



THIRD AVENUE UNITED CHURCH

Advent & Christmas 2020

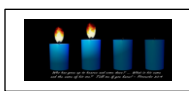
FROM THE DESK OF REV. DEXTER

If things stay as they are with the covid-19 pandemic our Advent time of preparation and Christmas celebrations are going to be quite different this year. There will not be the kind of gatherings to which we have been accustomed. There may even be challenging choices about whether we travel to be with family or welcome family to travel and be with us. Depending on our vulnerability or the vulnerability of others we may have to make difficult choices to keep ourselves and others safe. There may be individual and family traditions that we cannot observe or keep. For us as the Third Avenue Church community there will not be a Christmas Cantata; there will be no carol festival. It is important to acknowledge that our inability to do many of the things we have come to treasure will be a loss and we will feel the pain that is a part of such losses. It is alright to grieve.

And yet the advent season is a time of hope. I believe that part of the challenge in this next while will be to look beyond what we cannot have and cannot do in order to focus on what we can do. As we physically isolate in these covid-19 times we can still be in touch with each other. Some of us have mastered new technologies and can use those. Others can use older but still very important technologies like the telephone and Canada Post. I invite you to think about those you know in the congregation who might be at risk of being isolated. Think about making one phone call to someone every day. Consider reviving the tradition of sending Christmas Cards. Send five cards to people from the congregation who are well known to you and send five cards to people you don't know as well. If you need help with addresses call me at 306 480-8676 or go to the photo directory and send the cards to the five people listed before you and to the five people listed after you.

An important part of the Christmas story is that Jesus birth happened in a place where Mary and Joseph were, as far as we know, all on their own, isolated from family and community. No one in Bethlehem knew them. They were strangers and therefore vulnerable. There were people all around As I contemplate the story of Jesus' birth, as part of my faith, I believe that part of the "Good News" the shepherds received is that from the time of Jesus' birth onward we humans are not alone; that the God we know and meet in Christ is with us. This belief is expressed in the opening words of our "New Creed". 'We are not alone. We live in God's world. As a faith community not only is God with us but we also have each other, as brothers and sisters in Christ. In this Advent Season and in the days of Christmas that follow may we celebrate that we are not alone in the things we say and in the things we do.

The following is an Advent Candle Lighting Service that you may wish to use in your home.



Advent Candle Lighting



Jesus was born into a world that, on an elemental level, was much like our own. He felt the earth beneath his feet and the sun on his face, experienced the wind on the water and the rain falling to nourish the soil. The lakes, seas, sun, wind, moon, and stars were all part of his life. He looked up and saw the glory of the night sky just as we do. He gave thanks for trees and growing things, just as we do. In this season of gifts and giving, we recognize the deep blessing of the world around us. With gratitude, we anticipate the birth of Jesus – the One who came to show us the way of hope, peace, joy, and love.

Advent 1: Sky

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you (Isaiah 60.1)

In the sun, in the stars, in the light of the moon, we see the glory of our God. Soon, the one we call the Light of the World will be born again in our hearts, minds, and spirits.

The first candle is lit.

Let us pray:

Wondrous, Holy God, today we begin our time of Advent waiting. Shine the light of your love upon us, we pray, and fill us with hope as we make our way toward the stable, the cradle, and the birth that changed everything...the birth of Jesus. Amen.



Sung response: MV 135 “Called by earth and sky” *chorus, verse 4, chorus*

Advent 2: Wind

The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit (John 3: 8)

We often associate the Holy Spirit with the wildness and unpredictability of wind. May the breath of the Spirit bring us energy and creativity as we continue on our Advent journey toward Bethlehem.

The first and second candles are lit.

Let us pray:

Spirit of God, Energy of Life, hear our prayer as we continue our Advent journey together.

Wherever you lead us, wherever you need us, give us the faith to trust your guidance—as Mary did, as Joseph did, as the wise ones did. Amen.

Sung response: MV 135 “Called by earth and sky” *chorus, verse 2, chorus*

Advent 3: Earth

Let the field exult, and everything in it. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy (Psalm 96: 12).

By the grace of God, and the wonder of the natural world, the earth provides. As Mary and Joseph made their way to Bethlehem for the census, they had food to sustain them—bread made from grain grown in good soil. There was hay for the stable and grass for the animals to eat while the shepherds watched over them. The goodness of God’s creation celebrates with us on our Advent journey.

The first three candles are lit.

Let us pray:

Creator God, we see your grace and goodness in the world around us. In trees and fields and the beauty of creation, we find deep joy. Bless us on our Advent way as we await the birth of Jesus. Amen.

Sung response: MV 135 “Called by earth and sky” *chorus, verse 3, chorus*

Advent 4: Water

But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream! (Amos 5: 24).

Before his birth, Jesus swam in the life-giving waters of Mary’s womb. He was baptized in the River Jordan and called his first disciples as they repaired their fishing nets by the lakeshore. When he needed respite, Jesus went to the water for rest and healing. Water, for Jesus, and for all of us, is life. As we come to the final days of our Advent journey, may we be filled with the hope, joy, peace, and love of Jesus.

The four candles are lit.

Let us pray:

Gracious God, giver of life, as we journey to Bethlehem and the manger, we are thankful for the blessing of this season. For all the blessings around us, for the wonder of creation, and for the gift of Jesus-Emmanuel, God-with-Us—our spirits soar with praise and thanksgiving. Amen.

Sung response: MV 135 “Called by earth and sky” *chorus, verse 1, chorus*

*Written by Susan Ivany, Westminster U.C. Thunder Bay, Ont. **Gathering,** Advent/Christmas/Epiphany 2020-2021, page 68, Used with permission.*

“Called by Earth and Sky”

Chorus:

Called by earth and sky, promise of hope held high. This is our sacred living trust, treasure life sanctified, called by earth and sky.

1. Precious these waters, endless seas, deep ocean’s dream,



waters of healing, rivers of rain, the wash of love again. *Chorus*

2. Precious this gift, the air we breathe; wind born and free.
Breath of the Spirit, blow through this place, our gathering and our grace. *Chorus*
3. Precious these mountains, ancient sands; vast fragile land.
Seeds of our wakening, rooted and strong, Creation's faithful song. *Chorus*
4. Precious the fire that lights our way, bright dawning day.
Fire of passion, sorrows undone, our faith and justice. *Chorus*

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR – Joyce Salie

We walk with cat feet through a pandemic that seems to get worse and not better. It sounds like Christmas may not be the usual Christmas with family and friends and so it will be up to us with God's help to make it meaningful.

Though COVID is trying to take over our lives there is much to be thankful for: I can call you and tell you my story and then listen to your story: I can ask for help and one of my neighbors will lend me a helping hand: I am constantly reminded that there is hope; hope that this too shall end and that we will be the stronger for it although at this time one wonders:

Rev Dexter has given us his time, talent and perhaps tears of frustration (at times), Barb has given beyond and above what work time should be with many thanks for organizing the beef dinner pick up:

Many thanks to all those that help bring this off by filling the plates and delivering the dinners to the waiting cars: To Sarah Wood and Lorna Reimer, Theresa Bacchetto and others that I may have missed - for preparing for the children in the Christian Education group. Allie Raycraft who comes every Sunday and checks us off her hit list (so to speak)...Thank you.... And for those of you that join us in Sunday worship... Thank you..

It was Christmas Eve, as I slept in my bed,
When I heard a great noise, possibly a sled!
I Jumped out of bed, to catch Santa in action,
but a bearded man in red was not in the caption.
Instead a man, in shiny white clothes,
he said come nearer, and I'll share a story of old.
He opened a great book, and started to read,
about a little town, and mans new seed.
O little town of Bethlehem, a gift for you I bring
a child shall be born, and praises angels will sing.
For this little child, who in a manger born,
will be the holy Savior, the holy Lord,
He will free all men, from this burden of sin,
and will hold each dear, as children and kin.”



It was then I realized,
Christmas was not about toys,
It was not about race cars, or fancy alloys.
Christmas is about a greater gift, one that never stops
Christmas is about God's love, a gift we cannot top'

Wishing you and yours a Blessed Christmas





THIRD AVENUE UNITED CHURCH FAITH FAMILY

CONGREGATIONAL CONNECTION – *Lorna Reimer*



Many members of our congregation have been attending services in person each Sunday. The numbers of people attending has seen steady growth during September and October. We are happy to see these people returning.

We also have many people who listen online or cannot attend in person. Our committee is hoping to make a connection between these two groups!



Included with this newsletter is a note card and envelope.

Please write a short note to someone in our church community that you have not seen in church since COVID 19 shutdowns caused us to restrict services. If you receive your Newsletter on line or if you need a name of someone you might contact, there will be a list of names provided on a table each Sunday when you arrive and leave the church. Additional notepaper and envelopes will also be on the table. in the collection plate. A member of our committee will look after delivery of the notes. We want to encourage as many people as possible to take part in this outreach. We hope you can find the time to connect with someone through a personal note.



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE – *Lorna Reimer*

We are not able to hold Sunday School classes at this time so the teachers have been assembling weekly packets for the children that will hopefully keep us all connected. A short Sunday School lesson and related craft or colouring are delivered to each child. We have been using a combination of lessons from Seasons of the Spirit supplied by Rev. Dexter and The Whole People of God curriculum we have always used. It is a wonderful to talk to the children and their parents as the deliveries are made.

Our Committee would like to thank the congregation for their participation in donating food to the Food Bank for Thanksgiving. This is an important outreach into the community for our congregation especially now when needs are greater than ever!

November 15th was Children's Sunday and we had Sunday School participation in the service.

In preparation for Advent, each of the children will be involved in making an Advent card. The finished cards will then be delivered to members of our Congregation who cannot attend services due to health problems or because of COVID restrictions. We are hoping that the connection between young and old will continue throughout the winter.

Our committee is arranging for families to light the candles on the Advent wreath on each of the four Sundays of Advent, November 29, December 6th, 13th and December 20th. **If your family can participate, please call me at 306.445.7162 or call the office at 306.445.8171.**

Each Sunday School family will receive an Advent Wreath craft to construct the together and light the candles each week.

PASTORAL CARE PASTORAL CARE – *Pat Gotto*

The Pastoral Care committee would like to say "Hello" and Merry Christmas! to everyone. We wish we could do this in person, and of course would like to be able to visit with one and all. However, we are all aware of the risks that would be taking.

It is wonderful to see some of our congregation attending the worship services on Sunday, and of course, all precautions are being observed. I'm sure many of you are enjoying the services on the church web site.

Winter has arrived with a vengeance, giving us further reason to stay in. In any case, "Stay in, Stay safe."



White Gift Sunday is December 6, 2020.

Our collections of

- *warm, adult, outdoor clothing for the Lighthouse
- *toys and games for the Empty Stocking Fund
- *gifts of non-perishable food for The Food Bank



are more important than ever for the 2020 Christmas season. Your donations make a significant difference to our North Battleford community.

Donations can be left at the church on Sunday or at the Church Office during the week. Please call 306.445.8171 to co-ordinate your drop-off with Barb or Dexter.

Donations can also be picked up between December 1st and December 15th by a member of the Congregation if you are unable to bring your items to the church. Please leave a message with the Office if you need your White Gift donation picked up.

We look forward to another strong response from the Congregation and a blessed Christmas season for everyone.



WORSHIP COMMITTEE – *Lorenzo Bacchetto*

Advent Season Services at Third Avenue United Church



Nov. 29 - 10:30 am

“Hanging of the Greens”

come explore the symbols of Christmas as the church is decorated

Dec. 6 - 10:30 am

“White Gift Sunday”

bring non-perishable food & toys for the Empty Stocking Fund
and/or clothing for The Lighthouse

Dec. 13 - 10:30 am

“Communion” – individual servings of bread and juice will be provided

Dec. 20 - 10:30 am

“Lessons and Carols”

Dec. 24 - 7:00 pm

“Christmas Eve Service”

Dec. 27

“On-line service only”

www.thirdavenueunitedchurchnb.ca



Due to public health guidelines, the following safety measures are in effect:

- please pre-register, if you can, with the church office (306 445-8171) to attend (space is limited);
- hand sanitize upon entering and leaving the church (provided);
- wear a face mask;
- physical distance.

If you are unable to attend our Sunday services, check them out on-line at www.thirdavenueunitedchurchnb.ca.

