

December 3, 2023
First Sunday of Advent

We Gather In God's Presence

Prelude: "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" 15th Century plainsong Arr. by Cindy Berry

Candle Lighting Liturgy

*Written by Gord Dunbar. **Gathering**, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany 2023-2024, pages 70-72. Used with permission.*

In a world filled with tragedy and chaos,
we arrive weary, wary, and wrung out.

**We come to find shelter from our fears,
to discover hope as we practice our faith in worship.**

We're tired of this marathon of difficulty,
longing for relief through a return to what we once thought normal.

We come because the vulnerable Christ Child enlightens us with possibility.

On this first Sunday of Advent, we light this first candle symbolizing hope---
the assurance that the risen Christ transforms all things in love.

The first blue candle is lit.

All sing: VU 7 "Hope Is A Star" verse one

Hope is a star that shines in the night,
leading us on till the morning is bright.

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.

Flickering and fragile, this tiny flame opens us to wonder,
to the heart of God, which transforms us as we join together in prayer:

We come to be sustained in life, O God, even as we wrestle.

Inspire us to perceive the Way of Jesus as the path of wholeness.

Unite us to become a community of faith woven as one by the Spirit.

**Teach us how to live by loving-kindness, becoming catalysts
for hope in the hearts of those we encounter.**

Amen

Birthdays, Celebrations, and Life and Work of the Congregation – see last page ...

Hymn: VU 5 "All Earth is Waiting"

All earth is waiting to see the Promised One,
and open furrows await the seed of God.

All the world, bound and struggling, seeks true liberty;
it cries out for justice and searches for the truth.

Thus says the prophet to those of Israel,

"A virgin mother will bear Emmanuel."

One whose name is "God with us," our Saviour shall be,
through whom hope will blossom once more within our hearts.

Mountains and valleys will have to be made plain,
open new highways, new highways for our God,
who is now coming closer, so come all and see,
and open the doorways as wide as wide can be.

In lowly stable the Promised One appeared.
Yet, feel that presence throughout the earth today,
for Christ lives in all Christians and is with us now;
again, on arriving, Christ brings us liberty.

Opening Prayer

Advent God, thank you for your precious gift of hope. Hope gives us courage to kick at the darkness in our world until light shines through. Hope stokes the fires of our faith, driving doubt away. Hope beckons us forward to build community where there is division and strife. Help nurture hope within our hearts. Help us to nurture hope in this world. In Jesus' name, the source of our hope. Amen.

We Are Blessed By God

Anthem: "An Advent Prayer" Allen Pote

Time for the Young and the Young @



Hymn: VU 713 "I See a New Heaven"

I see a new heaven. I see a new earth
as the old one will pass away,
where the fountain of life flows and without price goes
to all people, who abide in the land.

There, there on the banks of a river bright and free,
yielding her fruit, firm in her root,
the Tree of Life will be.

I see a new heaven. I see a new earth
as the old one will pass away,
where the fountain of life flows and without price goes
to all people, who abide in the land.

There, there where death dies and our lives are born again,
body and soul, struggling but whole
like flowers after the rain.

I see a new heaven. I see a new earth
as the old one will pass away,
where the fountain of life flows and without price goes
to all people, who abide in the land.

There, there where the darkness brings visions from above.
There where the night, bearing new light,
reveals the promise of love.

I see a new heaven. I see a new earth
as the old one will pass away,
where the fountain of life flows and without price goes
to all people, who abide in the land.

There, there where we work with the love of healing hands.
Labour we must, true to our trust
to build a promised new land.

I see a new heaven. I see a new earth
as the old one will pass away,
where the fountain of life flows and without price goes
to all people, who abide in the land.

Psalm Psalm 80:1-7, 18-19 VU 794 part 1

R: You face, God, shine on us and give us peace.

Shepherd of Israel, hear us,

**you who lead Joseph like a flock,
you who are enthroned amidst the cherubim.**

Shine forth before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh;

stir up your might, come and save us.

R: You face, God, shine on us and give us peace.

God of hosts,

how long will you be angry with your people's prayer?

**You have fed us with the bread of weeping,
and given us tears in plenty to drink.**

You have made a mockery of us to our neighbours,

and our enemies laugh us to scorn.

Let your hand rest on the one at your right hand,

on the one you have made strong for yourself.

**Then we will never forsake you;
give us life, and we will call on your name.**

R: You face, God, shine on us and give us peace.

Scripture: Mark 13:24-37 The Coming of the Son of Man

“But in those days, after that suffering,

the sun will be darkened,

and the moon will not give its light,

and the stars will be falling from heaven,

and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

The other readings for this week are: Isaiah 64:1-9; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Meditation: “Keep Awake!”

Hymn VU 688 “O Day of God, Draw Nigh”

O day of God, draw nigh in beauty and in power;
come with your timeless judgement now to match our present hour.

Bring to our troubled minds, uncertain and afraid,
the quiet of a steadfast faith, calm of a call obeyed.

Bring justice to our land, that all may dwell secure,
and finely build for days to come foundations that endure.

Bring to our world of strife your sovereign word of peace,
that war may haunt the earth no more and desolation cease.

O day of God, draw nigh as at creation’s birth;
let there be light again, and set your judgements in the earth.

We Respond To God’s Grace

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession & The Lord’s Prayer

‘A voice cries in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord!’ O God, we pray that in our hearts your way may be prepared, that the path among us, by which your Spirit comes, may be made straight.

Prepare among us, O God, the path of hope. We pray for those in need of hope today: all who live in the midst of social collapse, warfare or grinding poverty; all who grieve the end of a relationship; all who are worried for a friend or relative; all who mourn the death of a loved one, especially the friends and family of Mary Kaiser, Archie Fletcher, and Sharon Young; all who are ill or dying, awaiting medical intervention or recovering from treatment, especially we pray for, and their loved ones and caregivers and those known only in the silence of our own hearts....

Prepare among us the path of peace. Grant the peace that comes in following your ways, in opening our lives to you, and sharing our gifts for your sake. We pray for the peoples and the nations as they work for justice and peace for all, especially we remember the people of Myanmar and Thailand.

Prepare among us a path of joy. We pray for those whose spirits need to be buoyed up and who have forgotten childhood’s gift of taking delight in the simple things of life, which come from you, O generous God. Hear our thanks and praise as our spirits turn to you, and as we remember, in a moment of silence, the blessings we enjoy.....

Prepare among us the path of love. We pray for all who need to be embraced by love: all who are cramped and narrowed in spirit; all who have lost the ability to trust; all who ache for a sign they are cherished, or even noticed by someone; all who struggle with a lifetime burden of being told they are not good enough. We pray for your church, whose role it is to make your love known in all the earth. This week we pray for Watford-Warick Pastoral Charge and their spiritual leader, Carey Wagner, as they make God’s love known.

O God of hope, peace, joy, and love, we honour you now and always, through Jesus, your Anointed One, and in the expectant power of your Holy Spirit. We continue praying the words that Jesus taught, saying:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come,

your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

and forgive us our sins,

as we forgive those who sin against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:

for yours is the kingdom the power and the glory,

forever and ever. Amen.

Invitation to Invest in God's Mission

God of wonder, You awaken us to ever new possibilities for sharing in the mission and ministry of your church. May the love that you offer and the hope that Jesus instills, be reflected in the way we offer our gifts and live out our faith. Our tithes and offerings will now be accepted.

Offertory Hymn VU 55 "In the Bleak Midwinter" vs. 4

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.

Prayer of Dedication

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and make our giving holy.
For what is here is freely given, with hope, and joy, and love.
Accept and bless the small gifts we offer, joining them with others,
that our world may realize your dream of justice and peace. Amen.

Hymn VU 31 "O Lord, How Shall I Meet You"

O Lord, how shall I meet you, how welcome you aright?
Your people long to greet you, my hope, my heart's delight!
O kindle, then, most holy, a lamp within my breast,
to do in spirit lowly all that may please you best.

Love, caused your incarnation, love brought you here to me;
your thirst for my salvation procured my liberty.
O love beyond all telling, that led you to embrace
in love all loves excelling our lost and fallen race.

A glorious crown you give me, a treasure safe on high,
that will not fail nor leave me as earthly riches fly.
My heart shall bloom forever for you with praises new,
and from your name shall never withhold the honour due.

Commissioning and Benediction

This Advent season prepare in your heart a place of hope.

We will be for others the hope that we yearn for.

We will act hope and speak hope as we await the coming of the God of hope.

May it be so. **Amen.**

Response: "Go Now in Peace"

Go now in peace. Never be afraid.
God will go with you each hour of ev'ry day.
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true.
Know He will guide you in all you do.
Go now in love, and show you believe.
Reach out to others so all the world can see.
God will be there supporting us with love.
Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.
Amen, amen, amen.

Postlude: VU 9 "People, Look East" vs. 1

People, look east. The time is near of the crowing of the year.

Make your house fair as you are able, trim the hearth and set the table.

People, look east: Love the guest is on the way.

Postlude: "The Holly and the Ivy" Traditional English Carol Arr. by Bernadine Johnson

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Christmas Communion Service December 24 at 9:45 a.m.

Christmas Eve Service December 24 at 7:00 p.m.

Christmas is coming! Fortunately, the new Gifts with Vision catalogue is available to help you buy that perfect gift for the person with everything and transform lives at the same time. You can find it at www.giftswithvision.ca

The 96th Annual Royal Canadian College of Organists Christmas Carol Service is being held on December 3 at 7:30 at Metropolitan United Church. It will feature Bible Readings on Advent and Christmas, a Mass Choir of choristers from church choirs in the area singing beautiful Christmas anthems, and the Salvation Army Citadel Band, along with several talented young organists.

We hope you can attend this wonderful service. There is no fee to get in, but a donation to the RCCO would be appreciated. Hope to see you there!

DORCHESTER:

An **Advent Lessons and Carols Service** will be held Sunday, December 3 at 3 p.m. at St. Peter's Anglican Church. This is a joint service with St. Peter's Anglican Church, Dorchester Presbyterian Church, and Dorchester United Church. An invitation is extended to the wider Dorchester community to join in this seasonal celebration.

Sox in a Box: We will be collecting new socks, mitts, hats, and other clothing items for the homeless. Please bring all donations to the church and place them in the boxes under the Christmas tree.

Food Bank: A box is located at the back door of the church for our ongoing collection for the food bank.

Coffee Time Wednesday mornings at 10 a.m.

Pop Cans and Aluminum: Keep collecting cans, aluminum pie and tart plates, meal containers, etc. Ernie Reid converts them into cash for the church. Call Ernie at 519-268-3129.

UNION:

Cookie Decorating at Union Church, December 8, 6:30 to 8 p.m. This is an evening of fun for the young and young at heart. Come join the messy fun as our children create masterpieces on cookies and enjoy a cup of hot chocolate. All are welcome.

Reception for Mark December 31, 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. as we wish Mark all the best on his retirement from Union Church. We hope everyone can attend.

December Outreach we will be collecting food items for Christmas Care as well as toys. These will be collected until Dec. 10, in time to donate them to Christmas Care for distribution.

LECTIONARY READINGS:

December 10 – Second Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85; 2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8