**Covenant**

***The United Church of Canada***

a safe place for all people to worship

Minister: Laura Hutchison

**COVENANT UNITED CHURCH**

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 5, 2025**

**SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS**



*(Ringing once of chimes)*

**LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE** and pillars – *in silence*

**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! Our next coffee will be on January 12th and our volunteers are Carol Third & Evelyn Glazier. Volunteering February 2nd will be David Krupka & Paul Kleinhuis. If you are willing to help, please contact Heather.

 Prayer Shawl will meet on January 9th from 1:00 until 3:00. All are welcome.

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

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

 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:

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

**(Ringing of the chimes)**

**HYMN – VU # ?? We Three Kings of Orient Are** (Verse 1 only)

We three kings of Orient are;  
bearing gifts we traverse afar,  
field and fountain, moor and mountain,  
following yonder star.

**O star of wonder, star of light,  
star with royal beauty bright,  
westward leading, still proceeding,  
guide us to thy perfect light.**

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE TERRITORY**

***For thousands of years, First Nations people have walked on this land; their relationship with the land is at the centre of their lives and spirituality. We are gathered on the traditional territory of the Treaty 9 people and acknowledge their stewardship of this land throughout the ages***

**LIGHTING THE CANDLES:**

"You assure us, Jesus, that wherever two or three are gathered in your name, you are there. We light this candle to remind ourselves and to celebrate your constant presence *(The Christ Candle and pillars are lit)*

**HYMN – VU # 82 A Light is Gleaming**

**A light is gleaming, spreading its arms**

**throughout the night, living in the light.**

**Come share its gladness, God’s radiant love**

**is burning bright, living in the light.**

When light comes pouring into the darkest place,

it hurts our eyes to see the glow.

Sometimes a word of hope reminds us of our fears,

our memories and tears. **(R)**

When night is round us and every shadow grows,

a star is there to light our way.

It tells a story of Jesus who came near to say:

“God’s light will ever stay.” **(R)**

And Jesus showed us a brighter path to walk.

He showed us things we hadn’t seen.

Now we, like Jesus, can help creation shine,

and this will be a sign: **(R)**

So let us live in the brightness God has giv’n,

and let us rise to see the dawn.

We trust that God is here asparkle and ablaze,

--- warming all our days. **(R)**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

1. (pointing to bible on communion table. What’s this?

2. A Bible.

1. Okay.....What’s a Bible?

2. Well...it’s a....

1. Obviously, it’s a book. I get that part.

2. Actually, it’s not really a book.

1. No?

2. No. It’s a library of books.

1. A library?

2. A library...

a library of stories told, and thoughts written’

a library of wondering about God,

and a library of trying to find answers’

a library written by many people,

over a time span of 1,500 years

and one that has lasted another 2,000.

1. Why is this library here, on this table?

**ALL: Because it’s important to us.**

**Because in it we see**

**stories and dreams,**

**hopes and wonders,**

**the Spirit moving,**

**the Christ teaching,**

**and the Creator changing the world.**

1. In this library.

**ALL: In that Bible.**

2. When we share the stories,

when we listen and learn,

when we talk and love...

**ALL: We hear God’s word!**

***(Richard Bott, The Gathering, Prayers for worship)***

**OPENING PRAYER**

God of past, present, and future, we give thanks for the gift of gathering to worship, singing, praying, and hearing how you lead us toward a faith-filled future. At the end of each year, we reflect on all that has been experienced in our lives, moments of joy and wonder, times of anxiety and confusion. Throughout it all we are grateful for your covenantal love and guidance. In this New Year upon us we ask your continued presence as we strive to live out the Good News of Jesus Christ, to comfort the lonely, attend to the suffering, welcome the stranger, feed the hungry, and speak for those whose voices are being ignored. In a spirit of togetherness and oneness we pray. Amen

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Artist of all Creation, we know that we have a blank canvas of a new year before us, filled with promise and possibility. We also know that the blank canvas of a new year is an illusion. Time ticks on, moment after moment, day after day, month after month. There are times that we are remarkable and generous, yet far too often we can succumb to selfishness and individualism. Forgive us, restore us, and guide us. Be a reminder to us when we seek only to look after our treasured abundance while others are left with so little. In the Spirit of your generosity, allow us the courage to share all that we have, all that we do, and all that we are in your name. Amen.

**HYMN** – VU # 87 I Am the Light of the World

**“I am the light of the world!**

**You people come and follow me!”**

**If you follow and love you’ll learn the mystery**

**of what you were meant to do and be.**

When the song of the angels is stilled,

when the star in the sky is gone,

when the kinds and the shepherds have found their way home,

the work of Christmas is begun: **(R)**

To find the lost and lonely one,

to heal the broken soul with love,

to feed the hungry children with warmth and good food,

to feel the earth below, the sky above! **(R)**

To fee the prisoner from all chains,

to make the powerful care,

to rebuild the nations with strength of good will,

to see God’s children everywhere! **(R)**

To bring hope to every task you do,

to dance at a baby’s new birth,

to make music in an old person’s heart,

and sing to the colours of the earth! **(R)**

**CENTERING**

**ANTHEM**

**GOD’S MISSION, OUR STORIES**

When we think of education, many of us envision a classroom with books and chalkboards. But education extends far beyond that. Through education, we can learn how the world works and how we work in the world.

The Women and Family Services division at the Church of Christ in Congo provides children with the education and training they need to take charge of their own lives when they leave school. With a combination of traditional education and life skills, they provide each child with the skillset they need to thrive after graduation.

Through funding, livestock and seeds are purchased to teach children sustainable agriculture. Older children have the opportunity to assist with livestock after their classes. They learn to care for chickens and take part in odd jobs in the fields.

Your generosity through Mission and Service helps fund programs that inspire learning and skills for life. Thank you.

**HYMN – MV # 158 Dream a Dream**

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.)

**SCRIPTURES**

**Jeremiah 31:7-14** (The people return home laughing and singing)

**Psalm 147:12-20** **VU Pg. 869, Part 2** Responsively with Refrain (God’s word goes out to the ends of the earth)

**John 1:1-9, 10-18**

**REFLECTION**

**HYMN – VU # 96 Will You Come and See the Light**

Will you come and see the light from the stable door?

It is shining newly bright, though it shone before.

It will be your guiding star,

it will show you who you are;

will you hide, or decide to meet the light?

Will you step into the light that can free the slave?

It will stand for what is right, it will heal and save.

By the pyramids of greed

there’s a longing to be freed;

will you hide, or decide to meet the light?

Will you tell about the light in the prison cell?

Though it’s shackled out of sight, it is shining well.

When the truth is cut and bruised,

and the innocent abused,

will you hide, or decide to meet the light?

Will you join the hope, alight in the young girl’s eyes,

of the mighty put to flight by a baby’s cries?

When the lowest and the least

are the foremost at the feast,

will you hide, or decide to meet the light?

Will you travel by the light of the babe new born?

In the candle lit at night there’s a gleam of dawn,

and the darkness all about

is too dim to put it out:

will you hide, or decide to meet the light?

**OFFERING**

As a man and his family drove home after church, he was complaining about everything. He said, “The music was too loud, the sermon was too long. The church announcements were unclear. The building was too hot. The people were unfriendly.”

He went on and on, complaining about everything. Finally his observant son said, “Dad, you’ve got to admit it wasn’t a bad show for just a dollar.”

As one year ends and another begins, together we commit to making a difference. Your generosity to this church and to Mission and Service assists friends and strangers, those who believe as we do and those who believe differently, neighbours across town and partners across the globe. Your generosity is such a gift.

**OFFERING HYMN**

**PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

**Gracious and loving God, bless now these gifts and those offered through PAR or online, that through them we transform lives, inspire meaning and purpose, and build a better world. Remind us that in giving freely as you do, O God, we embody your own self-giving nature. Thanks be to you. Amen**

**HYMN – VU # 581 When we are Living**

When we are living, it is in Christ Jesus,

and when we’re dying, it is in the Lord.

Both in our living and in our dying,

we belong to God, we belong to God.

Through all our living, we our fruits must give.

Good works of service are for offering.

When we are giving, or when receiving,

we belong to God, we belong to God.

‘Mid times of sorrow and in times of pain,

when sensing beauty or in love’s embrace,

whether we suffer, or sing rejoicing,

we belong to God, we belong to God.

Across this wide world, we shall always find

those who are crying with no peace of mind,

but when we help them, or when we feed them,

we belong to God, we belong to God.

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

God of all time,  
help us enter the New Year quietly,  
thoughtful of who we are to ourselves and to others,  
mindful that our steps make an impact  
and our words carry power.

May we walk gently.  
May we speak only after we have listened well.

Creator of all life,  
help us enter the New Year reverently,  
aware that you have endowed  
every creature and plant, every person and habitat  
with beauty and purpose.May we regard the world with tenderness.  
May we honour rather than destroy.  
We Pray...  
For healing...   
For strength...

For vision....  
For transformation...   
For messengers and messages...   
For community....  
For acceptance -   
For making room at our tables...   
For Truth-seeking...   
For support...

For an abundance of generosity…  
Help us enter the New Year joyfully,  
willing to laugh and dance and dream,  
remembering our many gifts with thanks  
and looking forward to how we can use them to be a blessing.

We offer these and all our prayers in the name of the One who will walk with us upon the journey of this New Year; Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray….

**THE LORD’S PRAYER**

**HYMN – VU # 43 Go, Tell It on the Mountain**

**Go, tell it on the mountain,**

**over the hills and everywhere.**

**Go, tell it on the mountain,**

**that Jesus Christ is born.**

While shepherds kept their watching

o’er silent flocks by night,

behold, throughout the heavens

there shone a holy light. **(R)**

The shepherds feared and trembled

when lo, above the earth

rang out the angel chorus

that hailed our Saviour’s birth! **(R)**

Down in a lowly manger

the humble Christ was born,

and God sent our salvation

that blessed Christmas morn. **(R)**

**COMMISSIONING & BLESSING**

As you have been fed, go to feed the hungry.  
As you have been set free, go release the imprisoned.  
As you have received—give.  
As you have heard—proclaim.  
Knowing that the blessing of the Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit is always with and is more than you can ever imagine. **Amen**.

**EXTINGUISH THE CHRIST CANDLE**

**SENDING SONG – HYMN MV # 209 Go Make a Difference**

Go make a diff’rence. We can make a diff’rence.

Go make a diff’rence in the world.

Go make a diff’rence. We can make a diff’rence.

Go make a diff’rence in the world.

We are the salt of the earth,

called to let the people see

the love of God for you and me.

We are the light of the world,

not to be hidden but be seen.

Go make a diff’rence in the world.

We are the hands of Christ

reaching out to thos in need,

the face of God for all to see.

We are the spirit of hope;

we are the voice of peace.

Go make a diff’rence in the world.

So let your love shine on,

let it shine for all to see.

Go make a diff’rence in the world.

And the spirit of Christ

will be with us as we go.

Go make a diff’rence in the world.

Go make a diff’rence. We can make a diff’rence.

Go make a diff’rence in the world.

Go make a diff’rence. We can make a diff’rence.

Go make a diff’rence in the world.

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