**Covenant**

***The United Church of Canada***

a safe place for all people to worship

Minister: Laura Hutchison

**COVENANT UNITED CHURCH**

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2024**

**FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**WITH HOLY COMMUNION**



**ADVENT CANDLE LITURGY**

Advent 1

1 - O come, all you faithful ones! It is time to begin the journey to Bethlehem. It is time to get ready for something wonderful...someONE wonderful!

2 - The days are surely coming!

1 - Amidst the struggles of today, amidst the pressures and anxiety, we live in hope. And hope lives in us, because we have heard the promise of God and we believe. We believe that peace, joy and love can be born anew in our world!

2 - The days are surely coming!

1 - We light the first candle in our Advent Wreath, the candle of hope.

*(the candle of hope is lit)*

1 - Small, like the very first glow of dawn on the horizon, it speaks to the promise of a new day, a new way of living together in harmony with each other and the earth.

1 - The days are surely coming!

Together - We begin our advent journey, guided by the light of hope! *(animals are placed at the creche and nearby)* See here, the stable in Bethlehem, where the animals await the arrival of the Holy Family.

ALL SING: VU 60 O Come All Ye Faithful, verse 1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wy-M7ukD8k0>

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.**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE LAND**

In our new creed we pledge to follow the divine call to live with respect in creation. With respect we acknowledge that this land where we are meeting for the worship and work of Christ is the traditional territory of the Mattagami First Nation, and of many Cree, Oji-Cree, Ojibway and Metis families. Use of this land is covered by Treaty 9, and we are all treaty people who are growing in our ability to care for the land together.

**ADVENT INTROIT** *(tune is MV 79 Spirit Open My Heart)*

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=mgnz_o303Tc>

Will you come, gather in?

Come in hope and come in wonder.

There is life in our longing,

There’s a voice – in the thunder.

Will you come, gather in?

**WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

You are welcome here at Covenant United Church, where the ordinary is sanctified, where humanity is celebrated in all of its diversity, and compassion is expected. In this place together, we make it a holy place where love can dwell.

 A special thank you to our coffee hour volunteers each month! Volunteering on December 15th are Heather & Veronica and January 12th are Carol Third & Evelyn Glazier. We are looking for volunteers to host the next coffee hour in February. If you are willing to help, please contact Heather.

 Office hours are Wednesdays from 9:00 – 3:30.

 Red Solo Cup homemade soups are available in the kitchen freezer. $ 5.00 each.

 Covenant will host our annual Christmas Carol and Coffee drop in on December 10, 2024 1-3 pm. Ask your singing friends to join the Covenant choir and all who enjoy Christmas music. Volunteers for desserts appreciated.

 Prayer Shawl will meet on December 5th from 1:00 until 3:00. All are welcome.

 The Church Property Network will meet online on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 7pm ET (in the South Room) to discuss the following topics:

December 12: Faithful Footprints and Energy Efficiency, with Stephen Collette and David Constable

January 15: Rental Strategies 101, with Katja Brittain and Daniel Reed

 Our annual Christmas Pageant will be held on December 15th.

*(ringing the chimes)*

**CENTERING**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

If it happened here

 As it happened there…

If it happened now

 As it happened then…

Who would have seen the miracle?

Who would have brought gifts?

Who would have taken Them in?

**LEARNING TOGETHER**

**HYMN – VU # 2 Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hRucZZny_gQ>

Come, thou long-expected Jesus,

born to set thy people free:

from our fears and sins release us,

let us find our rest in thee.

Israel’s strength and consolation,

hope of all the earth thou art,

dear desire of every nation,

joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver;

born a child and yet a king;

born to reign in us for ever;

now thy gracious kingdom bring.

By thine own eternal Spirit

rule in all our hearts alone;

by thine all-sufficient merit

raise us to thy glorious throne.

**PRAYERS OF APPROACH** - *by Cindy Randall for the gathering*

**In a spirit of hope, we come, Holy God,
on this first Sunday of Advent.**

**As we enter into a season
of anticipation and waiting,
help us to appreciate each day
of this sacred time.**

**Prepare our hearts, we pray,
to receive the babe of Bethlehem. Amen.**

**PRAYERS OF CONFESSION** – *Sue Webb, Faith Centennial U.C., Selkirk, Ont.*

God of all hope,
we gather this morning,
a people after your own heart,
wanting to draw near to you,
wanting to declare our devotion to you,
wanting to live lives worthy of our calling.

We desire to run this race called life to completion but struggle to find the strength to do so.

**We long to feel your Spirit move through this gathering. We long to feel your presence with us in the long, lonely days. We long to notice evidence of your healing power. We long to notice you in the people we meet, in our children and grandchildren. We long for forgiveness and a fresh start. We long for a broken relationship restored.**

God of all hope,
help us to journey in faith, through these Advent days.

**Give us the senses to perceive your kingdom come. Give us hearts open to the songs of angels. Give us the courage to share the Good News of a baby born, the answer to all of our longings, the hope\* of the world.
In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.**

**HYMN – MV # 158 Dream a Dream**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5840RKsgUco>

Dream a dream, a hopeful dream,

as children do on Christmas Eve,

imaginings, surprising things

to hold and to believe. (to believe).

Dream a time, this Christmas time,

when no one’s hungry or afraid;

that weapons go and harvests grow,

that friends are met and made. (met and made).

Dream a peace, our planet’s peace,

the greening of the earth at play,

the holy ground where life is found,

where God has touched the clay. (touched the clay).

Dream a gift, the Christmas gift

that changes every thing we see:

the shimmering of angel wing,

the Child, the Mystery. (Mystery).

**GOD’S MISSION, OUR STORIES**

Helping children and communities grow.



Becoming a new parent can be overwhelming, with the constant demands of caring for a newborn, sleepless nights, and the pressure to make the right choices for your child. The exhaustion and balancing daily responsibilities while navigating the unknowns of parenthood often leaves new parents feeling unsure and isolated. It’s a time filled with great joy, but also uncertainty, as parents adjust to their new roles and work to create a safe and nurturing environment for their little one.

At Fairview Resource Centre in Halifax, Nova Scotia, the New Parents Support group aims to walk with parents as they navigate the complexities of raising a newborn. Once a week, parents gather to meet with a public health nurse who provides education and answers questions. From expectant parents to those with babies up to 18 months, the program provides resources for those who might not otherwise have access to in-person support or resources.

Parents connect not only with health professionals, but form deep bonds with each other, and some are still in contact many years later. Many of us have heard that “it takes a village to raise a child,” and Fairview Resource Centre is truly taking action to give a positive space for children in the community to flourish. Thank you for walking alongside our Mission and Service partners as they help children and communities grow.

Your support of Mission and Service is vital to the continuation of incredible programs like these.

**SCRIPTURE READINGS**

**Jeremiah 33:14-16** – New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

**Psalm 25: 1-10** VU p.752 (responsively)

Refrain – **To you, O God, I lift my soul, to you I lift my soul.**

To you, O God, I lift my soul; my God, in you I trust.

Let me not be put to shame, nor let my foes gloat over me.

**Let none who wait for you be shamed;**

**Let them be shamed who wantonly break faith.**

Show me your ways; teach me your paths.

**Lead me in your truth and teach me;**

**For you are God my saviour.**

**For you I wait all day long.** Refrain

Remember your mercy and your steadfast love

For they are as old as time.

**Do not remember the sins and offences of my youth.**

**According to your steadfast love remember me,**

**For your goodness’ sake, O God.** refrain

You are upright and good, O God,

Therefore you show the path to those who go astray.

**You guide the humble to do what is right,**

**And teach the lowly your way.**

All your ways are loving and sure

**For those who keep your covenant and commandments.** Refrain

**1 Thessalonians 3:9-13**

**Luke 21:25-36** – Good News Translation

**REFLECTING**

**HYMN – VU # 713 I See a New Heaven** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gjxnLbQdRW4>

**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. **(R)**

There, there where death dies and our lives are born again,

body and soul, struggling but whole

like flowers after the rain. **(R)**

There, there where the darkness brings visions from above.

There where the night, bearing new light,

reveals the promise of love. **(R)**

There, there where we work with the love of healing hands.

Labour we must, true to our trust

to build a promised new land. **(R)**

**OFFERING INVITATION**

Holy One, this Advent season we wait in hope.

And we give in hope.

Hope for your coming reign;

Hope because of your presence with us even now.

Receive these generous offerings,

And use them for your work of healing and hope in our world.

Amen.

**ADVENT DOXOLOGY -- VU # 541 Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow** (tune VU # 1 O Come, O Come Emmanuel) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6oum4aXRrgs>

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;

praise God, all creatures high and low;

give thanks to God in love made known:

Creator, Word and Spirit, One.

**PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION** –

**Gracious God, with these gifts we declare that our hope lies in you. We trust you to provide all that we need, and so we are secure in offering these generous gifts. May our giving be a sign of our faith and hope. Bless our giving, that it might indeed serve your purposes in us and in the world. Amen.**

**COMMUNION HYMN – VU # 9 People, Look East**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_b-y0vaXY1E>

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.

Furrows, be glad. Though the 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.

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.

Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim

one more light the bowl shall brim,

shining beyond the frosty weather,

bright as the sun and moon together.

People, look east and sing today:

Love the star is on the way.

Angels, announce with shouts of mirth

Christ who brings new life to earth.

Set every peak and valley humming

with the word, the Lord is coming.

People, look east and sing today:

Love the Lord is on the way.

**ADVENT COMMUNION LITURGY -** *Written by* ***Alydia Smith,*** *Program Coordinator, Worship, Music, and Spirituality, General Council Office*

As we come to this table,

we are reminded that this is the table of Jesus Christ,

a banquet prepared for everyone.

All who seek to be nourished and sustained

in the journey of faith,

all who seek wholeness and compassionate paths to peace and justice,

are welcome here.

God be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift our hearts in prayer.**

Let us give thanks to God.

**It is good to give God thanks and praise.**

*Let us pray:*

(*The following prayer was inspired by “Blessed are you, gracious God…” by William Kervin and Lillian Perigoe in* Celebrate God’s Presence*, page 276. Used with permission.*)

Blessed are you, Breath of peace,

Giver of all life,

Source of love that knows no boundaries.

Your song of wisdom rang out before the world began;

throughout the ages, your song of liberation has impregnated us with your hope for a world where:

 those considered last and least are first and most;

violence is overcome by the power of your ancient love; and,

all siblings work together for peace.

You bring our longings to birth,

and send prophets to awaken us

to your approaching Advent among us.

We thank you for those who, like Mary,

 have the strength and courage

 to give birth to your love in the world;

for those who, like the shepherds,

 dare to seek out the Child of Bethlehem;

for those who, like the wise ones,

 actively challenge violent and oppressive powers.

We praise you that your everlasting light is shown to us

 in womb and tomb,

 in cradle and cross,

 in tenderness and compassion.

We join in the Advent prayer of all your people,

**“O come, Emmanuel.”**

And, as we wait and watch for your coming among us,

we proclaim your goodness.

***All sing: Sanctus -- “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”* (*Voices United 1*)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-cTZ9fhvYKQ&list=PLuiDgKH-sKfGVh7r-CIQb2hguDIAc7uaX&index=1>

**“O come, O come, Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel,**

**That mourns in lowly exile here until the Son of God appear.**

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!”**

At this time, we also remember

all with whom you would have us share your feast.

We pray for all who are in sorrow or in pain…

all who are ill or alone…

all who are close to our hearts…

all our sisters who live with fear, oppression, or hunger…

all whose lives have been blighted by violence, racism, or poverty…

for all whom the world counts as last and least.

We pray for the church and its many ministries,

for nations as they strive for peace and justice,

for an end to violence against women.

God of hope, make this bread the means of our rebuilding,

this wine the medium of our transformation,

this table the foundation of our renewal,

and this community, the place of our rebirth. Amen.

At this time, we remember Jesus,

Who on the night before he died,

took a loaf of bread,

gave you thanks, broke it, and said,

“Take and eat; whenever you do this, remember me.”

Likewise, after supper, he took the cup, saying,

“This is the new covenant; remember me.”

Gracious God, Breath of peace,

Source of love,

we pray for your Spirit.

**Make us, while many, one.**

**Make us, though broken, whole.**

**Make us, despite death, alive.**

And so we pray:

**Come, Holy Spirit, come.**

And so we join with our siblings around the world in the prayer of Jesus:

As we find it on page 916 in Voices United:

**SHARING THE BREAD AND CUP**

The body of Christ,

**the Bread of life.**

The lifeblood of Christ,

**the cup of blessing.**

Let us eat and drink together

for our strengthening in the faith,

and for the sake of the world.

*Communion is served*

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

**We thank you, God,**

**for breaking into our world**

**and pouring into our lives and our experiences.**

**We thank you, God,**

**for this meal of thanksgiving**

**and the stories of love, grace, and hope that it tells. Amen.**

**HYMN – VU # 29 Hark the Glad Sound** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=heo14lCTFok>

Hark, the glad sound! The Saviour comes,

the Saviour promised long:

let every heart prepare a throne,

and every voice a song.

He comes, the prisoners to release

in Satan’s bondage held;

the gates of brass before him burst,

the iron fetters yield.

He comes, the broken heart to bind,

the bleeding soul to cure,

and with the treasures of his grace

to bless the humble poor.

Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace,

your welcome shall proclaim;

and heaven’s eternal arches ring

with your beloved name.

**COMMISSIONING AND BLESSING --** *Heather Sandilands, Cornerstone P.C., Waskada, Man.*

We have prayed that God’s kingdom will come.
**May this prayer bring us hope in this week.**

We have prayed that we will be empowered to act on God’s will as it is enacted in heaven.
**May this prayer carry us in hope in this week.**

We have held the world in prayer.
**May these prayers encourage us to work for hope throughout this week.**

We have received words of promise: “I am with you.”
**May these words empower us to live in hope this week,
for the sake of God’s kingdom, in the memory of Christ, for the good of the world. Amen.**

**EXTINGUISH THE ADVENT CANDLES**

**SENDING SONG –** (tune is MV 79 Spirit Open My Heart)

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=mgnz_o303Tc>

Let us go now in hope.

Raise your hearts for hope is nearing.

In the chaos, the holy

Hovers, ripe – for receiving.

Let us go now in hope.

*Resources:*

*Advent Candle & Creche Liturgy 2024, RCL Year C by Rev. Robin Pengelly*

 *And from Gatheringworship.ca*

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