

December 17, 2023
Third Sunday of Advent

We Gather In God's Presence

Prelude: "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming" arr. Bernadine Johnson

Candle Lighting Liturgy

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

On this third Sunday of Advent, we light this candle symbolizing joy—
acknowledging the reality that joy often bursts out of pain, hardship, and failure.

The pink candle is lit.

Joy often comes to us unexpected, especially when we have given up on life.

Joy reminds us that nothing is impossible—even in weakness.

In our joy, we are powerfully reminded that God is always near.

Therefore, let us rejoice! Let us sing as we celebrate the good news in this divinely newborn baby.

All sing: VU 7 "Hope Is A Star" verse three only

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.

Rejoice! And again, I say rejoice!

Our joy erupts from the assurance that God is with us in our here and now.

Let us join prayerfully in thanksgiving, and through divine conversation
to discover peace and strength for our living and our loving:

Open our understanding, O God, rooted in coming home to your loving.

Free our perceptions from the chains of judgement and of polarization.

Equip us to perceive the good in one another while sharing right relations.

Inspire us for new life and new vision in all we think and do,

that we might dance joyfully in Jesus' name. Amen.

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

Hymn: VU 60 "O Come, All Ye Faithful" vs. 1-4

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem:
come and behold him, born the King of angels;
O come, let us adore him, O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

God of God, light of light,
lo, he abhors not the virgin's womb;
very God, begotten, not created:
O come, let us adore him, O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;
glory to God in the highest:
O come, let us adore him, O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

See how the shepherds summoned to his cradle,
leaving their flocks, draw nigh with lowly fear;
we too will thither bend our joyful footsteps;
O come, let us adore him, O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Opening Prayer

Advent God, thank you for your precious gift of joy. We search for happiness and personal fulfillment, and you offer us deep joy. We struggle to love ourselves, and you invite us into meaningful relationship with you. We love others when they think like us, act like us, agree with us, and you love us no matter what. True joy comes not from our possessions or our status, but from knowing that we are invited into relationship and loved unconditionally. Help nurture joy within our hearts. Help us to nurture joy in this world. In Jesus' name, the source of our joy we pray. Amen.

We Are Blessed By God

Anthem: "Come To Us, O Promised One" lyrics Jan McGuire music Lloyd Larson

Time for the Young and the Young @ 

Hymn: VU 28 "Herald! Sound the Note of Gladness"

Herald! Sound the note of gladness! Tell the news that Christ is here;
make a pathway through the desert for the one who brings God near.
Sound the trumpet! Tell the message! Christ the Saving One has come!

Herald! Sound the note of judgement, warning us of right and wrong,
turning us from sin and sadness, till once more we sing the song.
Sound the trumpet! Tell the message! Christ the Saving One has come!

Herald! Sound the note of pardon! Those repenting are forgiven;
God receives these wayward children, and to all new life is given.
Sound the trumpet! Tell the message! Christ the Saving One has come!

Herald! Sound the note of triumph! Christ has come to share our life,
bringing God's own love and power, granting victory in our strife.
Sound the trumpet! Tell the message! Christ the Saving One has come!

Responsive Psalm 126 VU 850

**R: We praise the One who gave the growth,
with voices full and strong.**

When God brought Zion's captives home,
it seemed to us like a dream.

**But then our mouths were full of laughter,
and our tongues uttered shouts of joy.**

Then they said among the nations:

"God has done great things for them."

**Truly God has done great things for us,
and therefore we rejoice.**

**R: We praise the One who gave the growth,
with voices full and strong.**

Restore our fortunes, O God,
as streams refresh the Negev.

**Those who sow in tears
shall reap with shouts of joy.**

Those who go out weeping,
carrying seed for sowing,
**shall come home with songs of joy,
bringing in their sheaves.**

**R: We praise the One who gave the growth,
with voices full and strong.**

Scripture: John 1:6-8, 19-28

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed and did not deny it, but he confessed, "I am not the Messiah." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said,

"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,

'Make straight the way of the Lord,' "

as the prophet Isaiah said.

Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, "Why, then, are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandal." This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

*The other readings for this week are: **Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24***

Meditation: "Joy"

Hymn VU 25 "Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending"

Lo, he comes with clouds descending, see the Lamb for sinners slain!

Thousand, thousand saints attending join to sing the glad refrain:

hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah! God appears on earth to reign.

Every eye shall then behold you, robed in awesome majesty;
all who jeered, and mocked, and sold you, pierced, and nailed you to the tree,
deeply grieving, deeply grieving, deeply grieving, shall the true Messiah see.

Now redemption, long expected see in solemn pomp appear;
all the saints, by us rejected, thrill the trumpet sound to hear:
hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah! See the day of God appear.

Yea! Amen! Let all adore you, high on your eternal throne;
crowns and empires fall before you, claim the kingdom for your own:
O come quickly! O come quickly! O come quickly! Everlasting Christ, come down.

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 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 Calvary United Church, London, and their spiritual leader, the Rev. Kerry Stover, as they make God's love known.

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; 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 Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and China.

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

Jesus shared generously, holding back nothing from those around him. Out of gratitude and in generosity we emulate Jesus in sharing what we have with all in need. Our tithes and offerings will be received.

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

We have looked in our lives, O God, and here, here is a portion of the abundance with which we have been blessed, and in offering it for the blessing of the world, we discover joy. Bless these tithes and offerings in Jesus' name. Amen.

Hymn VU 48 "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing"

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King,
peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"

Joyful, all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies;
with the angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ the everlasting Lord,
late in time behold him come, offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail, the incarnate deity,
pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel!
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

Hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
Light of life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,
born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

Commissioning and Benediction

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

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

We will act joy and speak joy as we await in joy the coming of our Lord.

May it be so. **Amen.**

Response: VU 9 "People, Look East" vs. 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.

**Postlude: "O How Joyfully with Joy To The World" Lowell Mason (based on G. F. Handel)
arr. Cindy Berry**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

DORCHESTER:

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

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:

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

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

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 24

Fourth Sunday of Advent

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Luke 1:46b-55 OR Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

Christmas Eve

Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)