

ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH
December 11, 2022 – Third Sunday of Advent
Sacrament of Communion

Welcome to Worship

Join us for a Zoom Virtual Coffee Time at 7:00 p.m. Sunday, December 11, 2022

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

Prelude: *Ralph McIntosh*

Opening Hymn: MV 1 O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Graham Laporte, organ, and Ralph McIntosh, piano

1. O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lowly exile here until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

2. O come, O Wisdom from on high, who orders all things mightily;
to us the path of knowledge show, and teach us in her ways to go.

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

7. O come, Desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind;
O bid our sad divisions cease, and be for us the Prince of Peace.

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Inviting Holy Light

Let us pray: O God, we place this light in this holy space as a reminder that we are on this journey together. Be light along all our paths. Lead us to a more just world, and help us to stay awake and present to your love in each ordinary day. Amen. *[lights candle]*

Sung Response: MV 220 Joy Shines as the Solitary Star

Graham Laporte, Flute, and Ralph McIntosh, piano

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.

Nurturing Safe Space

We are all children of God. Each one of us here, or at home, have answered the call of God inviting us to worship together. All are welcome, regardless of race, age, gender identity, ability. We celebrate our differences and rejoice that we are all welcomed in this space.

Acknowledging Traditional Territory

We acknowledge that we at St. Andrew's live, work, worship, and play on the unceded and unsurrendered lands of the Wahnapiatae First Nation and of the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek. As we celebrate the birth of Jesus once again, we remember everything this birth means for our whole world and all people: hope, peace, joy, and love. May we live our lives moving gently in creation, listening, learning, and striving to be people of reconciliation.

Welcome and Announcements

Welcome to St. Andrew's! This Sunday, we continue Our Advent project of raising funds for Lansdowne Queen Elizabeth Public School. Also, today is the last day for our Socks for Souls collection. Socks will be distributed to Lansdowne and Queen Elizabeth Public Schools, Sudbury Action Centre for Youth, Sudbury Secondary School Value Vault, and others in need in the

downtown area. Also, there will be two in-sanctuary Christmas Eve services, the family service at 5:00 and the candle-light service at 9:00.

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 Social Hour on Zoom, every Sunday night at 7. As always, you can get your Zoom link to join that time of connection by sending an email to Diane. That email address is above.

Call to Worship (Doreen, Tracey, Connor)

Advent Candle Lighting Ceremony

Tracey: Over a hundred people, from the ages of two to eighty years old, were asked the question, "What brings you joy?" From the voices of different generations, hear their answers:

Doreen: A clean kitchen. Hugs from my niece and nephew. Sand between my toes. My new grandchild.

Connor: Being outside. Sleeping in my own bed after a night away. When my parents pick me up. A warm cup of coffee with friends.

Tracey: Having a camera in my hands. My partner's laugh. Mountain air. Reading in bed.

Doreen: The end of my to-do list. Baby giggles. Putting my hands in the garden.

Connor: Stargazing. Lingered at the table after dinner. Time with family. My cat.

Tracey: Today we light the candle of joy. May its light remind us of all the good news this season brings. May its light remind us of the many sources of joy in our lives, and may that joy not only draw us closer to one another, but closer to God.

Connor lights the candle.

Doreen: St. Andrew's family, what brings you joy? Amen.

Opening Prayer

God of Advent Promise, joy is in the air. And in this moment, we hold on to the timeless truth of Advent hope, peace, and joy. You break into our worship service with the astounding gift of delight.

God of Advent Promise, we long to receive Good News. As this time of blessed waiting is upon us, we set our eyes on the cradle in the Bethlehem stable. And yet, we know we must not rush. We linger where we are. We take time to ponder.

We notice the small things. We hear the quiet whispers. In this way, we experience Emmanuel! God of Advent Promise, may this third Sunday in Advent be a day of rich blessings and deep joy. We pray in the name of the One who brought joy into a troubled world, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

The Prayer Jesus Taught

Our Father,

Our Mother,

Who art in heaven,

Who are in all the earth,

Hallowed be thy name.

Holy is your truth.

Thy kingdom come,

May your wisdom come,

Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Your circle be one uniting heaven and earth.

Give us this day our daily bread,

Give us today a nurturing spirit,

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Heal through us as we ourselves are healed.

Lead us not into temptation,

Lead us into fullness of life,

But deliver us from evil.

And liberate all that is good.

For thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory.

For the Wisdom, Presence and the Goodness are Yours, Now and forever. Amen.

Hymn: VU 6 A Candle is Burning, vs. 1

1. A candle is burning, a flame warm and bright,
a candle of hope in December's dark night.

While angels sing blessings from heaven's starry sky,
our hearts we prepare now for Jesus is nigh.

Time up Front (Connor and Tracey Ross)

1. Have you ever had something happen to you that you have little choice about?

2. Maybe something your parent or grandparent tells you need to do is not going to be fun, but they say that it is for your own good?

1. Here is a quick story and you can help us figure it out. Sam was an energetic 7-year-old who loved getting home and quickly going out to play with their friend. Sam came home one day looking forward so much to going bike riding with friends. Dad was at work, so grandma was there waiting for Sam. Grandma gave Sam a big hug, then said,

2. "Honey, would you come with me to visit Grandpa at Quiet Pines home this afternoon?"

1. Well Sam was so upset, spending an afternoon with people grandpa's age, was, like, the last thing Sam was thinking. Sam stomped away, not wanting to hurt Granny. Sam loved Granny so much, and knew that Gramps was alone in that home.

2. "He always loves my hugs."

1. Thought Sam.

2. What should Sam do, friends?

Dave: Last week and then in a moment today, we are hearing about two parents, Mary and Joseph, to whom God has said: I have something special for you. Mary was told that she will be the mother of God's beloved child, Jesus. Mary was not so sure about that. That was not part of her plan as a young person. She says yes. Imagine being the mummy of Jesus.

Then today will be Joseph getting the news. He isn't even married to Mary yet, he was soon going to be married but then God has a message for him, you and Mary are going to be parents of Jesus, my beloved. Wow, I imagine Joseph had some different ideas of jobs and adventures he and Mary would enjoy, but wow, being parents. Ok.

Sometimes we do things because it is the right thing to do, or because we have talents and a coach or teacher wants us to join a team or a group. Before we say "no", maybe think about Sam, and Mary and Joseph. Life can change my plans and dreams. Sometimes people need us, sometimes God needs us because we are special and God has just the job for us.

This is a repeat-after-me-prayer:

God Advent waiting;... God of Christmas so close, but not quite here,... thank you for making us special... Help us to be ready sometimes...to do what you want us to do,...to offer love, to spend time with someone,...even when it is not as fun as our plans... Sometimes waiting for Christmas is so exciting,...and that excitement is almost as great as Christmas... But not quite... God, you are awesome. Thanks. Amen.

Hymn: VU 6 A Candle is Burning, vs. 3

Graham Laporte, organ, and Ralph McIntosh, piano

3. A candle is burning, a candle of joy,
a candle to welcome brave Mary's new boy.
Our hearts fill with wonder, and eyes light and glow
as joy brightens winter like sunshine on snow.

Scripture Readings (Jacqueline Warner-Smith)

Isaiah 35:1-9a – The Message translation

Isaiah 35 is a vision of what happens when we choose a better way: the wilderness blooms, water breaks forth in the desert, eyes are opened, ears are unstopped, sorrow and sadness flee away. A highway shall appear and it will become a holy way.

¹⁻² Wilderness and desert will sing joyously, the badlands will celebrate and flower—Like the crocus in spring, bursting into blossom, a symphony of song and color. Mountain glories of Lebanon—a gift. Awesome Carmel, stunning Sharon—gifts. God's resplendent glory, fully on display. God awesome, God majestic. ³⁻⁴ Energize the limp hands, strengthen the rubbery knees. Tell fearful souls, "Courage! Take heart! God is here, right here, on his way to put things right And redress all wrongs. God is on the way! God will save you!" ⁵⁻⁷ Blind eyes will be opened, deaf ears unstopped, Lame men and women will leap like deer, the voiceless break into song. Springs of water will burst out in the wilderness, streams flow in the desert. Hot sands will become a cool oasis, thirsty ground a splashing fountain. Even lowly jackals will have water to drink, and barren grasslands flourish richly. ^{8-9a} There will be a highway called the Holy Road. No one rude or rebellious is permitted on this road. It's for God's people exclusively—impossible to get lost on this road. Not even fools can get lost on it.

Matthew 1:18-24 (NSRVUE)

As far as Joseph knows, his new wife has been unfaithful to him and broken their marriage contract. And yet, instead of punishment, he chooses not to publicly disgrace or humiliate her. This interruption in his life becomes a holy invitation when the angel comes to him in a dream and says, "Do not be afraid."

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly.

²⁰ But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³ "Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us."

²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him.

Let us pray: Holy God, scripture tells us that you came to Joseph through an angel—loud and clear, impossible to miss. Scripture also tells us that Joseph listened. He rearranged his life to follow your invitation. God, we long for that— all of that. We long to hear your voice—loud and clear, impossible to miss. We long for invitations to something more, something deeper. And we long to be like Joseph and find the courage to follow. Amen.

Message: A New Lens

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

An Affirmation of Faith

We believe in a God who offers second chances and does not hold grudges. We believe in a God who opens the door to new life and leaves the porch light on for us when we get lost. We believe in a God who believes in us—believes that we can make a difference, that we can choose grace over comparison, love over hate, peace over war. We believe in a God who kicks off her shoes and wades into the muck of our lives with us. We believe in a God who stitches herself to our heels, and invites us to dance. We believe in a God who hemmed stars into the night sky so that we can find our way home. And so we strive to live our lives in love. We strive to listen as Joseph listened, and to be the people that God calls us to be. It's all that easy, and it's all that hard. This we believe. Amen.

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

1. Lo, how a rose e'er blooming from tender stem hath sprung,
of Jesse's lineage coming, as seers of old have sung.
It came a blossom bright,
amid the cold of winter, when half spent was the night.
2. Isaiah 'twas foretold it, the Rose I have in mind,
with Mary we behold it, the virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright
she bore for us a Saviour when half spent was the night.

Minute For Mission

Knowledge for Life: Habtamu's Story

Habtamu and his family live in Ethiopia, where Habtamu farms the land he inherited from his father. Unfortunately, when the land was passed on to him, it wasn't fertile. Teams of oxen used for agriculture had eroded the soil, and the harsh sunlight meant that anything planted in it died.

Thanks to a conservation agriculture program supported by the Canadian Foodgrains Bank,* a Mission & Service partner, Habtamu and his family learned farming techniques that reduce soil erosion, improve soil fertility, and increase productivity. For example, they are using crop by-products as a cover for their soil, preventing it from being exposed to sunlight, and rainwater. The impact is incredible.

"Earlier, we were hungry and the land was infertile, but now for the last eight years we have been harvesting a good crop. I am happy we are trying to alleviate our problem, change our lives, and feed our children," explains Yitayish, Habtamu's wife, while he proudly shows a barn full of grain.

"Before, we only had one or two grain stocks. I used to feed my children with maize I bought at the market, but now I can satisfy the needs of my family and supply the market," Habtamu says.

Your generosity through Mission & Service supports the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. This is one of the many ways your gifts help end hunger.

"I would really like to express my deepest gratitude...for giving us knowledge and insights. I am really grateful to you for all the kindness you have shown me," Habtamu says.

*The United Church of Canada provided funding to the Scaling-Up Conservation Agriculture program of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, funded by the Government of Canada. This story is one example of a project from that program. Program partners include the Mennonite Central Committee and the Migbare Senay Children and Family Support Organization (MSCFSO).

Offering Moment

In our offerings to God, we provide ways for this community to serve God and sing to the world. When we combine what we offer God, our gifts serve Christ in ways we could not alone. Let us worship our God together.

Thank you for sharing both your talents and treasures. Your donations will help St. Andrew's to partner with people who help the most vulnerable downtown. Giving to the United Church of Canada's Mission and Service allows us collectively to reach out to Ukraine and other places needing love and community. Thank you for all you do!!

Dedication Hymn: VU 510 *We Have this Ministry, vs. 1*

1. We have this ministry and we are not discouraged;
it is by God's own power that we may live and serve.
Openly we share God's word, speaking truth as we believe,
praying that the shadowed world may healing light receive.

Dedication Prayer

God of plenty, like a great mother, you fill our lives with love, connection, and ultimate care.

In this moment, we hold open our arms or our hands and silently name to you the ways you have blessed us with safe homes, enough food, and enough, enough, enough... indeed, we thank you.

God who knows the world's needs, we offer you heartfelt thanks that we know our very best response is to give back to you what was always yours to begin with: our talents, our money, our very best love. We hold open our arms or our hands and silently name to you the ways we dedicate ourselves to you today.

We lift up the very money or time or talent or love we want to give to you...

...hear and feel and know our love for you, Beloved God! With dedicated love, we pray. Amen.

We lift up the very money or time or talent or love we want to give to you...

...hear and feel and know our love for you, Beloved God! With dedicated love, we pray. Amen.

Prayers of Community

God of step-fathers and adopted parents,

God of angel messengers and your beloved Child, soon to be born, come before you in praise and gratitude.

Your wisdom baffles us, for you choose ordinary people to accomplish incredible things. Ordinary people entrusted with your child as parents, a gift of holiness to the world, in the fragile form of an infant.

We give thanks for your patience with young Mary and uncertain Joseph, and with us, each of us worshipping today whom you have entrusted gifts and mission – be patient with us, help us to be open to what will be born in us as well.

In our fear and confusion, you touch us with a deep love that calms us. In spite the challenges we might be facing right now, what our world and in fact all of Creation might be facing, open our hearts afresh to a new day with new possibilities tomorrow. May we hear anew the voice of angel Gabriel reminding Mary, and us, that nothing is impossible for you. Thank you Creator God.

In Silence reach out beyond ourselves to pray for our world, especially those people and communities and parts of Creation groaning under the weight of injustice, human neglect, tyranny. Perhaps we pray today for people closer to us, situations filled with uncertainty and tired hearts and bodies needing your love and comfort...[silence]

Today we pray that you will equip us to, like Mary and Joseph:

In a world full of competition, help us choose celebration.

In a world full of scarcity, help us choose abundance.

In a world of war and violence, help us choose peace and grace.

In a world of divided lines, help us choose connection and relationship.

In a world of quick assumptions and stereotypes, help us choose curiosity and compassion.

In our striving to choose a better way, God, may we be transformed. Amen.

Closing Hymn: VU 424 *May the God of Hope Go with Us*

1. May the God of hope go with us every day,
filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.
May the God of justice speed us on our way,
bringing light and hope to every land and race.

Praying, let us work for peace,
singing, share our joy with all,
working for a world that's new,
faithful when we hear Christ's call.

2. May the God of healing free the earth from fear,
freeing us for peace, both treasured and pursued.
May the God of love keep our commitment clear
to a world restored, to human life renewed.

Praying, let us work for peace,
singing, share our joy with all,
working for a world that's new,
faithful when we hear Christ's call.

Blessing

Come, let us go with God to bring healing to the world.

**Come, let us bring family to the lonely,
comfort to those who grieve.**

Come, let us go with Jesus to all are forgotten.

**Come, let us carry justice to the oppressed,
to feed those who hunger in body and soul.**

Come, let us go with the faithful Spirit.

**Come, let us speak the gospel with our lips,
let us share grace with our lives.**

Blessing Hymn: VU 7 *Hope is A Star, vs. 3*

Graham Laporte, flute, and Ralph McIntosh, piano

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.

Choral Postlude: MV 222 *May the Peace of God Be Your Peace*

May the peace of God be your peace.

May the love of God be the love you show.

May the joy of God be the joy you know,

and may the world that God would see be found in you.

Postlude

Inviting Holy Light, Offering Moment, Dedication Prayer, and Blessing Prayer from *Seasons of the Spirit, Fusion*. Advent, Christmas, Epiphany 2022-2023, Year A.

Acknowledging Traditional Territory written by Jessica Knoyle, Ottawa, ON. GatheringWorship.ca, Advent, Christmas, Epiphany 2022/2023, Year A.

Opening Prayer written by Laura Turnbull, Penticton, BC. GatheringWorship.ca, Advent, Christmas, Epiphany 2022/2023, Year A.

The Prayer Jesus Taught from Mary Elizabeth Hess, meh.religioused.org, from Dominican Sisters Retreat, March 1993, Great Bend, Kansas.

Call to Worship – Lighting the Advent Wreath adapted from a prayer written by Rev. Sarah Speed, sanctifiedart.org

Scripture reading introductions from *Sanctified Art: From Generation to Generation Sermon Planning Guide*, sanctifiedart.org

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Prayer after scripture and An Affirmation of Faith from *Sanctified Art, Advent 3*, sanctifiedart.org

Prayers of Community adapted from a prayer written by Rev. Sarah Speed, sanctifiedart.org

Blessing written by Thom M. Shuman. © December 22, 2019 (Fourth Sunday of Advent - A), lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com

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