on the Hill United Church

Welcome to the Sudbury Shared Worship Service for Boxing Day, December 26, 2021. This service is a joint project of the Greater Sudbury United Churches. You will see and hear many familiar faces and voices from ten local United Churches: St. James in the Valley, Grace United, Trinity (Capreol), and Trinity (Lively), All Peoples, Onaping Falls, St. Mark's, St. Stephen's on the Hill, St. Peter's, and St. Andrew's. We thank all participants for their contribution.

The lands where we gather today across this region have been places of gathering for First Nations Peoples, as they camped and traveled across the land for generations beyond our knowing. Before people arrived from across the seas, these nations lived, loved, raised children and made a living. They lived in harmony with all that the Creator had made. We recognize these traditional sojourners in this land. We give thanks for them, and for the land on which we gather today. We acknowledge that our settler history has come at a great cost to the Indigenous community and we commit ourselves to be partners in healing and reconciliation.

Dave Chuipka from St. James in the Valley will now call us to worship.

Call to Worship (responsive)

Pastor Dave Chuipka, St. James in the Valley

One: We gather to once again hear the angels announce the good news of Jesus' birth

All: To ponder the wonder of Jesus as Mary did when she held her child

One: To glorify God as the shepherds did when they saw love lying in a manger

All: To remember that Jesus' love was an out-of-the-box kind of love.

One: On that first Christmas, the prophets knew Jesus would grow to love without limits

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All: caring for strangers and friends alike

One: instructing followers to love their neighbours.

All: When Jesus said “Love your neighbour,” he meant everyone.

One: His love was so profound, that even from the very first day, the angels couldn't keep from singing.

All: We've been singing along with the chorus of angels ever since.

One: Glory! Hallelujah! Christ is born!

Hymn

Voices United 36 “Angels, from the Realms of Glory” *St. Peter's United Church*

1. Angels, from the realms of glory,
wing your flight o'er all the earth;
ye, who sang creation's story,
now proclaim Messiah's birth:
come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the new-born King.

2. Shepherds in the field abiding,
watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing,
yonder shines the infant Light:
come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the new-born King.

3. Sages, leave your contemplations;
brighter visions beam afar;
seek the great desire of nations;
ye have seen his natal star:
come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the new-born King.

4. Saints before the altar bending,
watching long in hope and fear,
suddenly the Lord, descending,
in his temple shall appear:
come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the new-born King.

Prayer of Approach (in unison)

Pastor David Chuipka, St. James in the Valley

O God, Christmas may be over but the celebration of all that Jesus means for us has just begun. Over 2,000 years ago, hope, peace, joy, and love came to light in the birth of the Christ child; by the fire of Jesus' spirit, hearts like ours have been warmed ever since. And still today, we pray that love burns strong within us such that friends and strangers find comfort and warmth by its glow. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

Children's Time

Rev. Erin Todd

Hi everybody! It's Reverend Erin here from Grace United Church and I'm so happy to be here with you for our Sudbury Churches virtual worship experience.

So I have a question for you. What day is today? It's the day after Christmas, right? We've opened a lot of presents, we've had a lot of fun, and probably eaten a lot of food. Maybe we're just having a lazy day today, lying around in our pajamas, watching tv and relaxing.

Today is the day after Christmas, but you know – today is also a special day, and has a special name all of its own. Today is Boxing Day.

When we think of Boxing Day, we might think of boxing – like the sport of boxing. But Boxing Day has nothing to do 'boxing'. In fact, nobodies really sure why Boxing Day came to be called that. Some people think it has to do with churches a long time ago in history. Churches would put boxes outside of their doors and invited people to put money in the box, and the money was given to people who maybe didn't have enough money – poor people or people that were in need. Other people think that once upon a time, rich people had servants in their home, people who worked for them in their home. Those servants would have to work on Christmas Day, right? So the people that employed those servants would give them the day off the next day and would give them a box full of presents and food and special things to show their appreciation to their servants for being such hard working helpers all year.

So those are some ideas about maybe where the word, "Boxing Day" came from

But let me ask you this: What was the best gift you got for Christmas yesterday? Was it something you were expecting? Maybe something that was on your wish list? Was it a surprise gift? Something you weren't expecting? Did you maybe get some gifts that weren't quite what you were hoping for or wanting?

One thing's for sure: on Christmas, we tend to spend a lot of time thinking about what we're getting, right? The gifts we're receiving. But Boxing Day can be a great time for us to think

about what we can give. The gifts that we have to give to the people we love, to the people in our community, and to the people all around the world.

I have a little activity you can do on Boxing Day if you have a little bit of time. You see that I have a special Christmas box. You probably got a lot of boxes like this yesterday. And in my special Christmas box, there is... well... nothing! Because this isn't actually a Christmas box, it's a Boxing Day box. And what I'm going to do is put things in this box – things that I want to give in the year to come. Those things don't have to be *things*, especially if we're little people, we might not have a lot of money to give, or we might feel that we don't have the kind of gifts that grown ups can give. But there's a lot that *anybody* can give.

Here are some things that I'm going to put in my Boxing Day box. Things like 'being kind'. That's a real gift we can give. Or how about 'listening'? You know lots of people don't feel like anybody listens to them, and sometimes if we can just sit and listen to somebody talk about their life or share their problems, that can be a real gift.

How about, 'Smiling at people'? You know sometimes, especially after Christmas, people start to feel a little bit blue. And these days, with the Corona Virus, people maybe feel even a little bit more blue than they usually would this time of year. So just smiling at people can be such a gift.

How about 'being a friend'? Sometimes when people feel really lonely or like they don't have any friends, if we just be that person that reaches out and says, "Hey, I'll be your friend, I'll hang around with you, I'll spend time with you," that can be the best gift you can give somebody.

And finally, what about "Sharing"? We all have things that we can share. It might be our money, it might be our time, it might be our talents. If we all share our gifts, and we all think about filling our Boxing Day box with all kinds of things to give to the world, then not only will we be giving a gift, but we'll be being a gift. And that's just what Jesus called us to be.

Reading: Proverbs 3:21–28

Read by Barb McPhail, St. Stephen's on the Hill United Church

The book of Proverbs includes wise sayings about what matters most in life. Think of it as the elder in your family whispering a culmination of the most important things they have learned in their life to you. In this short excerpt from the third chapter, verses 21–28, the writer speaks of wisdom and prudence and doing good when we have the power to do it. Listen to the Spirit speak to you through these wise words:

My child, do not let these escape from your sight: keep sound wisdom and prudence, and they will be life for your soul and adornment for your neck. Then you will walk on your way securely and your foot will not stumble. If you sit down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. Do not be afraid of sudden panic, or of the

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storm that strikes the wicked; for the Lord will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught. Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. Do not say to your neighbor, “Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it”—when you have it with you.

Cosmic Hymn of Praise: Psalm 148

Introduced by Alison Hardie, Trinity United Church (Capreol)

Psalm 148 is all about praise. It’s not just about how humanity praises God—it’s about how God is praised throughout the cosmos. The first verses talk about how the angels, stars, and lights of the heavens praise God. Then, the psalm focuses on how the earth, including the mountains, trees, and animals, glorify God. Finally, it concludes with us, God’s people. From the highest heavens to earthly creatures, when God is present, creation sings “Glory be to God on high.”

Sound familiar? You are right, the angels sang “Glory to God in the highest heaven” when Jesus was born, and just like the heavens proclaimed God in Psalm 148, in Matthew’s account of Jesus’ birth a star leads seekers to the stable. The idea is that when God is present, every element of the cosmos offers praise.

Let’s sing together:

Cosmic Hymn of Praise (Psalm 148)

Sung by Trinity United Church choir, pianist Faye Moffatt

Words and music © 2001 Michael Mangan Litmus Productions

Sun and moon, praise God
Shining stars, praise God
Highest Heaven, praise God
Let all creation sing

*Alleluia! Lift your voices!
Join creation’s cosmic hymn of praise.*

All the earth, praise God
Deepest oceans, praise God
Wind and fire, praise God,
Let all creation sing. *Chorus*

Hills and mountains, praise God
Rivers, forests, praise God
Living creatures, praise God
Let all creation sing. *Chorus*

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Every adult, praise God
 Little children, praise God
 Wise elders, praise God
 Let all creation sing. *Chorus*

Ev'ry nation, praise God
 Mighty rulers, praise God
 Lowly people, praise God
 Let all creation sing. *Chorus*

Reading: Luke 2:8–20

Donna Mese, St. Andrew's United Church (Sudbury)

Listen to the Christmas story from the gospel of Luke as though I'm reading it to you for the first time. You may even want to close your eyes and visualize the scene. Note the variety of ways characters in the story respond to the good news. Put yourself in their shoes. What would your response be? May God bless us with insight as we listen to a reading from our sacred scripture:

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Reflection Series: Love Out of the Box

Rev. Dave Le Grand, St. Andrew's United Church (Sudbury)

Thank you, Donna, for bringing that message. We are happy to be here on behalf of St. Andrew's in this collective worship for December 26.

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I'm wondering what you are doing on this Boxing Day. Perhaps it's a little different from last year. For some of us, maybe, a little more gathering – more hugs and kisses. But I bet we long for more, those big gatherings again, someday. All of us are probably eating lots of leftover turkey and we're probably cleaning up in the Christmas Day aftermath.

I'm thinking about those shepherds who visited Jesus' family and shared the news that the angels had given them. News that this baby would bring great joy and wonderful things. We're told that Mary, her response was that she "treasured" their words and "pondered" them in her heart. In other words, she grew quiet and she was reflective.

Now the shepherds, they had a bit of a different response, equally powerful, because we are told that they went out into the fields and they glorified and praised God.

So isn't that interesting? Different responses: treasuring, pondering, glorifying, praising. All appropriate responses to getting profound news.

In Matthew's version of this story, we think about the wise ones. What a great story, where people from an altogether different culture, different religious backgrounds make this grand journey and they come bringing gifts. Their response to hearing the news of Jesus' birth is to offer a gift that symbolizes what Jesus would become, not just for them, but for many.

So Boxing Day, I suggest, is a good day for us to treasure the Christmas story that we heard yet again this past year. It's time to ponder the call that Christmas places on you and me. It is a good day for glorifying and praising. It's a great day to contemplate how we can bring generosity into the New Year. Amen.

Hymn: VU 55 "In the Bleak Midwinter," verse 4

St. Andrew's United Church (Sudbury) choir

What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man, I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give him – give my heart.

Reflection

Hymn: VU 58 "Infant Holy, Infant Lowly," verse 1

James and Alison Warner Smith, duet; St. Andrew's United (Sudbury)

Infant holy; infant lowly; for his bed a cattle stall,
oxen lowing, little knowing Christ the babe is Lord of all.
Swift are winging angels singing, Noels ringing, tidings bringing;
Christ the babe is born for all. Christ the babe is born for all!

Reflection

Leona Moote, Grace United

Christ—the greatest gift of all—was born for all. He made that clear in the life he would grow up to lead. In his life, he fulfilled the angels' promise that he would bring "good news of great joy for all the people." Notice the scripture doesn't say "some of the people." It says "all of the people." Just because someone lives next to us doesn't mean we should care more for them than we do someone who lives a block, a city, or a country away. God calls us to love our neighbour as ourselves. When Jesus was asked who our neighbour is, he essentially said everyone.

Our collective Mission & Service strives to accomplish three things: to help transform and save lives, inspire meaning and purpose, and build a better world. As Christ followers, we aren't only interested in how our neighbours who are living down the street are doing—we are called to care for the whole human family, including those living across Canada and around the world. As a United Church, we share our resources so we can have a bigger impact than any one of our churches could have alone. After we sing, we are going to hear the story of a man called David. His experience illustrates just how important it is that our generosity isn't constrained by artificial borders of geography or even judgment.

Hymn: VU 64 "O Little Town of Bethlehem," verse 4

St. Andrew's United (Sudbury) choir

O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin, and enter in; be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell,
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel.

Reflection

Maureen Masecar, St. Peter's United Church

If anyone needs to hear great, glad tidings, it's people like David who experience Christmas as one of the loneliest times of year.

"Ten years ago, my wife and I were living our dream, running a successful catering business in Vancouver. But that was before a drunk driver took my wife's life," says David.

And that was just the beginning. "The heartbreak was still fresh for me when, six weeks later, a work accident claimed the life of my 23-year-old son. In the blink of an eye, he was gone. A few months later, I got a call that my daughter's car had veered from the road. By the time she was found, she'd frozen to death."

In five months, David's entire family was gone, and he turned to substances to numb the pain.

"My rock-bottom came when I was arrested for carrying drugs. In jail, I had a lot of time to think about the man I wanted to become. I knew I needed to make some huge changes if I wanted to be happy again and become the man my beloved wife and kids knew me to be," he says.

The Bissell Centre—supported through your Mission & Service gifts—was the first place David went to when he was released. "The staff greeted me with kindness. Instead of judging me, they welcomed me and handed me a warm plate of food. The staff told me about their mental health and housing support programs, and I was blown away. For the first time, I realized that I didn't have to rebuild my life alone," he says.

Your generosity through Mission & Service helps people like David start over. In their most painful hour, it is one of the ways you and I tell them that they matter to us and they matter to God. Is there any better gift than to let someone know they are valued and loved just as they are?

Hymn: VU 68 "All Poor Ones and Humble"

St. Peter's United Church choir; Ashton Dunk, piano

All poor ones and humble and all those who stumble,
 come hastening; and feel not afraid;
 for Jesus, our treasure, with love past all measure,
 in lowly poor manger was laid.
 Though wise men who found him laid rich gifts around him,
 yet oxen they gave him their hay,
 and Jesus in beauty accepted their duty, contented in manger he lay.
 Then haste us 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.

Reflection

Rev. Susan Peverley, Onaping Falls Pastoral Charge (Larchwood Memorial, Dowling and St. John's United, Levack)

What do you typically do on Boxing Day? Do you fall into a turkey coma? Hit the sales? Tidy up the aftermath of company and presents?

What are your memories of Boxing Days past?

Through my family, Boxing Day was a day of celebration, with has become a day of reflection. You see, my father – our father – was born on December 26, 100 years ago. He died twenty seven years ago. But it is interesting listening to my siblings' memories of Boxing Day and Dad's birthday. My sister remembers that even though we made him open his birthday presents on Christmas morning, he always had his favourite cake for his birthday on his birthday: carrot cake with cream cheese icing. My brother remember skiing – especially going skiing with Dad on his seventieth birthday. Family time, travelling to our grandmother's. In her early years, we would travel from Englehart to North Bay Christmas Day evening. We travelled by train, sharing the passenger car with priests in training, returning to seminary after travelling north to provide Christmas Eve and Christmas Day masses in smaller, remote communities.

Now, in the past number of years, I reflect on Advent and Christmas on December 26th. My mind wanders as it will, wondering how many hats and mitts and socks we have gathered to go to community outreach services. How many cards have been sold to support the food bank? How many food and beverage gift cards have been purchased to distribute in the downtown core of Sudbury? Have we – my congregations – come close to reaching our Mission & Service goals?

Mission & Service has taken a big hit this year financially. My congregations decided that this year, instead of the typical White Gift Sunday that we would ask for donations to Mission & Service on White Gift Sunday. How well did we do?

When we reflect on our past and all of those memories that we hold precious, let us also think about what we can do to make a difference in our world, close to home and farther away. I know that my dad reached out to help others in many ways. I can, too. So can each of you. If you already give to Mission & Service and local mission efforts, you're doing so much for so many people. Right now, your generosity is restoring dignity; putting food on a table and a roof over a head; letting someone know they aren't alone; and providing education, agricultural training, and life-saving advocacy. For some, your generosity means a second chance at life.

Through your gifts, you are bringing great joy.

Treasure that thought today. Treasure knowing that you are making a difference. On this day that has somehow morphed into becoming about getting a deal, you are giving the best gift of all—compassion.

May God bless us with wisdom to appreciate all that we have and all that we have to give – all that's precious in our lives. Like Mary, the shepherds, the magi, and Jesus himself, let's go into the New Year treasuring, pondering, glorifying, praising, and giving. Let's take love out of any those boxes we put her in. Amen.

Hymn: VU 70 “There’s a Star in the East”*Sung by Shannon Duffus*

There’s a star in the East on Christmas morn,
 Rise up, shepherd, and follow;
 It will lead to the place where the Christ was born;
 Rise up, shepherd, and follow.
*Follow, follow, rise up, shepherd, and follow,
 Follow the Star of Bethlehem,
 Rise up, shepherd, and follow.*

If you take good heed to the angel's words,
 Rise up, shepherd, and follow,
 You'll forget your flocks, you'll forget your herds;
 Rise up, shepherd, and follow. *Refrain*

Offering

Boxing Day wasn’t originally about sales.
 It was a day when churches gave gifts to those in need.
 Your support through Mission & Service
 Puts generosity back into the holiday.
 Through Mission & Service, we shine Christ’s light
 Of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.
 Giving is about more than making a gift.
 It’s about lighting the way for everyone.
 Please give generously.
 Thank you for making the world a little brighter.

Offertory Hymn: VU 37 “Gloria”*Trinity United Church (Choir), musician: Faye Moffatt*

Gloria, Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, Gloria, alleluia, alleluia.
Glory to God, glory to God, glory in the highest!
Glory to God, glory to God, hallelujah, hallelujah!

Offertory Prayer (in unison)*Alison Hardie, Trinity United Church, Capreol*

Glory to you, O God! Glory to you for all the ways this offering supports the work of our church. Glory to you for all the ways these gifts extend care in our neighbourhood. Glory to

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you for all the ways our support transforms and saves lives through Mission & Service. Glory to you, O God! Amen.

Pastoral Prayer and Lord's Prayer

Jean Cornwaithe, St. Mark's United Church

Good morning.

God wants us to bring our every day needs and wants to Him, with faith and expectation.

In doing so, we learn to depend on Him and know the blessing of knowing His purposes.

Please bow with me in prayer.

Heavenly Father, we have celebrated the holiest of nights

And the most wonderful day of the year.

For unto us was born this day in the city of David

A saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

This was the gift to transcend all gifts,

For it was the gift of pure love, of forgiveness, of joy and of peace for all people.

And it came wrapped as a tiny babe in the manger at Bethlehem.

Jesus – Emmanuel – a gift of God, by God, for each one of us.

In a sense, we may not have found this night

Any different from any other night that we have known,

Yet it was not the same,

And we are not the same,

Nor will we ever be the same.

This birth has left its mark upon our souls and upon the world

As no other birth has done.

He came to draw us into his love, his forgiveness, his peace, his joy in living,

Eternal life.

These are his promises, the reasons for his birth, and we thank him for them.

And because of His love for all people, we now bring others to him in prayer,

For the healing of body and soul;

The sick, and there are many who are afflicted,

Particularly as Covid is not retiring,

Nor is cancer, nor any other auto immune disease or any other disease.

The names of these sick are written on our hearts, and we pray for them.

For the alone and lonely, and there are many also,

For we can experience loneliness even in a crowded room.

For those who grieve the loss of one much loved,

It is all right to shed a tear, for the emptiness left behind in the heart and the empty chair at the dinner table are daily memories.

We pray for all ministers of the gospel,

Our families,

The children,

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The homeless and destitute,
 All volunteers,
 And prisoners, even some suffering through prisons of their own making.
 We pray for the towns of Abbotsford and Merritt in British Columbia,
 Who have suffered through the most incredible catastrophe in my memory.
 The blessings of Jesus Christ are available to all,
 If we will just open our hearts to receive them,
 For he is Emmanuel – God with us.
 I pray that this Christmas has given you a heart full of peace,
 Freedom from all worries and fear,
 Comfort, gratitude, strength and joy –
 Gifts of love from a Heavenly Father,
 Who truly loves us.
 We pray this in His Holy name,
 And honour Him as we pray together the Prayer that he taught:
**Our Father, who art in heaven,
 Hallowed be thy name;
 Thy kingdom 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 kingdom, and the power and the glory,
 Forever and ever, Amen.**

Closing Hymn: VU44 “It Came upon the Midnight Clear”

St. Peter’s United Church

It came upon the midnight clear,
 that glorious song of old,
 from angels bending near the earth,
 to touch their harps of gold,
 "Peace on the earth, good will to all,
 from heaven's all-gracious King!"
 The world in solemn stillness lay
 to hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come
 with peaceful wings unfurled;
 and still their heavenly music floats
 o'er all the weary world;
 above its sad and lowly plains

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they bend on hovering wing,
and ever o'er its Babel sounds
the blessed angels sing.

Yet with the woes of sin and strife
the world has suffered long;
beneath the angel strain have rolled
two thousand years of wrong;
and warring humankind hears not
the love song which they bring.
O hush the noise and cease your strife,
and hear the angels sing.

For, lo! The days are hastening on,
by prophets seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years
shall come the time foretold,
when peace shall over all the earth
its ancient splendours fling,
and the whole world send back the song
which now the angels sing.

Commissioning and Benediction

Mardi Mumford, Trinity United Church (Lively)

Nothing boxed in Jesus' love. Not rules, not borders, not petty disagreements. We too are called to let love break loose in and through our lives.

As we leave, may God bless us to live with a caring and daring love, one that not only knows it is better to give than to receive but also that it's in giving that we do receive.

May God who is our Creator and Jesus Christ our Redeemer and the Holy Spirit our Sustainer bless us to live generously today and in all the days to come. Amen.

Recessional: "King"

Musician: Janet Evans, Copper Cliff United Church