

**Sunday February 16, 2025
Sixth Sunday after Epiphany**

We Gather In God's Presence

Prelude: "Open The Eyes of My Heart" Words and Music by Paul Baloche. Arr. by Paul Medema

Birthdays, Celebrations, and Life and Work of the Congregation

Lighting the Christ Candle

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;

those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined.

Isaiah 9:2

Preparing Our Hearts for Worship

Call to Worship

Blessed are those whose faith is in God!

We gather to worship our God in whom we trust.

Blessed are those whose hope is in the Lord!

We gather to worship our God in whom our future lies.

Blessed are those whose life is rooted in God!

We gather to be nourished like trees by a stream.

Hymn VU 222 "Come, Let Us Sing" Words and Music: Jim Stratthdee, 1976. Arr.: Jean Stratthdee, 1976.

Words and Music © 1977 Desert Flower Music. OneLicense.net A620168

Come, let us sing to the Lord our song,
we have stood silently too long;
surely the Lord deserves our praise,
so joyfully thank God for our days.

O thirsty soul, come drink at the well;
God's living waters will never fail.
Surely the Lord will help you to stand,
strengthened and comforted by God's hand.

You dwell among us and cause us to pray,
and walk with each other following your way;
our precious brothers and sisters will grow
in the fulfilling love they know.

Deserts shall bloom and mountains shall sing
to the desire of all living things.
Come, all you creatures, high and low,
let your praises endlessly flow.

Opening Prayer (*unison*)

Creator God, from the dust of the earth you fashioned hearts that beat within our chests and breathed into us the breath of life. We thank you and bless you for the gift of life. You gave us life that we might love you, one another, and ourselves, yet all too often our hearts are obsessed with what is wrought by our own human strength; our hearts listen to those we believe to be wise because we think they are strong; our hearts are closed against those who do not act or live as we think they ought; our hearts are hardened by the sight of those we perceive to be weak. Forgive us God. Remove our hardened hearts and create in us new hearts; hearts that beat for the poor; hearts that ache for those who weep; hearts that welcome those shunned by the rest of the world; hearts that break at the sights and sounds of the pain, suffering and anguish in our world. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Ministry of Music: "Hymn Sing"

A New Creed VU 918

We are not alone,
we live in God's world.

We believe in God:
who has created and is creating,
who has come in Jesus,
the Word made flesh,
to reconcile and make new,
who works in us and others
by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:
to celebrate God's presence,
to live with respect in Creation,
to love and serve others,
to seek justice and resist evil,
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,
our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death,
God is with us.

We are not alone.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn VU 401 “Worship the Lord” vss. 1, 2, 3, 5 Words: Fred Kaan, 1972. Music: Ron Klusmeier, 1977.
Words © 1974 Hope Publishing Co. Music © 1976 Ron Klusmeier. OneLicense.net A620168

Worship the Lord (worship the Lord)
worship the Father, the Spirit, the Son,
raising our hands (raising our hands)
in devotion to God who is one!

Raising our hands as a sign of rejoicing,
and with our lips our togetherness voicing,
giving ourselves to a life of creativeness,
worship and work must be one!

Worship the Lord (worship the Lord)
worship the Father, the Spirit, the Son,
raising our hands (raising our hands)
in devotion to God who is one!

Praying and training that we be a blessing,
and by our handiwork daily confessing:
we are committed to serving humanity,
worship and work must be one!

Worship the Lord (worship the Lord)
worship the Father, the Spirit, the Son,
raising our hands (raising our hands)
in devotion to God who is one!

Called to be partners with God in creation,
honouring Christ and the Lord of the nation,
we must be ready for risk and for sacrifice,
worship and work must be one!

Worship the Lord (worship the Lord)
worship the Father, the Spirit, the Son,
raising our hands (raising our hands)
in devotion to God who is one!

Now in response to the life you are giving,
help us, Creator, to offer our living,
seeking a just and a healing society,
worship and work must be one!

Worship the Lord (worship the Lord)
worship the Father, the Spirit, the Son,
raising our hands (raising our hands)
in devotion to God who is one!

We Open Ourselves to Receive God's Blessings

Responsive Reading: Psalm 1

Blessed are those who follow the law of God.

Blessed are those who do not follow the counsel
of the wicked, or linger in the way of sinners,
or sit down among those who mock.

**But their delight is in the law of God,
and on that law they meditate day and night.**

They are like trees planted beside streams of water,
yielding their fruit in due season.

**Their leaves do not wither,
and whatever they produce shall prosper.**

Blessed are those who follow the law of God.

As for the wicked, it is not so with them,

**but they are like the chaff,
driven away by the wind.**

Therefore the wicked shall not be able to stand
when judgement comes,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

**For God watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.**

Blessed are those who follow the law of God.

Scripture: Jeremiah 17:5-10

Thus says the Lord:

Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals
and make mere flesh their strength,
whose hearts turn away from the Lord.

They shall be like a shrub in the desert
and shall not see when relief comes.

They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness,
in an uninhabited salt land.

Blessed are those who trust in the Lord,
whose trust is the Lord.

They shall be like a tree planted by water,
sending out its roots by the stream.

It shall not fear when heat comes,
and its leaves shall stay green;
in the year of drought it is not anxious,
and it does not cease to bear fruit.

The heart is devious above all else;
it is perverse—
who can understand it?
I the Lord test the mind
and search the heart,
to give to all according to their ways,
according to the fruit of their doings.

*The other readings for this week are: **Luke 6:17-26; 1 Corinthians 15:12-20***

Meditation: “Who has your ear?”

Hymn VU 121 “Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery” vss. 1, 7, 9, 10 Words and Music: Marty Haugen, 1984
Words and Music © 1984 G.I.A. Publications, Inc. OneLicense.net A620168

Tree of Life and awesome mystery,
in your death we are reborn,
though you die in all of history,
still you rise with every morn,
still you rise with every morn.

From the dawning of creation,
you have loved us as your own;
stay with us through all temptation,
make us turn to you alone,
make us turn to you alone.

Living Water of salvation,
be the fountain of each soul;
springing up in new creation,
flow in us and make us whole,
flow in us and make us whole.

Give us eyes to see you clearly,
make us children of your light;
give us hearts to live more nearly
as your gospel shining bright,
as your gospel shining bright.

We Respond To God's Grace

Invitation to Invest in God's Mission

God does not bless us for our own benefit alone. Rather it is through us that God blesses all of creation. The blessings we receive are to be shared to be blessings for others as well. It is at our own peril that we hoard God's blessings. Our tithes and offerings will be received.

Offertory Hymn VU 81 “As with Gladness Men of Old” **vs. 3** Words: William Chatterton Dix, ca. 1858.
 Music: Conrad Kocher, 1838. Adapted William H. Monk, 1861.
 Words, Music and Adaptation in the Public Domain.

As they offered gifts most rare at that manger crude and bare,
 so may we with holy joy, pure and free from sin’s alloy,
 all our costliest treasures bring, Christ, to you, our heavenly King.

Prayer of Dedication

You pour out your abundance on us, Loving God, so we can alleviate the sufferings of others, turn their woes into blessings, and their emptiness into overflowing grace and life. Take the gifts we offer and use them in the work of your new life which is in our midst. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession & The Lord’s Prayer

Loving God, you cause the rain to fall on the just and the unjust alike. Hear our prayers:

For the hungry and the overfed: may we all have enough.

For the mourners and the mockers: may we laugh together.

For the victims and the oppressors: may we share power wisely.

For the peacemakers and the warmongers:

may clear truth and stern love lead us to harmony.

For the silenced and the propagandists: may we speak our own words in truth and in love.

For the unemployed, the retired and the overworked:

may our mark on this earth be kindly and creative.

For the troubled and the secure: may we live together as wounded healers.

For the homeless and the pampered: may we all have shelters of warmth and safety.

For the vibrant and the dying: may we all die to sin and live to love.

All knowing God, we lift up our neighbours and ask your blessing upon them:

The people of Austria, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland.

All who mourn a loss in their lives,

Those who are ill or dying, waiting for medical treatment or recovering from medical intervention, especially Butch, Christa, Christina, David, Jack, Kurt, and their loved ones and caregivers,

and those known only in the silence of our hearts.....

We pray in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus, the Christ, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever, and who taught us to pray,

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, the power, and the glory,

forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn VU 675 “Will Your Anchor Hold” Words: Priscilla Jane Owens, 1882.

Music: William James Kirkpatrick, 1882. Words and Music in the Public Domain.

Will your anchor hold in the storms of life?

When the clouds unfold their wings of strife,
when the strong tides lift and the cables strain,
will your anchor drift or firm remain?

We have an anchor that keeps the soul
steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
fastened to the rock which cannot move,
grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love!

It will surely hold in the straits of fear,
when the breakers tell that the reef is near;
though the tempest rave and the wild winds blow,
not an angry wave shall our bark o'erflow.

We have an anchor that keeps the soul
steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
fastened to the rock which cannot move,
grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love!

It will surely hold in the floods of death,
when the waters cold chill our latest breath;
on the rising tide it can never fail
while our hopes abide within the veil.

We have an anchor that keeps the soul
steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
fastened to the rock which cannot move,
grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love!

When our eyes behold, through the gathering night,
the city of gold, our harbour bright,
we shall anchor fast by the heavenly shore,
with the storms all past forevermore.

We have an anchor that keeps the soul
steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
fastened to the rock which cannot move,
grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love!

Commissioning

Blessed are we,

**because we are able to gather to worship God,
and listen for the word God speaks to us today.**

Blessed are we,

because we know we sin and fall short of the glory of God.

Blessed are we,

because we know our need for God in our lives.

We leave this time of worship knowing we are blessed,

blessed by God, who created us for blessing.

Response: VU 298 “When You Walk from Here” Words & Music: Linnea Good, 1991.

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When you walk from here, when you walk from here,
walk with justice, walk with mercy, and with God’s humble care.

Postlude: “I Could Sing of Your Love Forevermore” (Based on *Morning* by Edvard Grieg).

Words and Music by Martin Smith. Arr. by Ken Medema

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Annual Congregational Meeting will be held following worship on Sunday, March 2.

Flourishing: Antler River, Western Ontario Waterways, and Horseshoe Falls Regional Councils

Spend a day with the Moderator, engaging in reflection and energizing activities towards dream-oriented actions for our churches and communities.

Saturday, February 22, 2025, 9:00 am to 4:30 pm (local time).

9:00am -9:30am Registration and coffee/tea

9:30am – Welcome and Introductions

In person at:

Avondale United Church, 194 Avondale Ave., Stratford, ON N5A 6N4

All around the world – from universities to the United Nations, from corporations to community organizations – people are talking about flourishing. Rooted in belonging, flourishing means living with purpose and joy, and bringing bold collaborative solutions to our world’s challenges.

The Moderator, the Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdowne, wants to bring that conversation to The United Church of Canada. She invites us to connect to one another in hope, with a deep conviction by a belief that, despite all the challenges of church life in this day and age, we can move from despair to transformation – from languishing to flourishing.

Is your church flourishing?

(Perhaps that’s the wrong question.)

Is your church contributing to the flourishing of your community?

How might we truly be a flourishing church in the world? How might we live in deep spirituality, bold discipleship and daring justice, linked from coast to coast to coast in ministry that transforms us and the world around us?

To register, go to:

<https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=qLUYz3gmEUCTEhXw9xV1dC15iUSbxN1CqdLiNwjtK9RURTKxNDVFTEtIQ1BFT0hHQkxFRTFIT1MyTC4u&route=shorturl>

OR, go to:

www.arwrcucc.ca and go to the UPCOMING EVENTS CALENDAR (under EVENTS), scroll down to February 22, and click on the poster, then scroll down to the link that says CLICK HERE TO REGISTER [Flourishing Workshop](#)

Something Sacred—Lenten Study 2025. Tuesdays, March 11 - April 15, 2025 1:00-2:00 p.m. ET

In this six-week series, join Rev. Stephen Fetter and people from across the country to explore some of the readings from Something Sacred, our new devotional resource. Join us as we explore how music unveils something awesome, something more, something faithful, something honest, something grace-filled, something hopeful, something sacred. Register on CHURCHx.ca

Being Christian: Baptism, Bible, Eucharist, Prayer – Lenten Book Study. Thursdays, March 6-27

7:00 p.m. We are invited to join our Anglican neighbours at St. Peters for their Lenten book study, written by the former Archbishop of Canterbury. You can order the book online at Thrift Books or Amazon.

LECTIONARY READINGS: February 23 – Seventh Sunday after Epiphany

Genesis 45:3-11, 15; Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40; 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50; Luke 6:27-38