

Sunday December 14, 2025  
Third Sunday of Advent

**We Gather In God's Presence**

**Prelude:** "Ave Maria" Music: Charles Gounod. Adapted from Prelude in C major by J.S. Bach  
Soprano Soloist: Nancy Quinn.

**Birthdays, Celebrations, and Life and Work of the Congregation**

**Lighting the Advent Candle:**

God delights us with wonder and blessing each morning.

**God brings smiles to our faces and joy to our sleepy souls.**

Let our delight burst forth with the birth of new life today.

**Let our candle of joy reflect our desire for inward happiness.**

**Hymn:** "Advent Song" Words and Music: Mary Lu Walker, 1975.

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Light the Advent candle, three: Think of heavenly harmony;  
angels singing "Peace on earth" at the blessed Saviour's birth.  
Candle, candle, burning bright, shining in the cold winter night;  
candle, candle, burning bright, fill our hearts with Christmas light.

**Preparing Our Hearts for Worship**

**Call to Worship** *based on a prayer © 2025 Thom M. Shuman, used with permission.*

Be patient! The time is coming  
when we will celebrate the birth of Jesus,

**when we will sing and rejoice,**

**dancing with everlasting joy.**

But for now, be patient,

as we wait in this time called Advent,

**when God speaks through dreams and visions,**

**and we are invited to dance**

**down the holy way into the kingdom.**

For this is Advent, as we prepare to join the world

in celebrating the Creator of goodness and hope,

**when those who limp will teach new dance steps,**

**when the voiceless sing, 'She Walked in the Summer.'**

**Hymn VU 12** "She Walked in the Summer" Words and Music: Miriam Therese Winter, 1968.

Words and Music © 1968, 1987 Medical Mission Sisters. Accompaniment: © 1995 Nan Thompson.

Miriam Therese Winter gives permission for one-time use if full copyright information is included.

She walked in the summer through the heat on the hill.

She hurried as one who went with a will.

She danced in the sunlight when the day was done.

Her heart knew no evening who carried the sun.

Fresh as a flower at the first ray of dawn,  
she came to her cousin whose morning was gone.  
There leaped a little child in the ancient womb,  
and there leaped a little hope in every ancient tomb.

Hail, little sister, who heralds the spring.  
Hail, brave mother, of whom prophets sing.  
Hail to the moment beneath your breast.  
May all generations call you blessed.

When you walk in the summer through the heat on the hill,  
when you're wound with the wind and one with Her will,  
be brave with the burden you are blessed to bear,  
for it's Christ that you carry everywhere, everywhere, everywhere.

**Opening Prayer (unison)** *based on a prayer © 2025 Thom M. Shuman, used with permission.*

Ever-approaching God, you gather those whom the world disregards in order to accomplish the unexpected and seemingly impossible in a world that only worships the god "me".

Ever-an-infant yet ever-scarred Lord, those whose voices are not heard by this world hear your voice and the whispers of angels on hillsides and in shelters as you embrace them with your love.

Breath of Advent, you guide those lost in the land of despair onto the holy way of hope where hills are brought low and valleys raised, where twists and turns are straightened and potholes are filled in.

Yet we are so busy with the crass consumerism of this holy season that we don't truly notice the vulnerable and marginalized. We step over the addict, the homeless, the mentally unwell to get into the store to buy gifts for those who do not need them. We are so busy going through lists in our head that we do not hear the cries of the despairing and the lonely. We are so lost in our thoughts that we fail to see those discarded by our society and our governments. We have forgotten that you came so long ago to bring justice and hope for those who have none. Open our eyes to see the salvation that you offer to us and to all. Open our hearts to witness the injustice and suffering all around us. Open our mouths to speak for those without a voice. Open our hands to work for reconciliation. May we make the love you came into this world to show us known to the least of our brothers and sisters. This we pray in the name of our Brother, Jesus, your Anointed, Messiah, Christ. Amen.

**Anthem: "Carol For The Nativity"** From Bishop Wadding's County Wexford Carols 1686, (Set to familiar Irish tunes).  
Pastoral finale verse from *The Little Red Lark*, Irish Melody. Arr. Healy Willan.  
Text Adapted by Nancy Quinn and Norman Abbott.

Soprano Soloist - Nancy Quinn

### **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 45** "Joy Is Now in Every Place" Words: Author unknown.

Music: German carol melody ca. 1500; arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1906.

Words and Music in the Public Domain.

Joy is now in every place,  
Christmas lightens every face;  
now be with us, in your grace,  
O hear us, bless us, holy Jesus.

May the star that shone that night,  
making your poor stable bright,  
fill our hearts with love and light,  
O hear us, bless us, holy Jesus.

Through the New Year let it stay,  
leading us upon your way,  
making Christmas every day,  
O hear us, bless us, holy Jesus.

Now and ever may we find  
your good news to fill our mind:  
peace and love to humankind,  
O hear us, bless us, holy Jesus.

## **We Open Ourselves to Receive God's Blessings**

**Responsive Reading: Luke 1:46b-55**

**To God I lift my soul in praise, in God my saviour I rejoice.**

My soul proclaims God's greatness.

**My spirit rejoices in God my saviour.**

For you have looked with favour on your lowly servant.

**From this day all generations will call me blessed.**

You have done great things for me, O Most Mighty.

**Hallowed be your Name!**

You have mercy on those who fear you,

**from one generation to another.**

**To God I lift my soul in praise, in God my saviour I rejoice.**

You took action with a strong arm.

**You scattered the proud in their conceit.**

You pulled the mighty from their thrones.

**You raised the lowly.**

You filled the hungry with good things.

**You sent the rich away empty.**

You come to the aid of your servant, Israel,

**for you remembered your promise of mercy,**

**to our ancestors, Abraham and Sarah,**

**and to their children in every age.**

**To God I lift my soul in praise, in God my saviour I rejoice.**

**Scripture: Isaiah 35:1-10 The Return of the Redeemed to Zion**

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;

the desert shall rejoice and blossom;

like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly

and rejoice with joy and shouting.

The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,

the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.

They shall see the glory of the Lord,

the majesty of our God.]]

Strengthen the weak hands

and make firm the feeble knees.

Say to those who are of a fearful heart,

"Be strong, do not fear!

Here is your God.

He will come with vengeance,

with terrible recompense.

He will come and save you."

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
 and the ears of the deaf shall be opened;  
 then the lame shall leap like a deer,  
 and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.  
 For waters shall break forth in the wilderness  
 and streams in the desert;  
 the burning sand shall become a pool  
 and the thirsty ground springs of water;  
 the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp;  
 the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

A highway shall be there,  
 and it shall be called the Holy Way;  
 the unclean shall not travel on it,  
 but it shall be for God's people;  
 no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.  
 No lion shall be there,  
 nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;  
 they shall not be found there,  
 but the redeemed shall walk there.  
 And the ransomed of the Lord shall return  
 and come to Zion with singing;  
 everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;  
 they shall obtain joy and gladness,  
 and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

*The other lectionary readings for this week are: **Psalm 146:5-10; James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11***

**Sermon:** "Great Expectations"

**Hymn VU 222** "Come, Let Us Sing" Words and Music: Jim Strathdee, 1976. Piano Arrangement: Jean Strathdee, 1976  
 Words and Music © 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.

### **We Respond To God's Grace**

#### **Invitation to Invest in God's Mission**

God's Word of joy is coming into the world: joy for those who are filled with worry and anxiety, joy for those who are filled with sorrow and remorse, joy for those who are numb to their feelings. We offer up our tithes and offerings to help prepare the way of the Lord, we offer up our gifts as symbols of joy.

**Offertory Hymn:** to the tune *Hymn to Joy* by Ludwig van Beethoven, 1824; adapt. Edward Hodges, 1864.

Music and Adaptation in the Public Domain. Words: Unknown.

Joyful, joyful, Lord we bring you gifts that you can use today.

Take them, bless them, may your kingdom spread to all the world, we pray.

We are here: our time, our talents, we would dedicate as well.

May we show Christ's love within us, by our lives our faith to tell.

#### **Prayer of Dedication**

Accept, O God, this money offered, these gifts given, the goodwill of our hearts, that despair may be turned to hope, and sorrow to joy, as we await with wonder the advent of Christ. Amen.

#### **Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession & The Lord's Prayer**

God of Love, "A voice cries in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord!"

Yet we need you, by your Holy Spirit, to prepare a way in our hearts and minds and lives.

Prepare among us the path of joy. Grant us joy that goes beyond simple happiness, which rises like bubbles in a carbonated drink only to disappear when they reach the surface. Grant us that deep, internal sense of contentment that endures times of hardship because it is an orientation tied to a sense of connection with you, O God, and to a sense of purpose. We pray for those whose spirits need to be buoyed up because they think joy comes from the contents of packages, boxes and bags. May they find their joy as they rest in your arms and know that they are home, perhaps for the first time.

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 signal they are cherished, or even noticed by someone;

all who struggle with a lifetime burden of being told they are not good enough.

Prepare among us, O God, the path of hope.

We pray for those in need of hope today:

all who mourn the death of a loved one; especially the friends and families of Jack Wilson;

all who grieve the end of a relationship;

all who are worried for a friend;

all who live in the midst of social collapse;

all who live in grinding poverty;  
 all who are anxious for a family member's health;  
 all who are overwhelmed by illness or disability;  
 Barb, Butch, 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 us peace that goes beyond the silence of guns and bombs and drones that fall in Ukraine and Russia despite so called peace talks, beyond bullets and mortars and shells that take innocent lives in Gaza, Lebanon and the West Bank despite a so called truce. Grant the peace that comes in following your ways, in practicing justice and righteousness, in sharing our gifts for your sake.

O God of hope, peace, joy and love, we honour you now and always, through Jesus, your Anointed One, who taught us to pray, saying:

**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,  
 for ever and ever. Amen.**

**Hymn VU 58** "Infant Holy, Infant Lowly" Words: Polish carol, trans. and para. Edith M. G. Reed, 1921.

Music: Polish folk melody, harm. A. E. Rusbridge.

Words and Music in the Public Domain.

Infant holy, infant lowly, for his be a cattle stall,  
 oxen lowing, little knowing Christ the babe is Lord of all.  
 Swift are winging angels singing, noels ringing, tidings bringing:  
 Christ the babe is born for all. Christ the babe is born for all.

Flocks were sleeping; shepherds keeping vigil till the morning new  
 saw the glory, heard the story, tiding of a gospel true.  
 Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow, praises voicing greet the morrow:  
 Christ the babe was born for you. Christ the babe was born for you.

### **Commissioning and Benediction**

O come, desire behind our greatest needs.

**O come, Joy of our hearts.**

O come, O come, Emmanuel.

**Amen.**

**Sung Response:** “Advent Amen” Words and Music: Lisa Waites. Words and Music © 2018 Lisa Waites.  
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Go now with hope, for Jesus will be coming soon.

Go now with peace, that God alone can give;

Go now with Joy, to share with all the prophet's news.

Go now with love, God's faithful love to live;

Amen, Amen, Hallelujah, Amen.

**Postlude:** “*Lo, How a Rose E're Blooming*” Geistliche Kirchengesang. Arr. Bernadine Johnson

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Sox in a Box.** We are collecting socks, mittens, hats, scarves, and other warm items for the homeless again this year. The box is at the foot of the Christmas tree in the sanctuary.

**Gifts with Vision.** Trying to find the perfect gift for the person who has everything? Have you looked at the 2025 edition of Gifts with Vision? There are many ways to support those in need in Canada and around the world. And, gifts are considered charitable donations. Pamphlets are available on the table just outside the front of the sanctuary (across from the elevator), or visit [www.giftswithvision.ca](http://www.giftswithvision.ca)

**Ark Aid Mission** has launched the HOLIDAY BIG GIVE. They have challenged the community, faith and otherwise, to raise \$500,000 to fund 10,000 more days of safe rest, food, and other essentials. For more information, go to [www.holidaybiggive.ca](http://www.holidaybiggive.ca) or contact [paula@arkaidmission.ca](mailto:paula@arkaidmission.ca)

**Organ Recital Series: From Buxheim to Bach** The final recital in a series of four recitals will take place at Metropolitan United Church (London) at 12:15 p.m., followed by a light lunch at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 27. A freewill offering will be received.

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### **Lectionary Readings:**

Sunday, December 21, Fourth Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 7:10-16; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25