

ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH
December 4th, 2022 – Second Sunday of Advent
Sacrament of Communion

Welcome to Worship

Join us for a Zoom Virtual Coffee Time at 7:00 p.m. Sunday, December 4, 2022

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

Prelude

Opening Hymn: VU 9 *People Look East, vv. 1, 2, 3*

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.

2. Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,
one more seed is planted there:

give up your strength the seed to nourish,
that in course the flower may flourish.

People, look east and sing today:
Love the rose is on the way.

3. Birds, though you long have ceased to build,
guard the nest that must be filled;

even the hour when wings are frozen
God for fledging time has chosen.

People, look east and sing today:
Love the bird is on the way.

Inviting Holy Light

With this one light, we 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 *Peace 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.

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 are gathered on the land of the Robinson Huron Treaty. For thousands of years, the First Peoples of this place have cared for the land even as the land cared for them. Guided by the wisdom of their traditions and their ancestors, they have been taught that the circle of life is embraced and embracing. Let us carry on this wisdom. Let us live into right relations with love and respect.

Welcome and Announcements

Welcome to St. Andrew's! This Sunday, special guests Young Sudbury Singers are joining us to sing. Thank you to directors Heather Charsley and Colette Nadeau, and to Ralph McIntosh for arranging for our musical guests.

This Sunday, another Advent Project begins. Again this year, we will be raising funds for Lansdowne Queen Elizabeth Public School. Also, our Socks for Souls collection is on-going until December 11. Please bring new socks to church on Sundays or drop them off at Aquilon Foot Clinic during the week. They have two locations, one inside Superstore on Lasalle and the other at 1500 Paris Street. 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.

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 connecting by sending an email to Diane. That email address will be part of the credits after this worship.

Call to Worship (*Tom Kozak and Rebecca Speedie*)

Advent Candle Lighting Ceremony

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

Rebecca: Not making enough of a difference. That we will forget we belong to one another. Climate change. My child having to learn gun violence drills at school.

Tom: Not having someone who knows my stories. My mental health slipping. Ending up alone. Stopping short of following God all the way.

Rebecca: Today we light the candle of peace, because we so desperately need God's peace in the midst of all we fear.

Tom lights the 2nd Advent Candle, then says: May this light be a reminder that Christ is coming. God was with generations before, God is with us today, and God will be with us tomorrow. Even now, God is on the way. Amen.

Opening Prayer

God of unexpected time and place, we place ourselves in the soil of justice, on the threshold of peace. We gather to bring forth your presence, to bring forth your peace. We come forth from our slumber. We awaken to your justice right here right now. We equip ourselves through worship and prayer to be a just and peaceful presence in the world. Amen.

Introduction to the Prayer of Grace

Fear can be a good thing. It can help us be attentive while driving down the highway. It can alert us to possible accidents. It can motivate us to do our best. However, fear can also be harmful. For so many of us, fear of the other, fear of failure, or fear of the unknown has led us to make sinful choices in our lives—choices such as building walls or tearing others down. Today, we ask for mercy and pray for guidance. We come before an entirely merciful and loving God who says to us, "Do not be afraid." Let us pray:

Prayer of Grace

We know that faith can only flourish from a place of love, not fear.

Give us the courage to love, God.

Patient God, you know just how often we make decisions from a place of fear rather than love. We know that faith can only flourish from a place of love, not fear.

Give us the courage to love, God.

You know just how often we allow fear to take the place of logic, fanning unhealthy fires in our lives. You know just how often we tuck your words, “Do not be afraid” on dusty shelves and in the back of closets, stubbornly holding onto our own point of view.

We know that faith can only flourish from a place of love, not fear.

Give us the courage to love, God.

Forgive us for giving fear the microphone. Silence the voices of scarcity, shame, and rejection, which spark and feed so much of our fear, to recenter us in love.

We know that faith can only flourish from a place of love, not fear.

Give us the courage to love, God.

Silent Moment of Reflection

Think of a moment in the past week where fear influenced a decision you made. Can you allow the voice of Love to speak to you about that situation. What would Jesus Say (WWJS) to you?

Words of Assurance

Family of faith, even when we forget God’s words, God does not forget us. Even when we lose our way, God does not lose us. Even when we fall short or make mistakes, God forgives and holds onto us. We are known, forgiven, and loved. Thanks be to God! Amen.

Time Up Front

Dave reminds people that he forgot the “gifts” intended to be handed out last Sunday.

We were talking about women in the Bible whose stories don’t get told much. We are also on a journey of preparation. We are excitedly awaiting Christmas – you know, the baby Jesus, and, I guess, also getting presents too.

Well, I’m entrusting to you bags that say, “Don’t open until Christmas.” You are not to look inside yet – wait until Christmas to open it up. That is like us waiting, waiting, waiting for the wondrous story of Jesus being born. But not yet. (*Hand out bags*)

Anthem: A Wish for Peace by Denise Gagné & Craig Cassils

Young Sudbury Singers

Scripture Readings (James Warner-Smith)

God’s Mountain – A Paraphrase based on Isaiah 11:1-10

Hello. My name is Isaiah, and I am a prophet. A prophet is someone who tells people about God. A prophet wants all the people to listen and learn about who God is and what God does. Life is difficult for the people of Judah, where I live. The people of the land are afraid and sad that other nations are trying to take over, and they feel that God is not listening to them.

I was thinking about all of this, and suddenly a picture came into my mind. I knew that God wanted the leaders and people of Judah to hear about it.

The picture was of a tree that had been cut down; it was just a stump, its life and beauty gone. But from the root of that tree, a new branch would grow, and it would become a strong tree again. I told the people not to give up hope; just like the new branch that grew from the stump of the tree that seemed dead, a new leader would come. This leader would have the Spirit of God and all of God’s knowledge and understanding. This person would be happy and really enjoy knowing God by seeing and hearing about all the good things God has done and will do. Caring for the poor and teaching bad people to be good would be something for this person to do.

The rest of my story was about what would happen if God made all things good and safe. I told about a mountain where no one would be hurt, and all the animals would live together. No animal would hunt and kill another animal for food. All the animals would live peacefully on the mountain, and a child would lead them on the mountain. The child would teach the world about God and all the good things God can do. No one would harm or destroy anyone or anything else on this mountain. Everyone and everything in the whole wide world would know about God. They would

know that God is everywhere, even in the biggest ocean. They would know that all the people have been a part of God's plan, and all the people will be a part of that plan in the future.

Luke 1:26-38 (New Standard Revised Version Updated Edition)

When the angel Gabriel comes to Mary, she is perplexed and confused—and no doubt, afraid. And yet, the angel's news is: "Do not be afraid." Do not be afraid. We hear this refrain all throughout the Christmas story and remember it is the most common phrase in all the bible.

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."

But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God."

Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Will you pray with me: God of imagination and all creation, help us to broaden our minds to see your desire for your Kingdom. Open our hearts to allow us to live in harmony with all your people, and with all Creation. Let us imagine and live into your possibilities. Amen.

Message: Faith says "YES!"

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

Silent Moment for Reflection

Anthem: A Place of Beginning Again by Mary McDonald

Young Sudbury Singers, church choir, and guests

Offering Moment

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: MV 20 God of Still Waiting, vs. 1

1. God of still waiting, God of deep longing, God of the heart's true rest:
hold us in fathomless peace, guard us with unwaning love.

Dedication Prayer

O God, just as the green shoot sprouts from the roots of Jesse, so too may these gifts allow for new growth to spring forth in the work of the church. Help us to also grow, in faithfulness and in love for our neighbours. We give to make Jesus' promise of peace real, when the wolf shall live in harmony with the lamb. Amen.

Sacrament of Communion

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

May the Approaching God be with you.

And also with you.

In the days to come, People of God,

offer your hearts to the One who comes near.

We will lay aside all that keeps us from opening ourselves to God.

Now is the time to sing praises to the One who loves us.

We offer our thanksgiving to God,

as we find ourselves standing within the gates of Advent.

You spoke of the days to come, Architect of life,

when anthills would erupt from dirt,

when cattle would gather under shade trees,

when cats would nurture little children,

when chaos would be transformed into creation,

and we stood within your garden of goodness.

All this beauty, all the wonder, was offered

so, we might walk in your light,

but we preferred the shadows of sin,

opening our hearts so that thief, death,

could come and steal us away from you.

You sent the prophets to us,

urging us to lay aside our foolishness,

but we continued to put on

the armor of apathy and anger

so, we could rebel against you.

Finally, when no one expected,

you came, not in power but poverty,

a crying baby born to nobodies.

With those who worry about your return,

with those who have forgotten to tell time,

we sing of your praises:

Holy, holy, holy are you, God of the welcoming heart.

All creation sings of your great love.

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is the One who comes when we least expect.

Hosanna in the highest!

In the days to come, God of life,

may we be reminded of your holiness,

and the blessing of your Child, Jesus.

When we fear what lies over the horizon,

he comes, arms filled with grace.

When worries fall like leaves on our lives,

he stands on the front porch,

arm in arm with hope.

When the rumblings of angry rhetoric

waken us in the night,

he lullabies us with songs of your love.

When sin would lock us away

in the shadows of death,

he comes like a thief in the night,
to steal our hearts back for you.

Let us remember together that vision of God's reign
shown to us in Jesus at table:

he shared food with followers and friends,

with saints and sinners,
with crowds of thousands on the hillside,

and a few friends in an upper room.

**On the night before he died,
he had supper with his companions.**

He took a loaf of bread, and after giving thanks,
he broke it, and gave it to them, saying:

"Take, eat. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then, he took a cup, and after giving thanks,
he passed it among them, saying:

"Drink this. Do this in remembrance of me."

Through this loaf and cup, Jesus lives within us.

In word and deed, Jesus lives among us.

As we begin our journey to Bethlehem,
as we seek to be alert and awake,
we would proclaim the mystery of faith:

**Christ died, seeking the good for all;
Christ was raised, putting on resurrection's love;
Christ will come, precisely when we least expect him.**

Prayers of Community

For these days, God, we have much to fear.

We fear the return of a COVID variant that could once again shut down the world. We fear the rising tide of violence.

We fear global warming. Will our grandchildren have trees to climb?

We look at our own lives and are afraid that we aren't making much of a difference, that we might be forgotten at the end of the day.

We fear rejection, we fear grief, we fear not being enough. We empty our pockets of our fears and give them to you, trusting that you will hold them tenderly, just as you hold us.

You whisper, "Be not afraid."

You promise to never leave our side.

You call us "Beloved."

May that be enough for today.

In our world are so many things that worry us, that weigh heavily on our hearts. Wars grounded in hatred and tyranny. So many people in our world who face unjust systems, sometimes people very close to us, and yet, we do not know how to change things, or perhaps we are afraid to rock the boat...

Creator God, we offer to you our own personal prayers in this silent moment... [silence]

God hear our prayers,

and in your love, answer. Amen.

The Prayer Jesus Taught

Heavenly Father, heavenly Mother, Holy and blessed is your true name. We pray for your reign of peace to come, We pray that your good will be done, Let heaven and earth become one. Give us this day the bread we need, Give it to those who have none. Let forgiveness flow like a river between us From each one to each one. Lead us to holy innocence Beyond the evil of our days — Come swiftly Mother, Father, come. For yours is the power and the glory and the mercy: Forever your name is All in One. Amen.

Now, pour out your Spirit upon
the gifts of the bread and the cup
and on those gathered in these moments.

Feed us with the bread which is broken, (elevate/break bread)

so, in the days to come, we may
bring healing to the shattered,
embrace the lonely,
invite strangers to our family feasts.

Pour the grace of the cup into us, (pour cup)

so, in the days to come, we may
wrap others in warm coats,
lay aside our differences,
walk with others in the light of justice.

And when you come when we least expect,
to bring all history to an end,
gather us around the Table of joy,
where we will join our siblings
of every place and time in forever praising you,
God in Community, Holy in One. Amen

Prayer after Communion

Life-giving God, may we, who share Christ's body, live his risen life; we, who drink his cup, bring new life to others; we, whom the Spirit lights, give light to the world. Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us, so that we and all your children shall be free, and all creation will live to praise your name. Amen.

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

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.

Blessing

We may not know when, but we will go,
to bring God's grace to our broken world;
Loving Creator, guide us.

We may not know who, yet we will go,
to receive Jesus' hope from those
we are uncomfortable being around.
Christ's Love, walk with us.

We may not know how, so we will go,
to share the Spirit's peace
in the most unusual places.

Holy Spirit, Love us abundantly so we can share that Love with absolutely everyone we meet. Amen.

Anthem: *May Your Roads Be Straight and Narrow* by Sally K. Albrecht & Jay Althouse
Church choir and guests

Postlude

Inviting Holy Light and **“God’s Mountain”**, and **Prayer after Scripture:** From Seasons of the Spirit, Fusion. Advent, Christmas, Epiphany 2022-2023, Year A.

Acknowledging Traditional Territory: Written by Jamie Miller, First United Church, Dryden, ON. GatheringWorship.ca, Advent, Christmas, Epiphany 2022/2023, Year A.

Opening Prayer: Written by Priscilla Geisterfer, Fredericton, NB. GatheringWorship.ca, Advent, Christmas, Epiphany 2022/2023, Year A.

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Prayers of Community, Call to Worship, Introduction to Prayer of Grace, Prayer of Grace, and Prayer of Assurance: Adapted from prayers written by Rev. Sarah Speed, sanctifiedart.org

Offering Prayer: Written by Taylor Croissant, Southminster United Church, Lethbridge, AB. GatheringWorship.ca, Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, 2022-2023, Year C.

Sacrament of Communion and **Blessing Prayer** written by Thom Shuman, © Thom M. Shuman, 2022 Advent, lectionary liturgies.blogspot.com

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