**ST. ANDREW’S UNITED CHURCH**



**December 20, 2020**

**60 West Avenue, St. Thomas 519- 631-4558**

**e-mail: standrewsucgra@rogers.com**

**website:** [**www.standrewsunitedchurch.com**](http://www.standrewsunitedchurch.com/)

**Minister: The People of St.Andrew’s**

**Pastor: Rev. Cheryl Bolton**

**Ministry of Music: Lynn Sloan**

**WE GATHER**

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Lighting of the Advent Candles**

**Reader One:** We live on the brink every day. We stand on the threshold between this world and the next one. We live and move between the ordinary and divine, between the mundane and the mystery. Too often, we forget to look up and see the angels in our living room. We forget that the love we give and live is a sign of eternity, God with us, right now. We forget that company is coming.

**Reader Two:** Luke tells us that God’s favour came to a girl, an ordinary girl. It might have been you or your daughter; it might have been the girl down the street or your grandchild. But the messenger of God came and greeted her and said, “The Lord is with you.” What a gift and a promise: Emmanuel, God is with us.

**Reader One:** We light these candles with love in our hearts for the promise of proximity, the nearness of God. Even when we forget to listen, to lean into that presence, God is as close as our own breath. This, in a confused and confusing world, is a peace that passes all understanding. It is the peace that knows that company is coming.

**Introit:** O Come, O Come Emmanuel - Vs. 1

**Prayer of Approach**

In the rush of preparation for holiday celebration, we come to this place to be fed by God. We need the peace, hope, love and joy that this season represents. We need to listen again with wonder at the magnificent words of Mary as she proclaims her faithful participation in God’s most miraculous gift. Open our hearts this day, Lord, to receive the words and the blessings, to be fed and then to be those who will share with others as you have shared with us. In Jesus’ Name, we pray. AMEN.

**Hymn: A Candle is Burning - 6 VU**

**Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Pardon**

O Holy God of Promise, we so often place our trust in the things we can see, and touch, and easily believe.

But you did not ask us to believe what is easy, you have asked us to believe what is true!

Forgive us, Holy One, when we doubt the ways you work.

Forgive us when we find it hard to believe an ancient story. Forgive us we question how you chose to enter the world, born as one of us. Forgive our lack of faith and belief in ways which seem so impossible to believe. Help us to look in faith, open our belief, and set aside our doubts that you sent your Son, born of a virgin – the one who has come to set us all free. We offer these prayers in the name of your Son, Emmanuel, God with us. Amen.

**Words of Assurance**

The Holy One forgives and bestows favour on each of us, even and especially when we are lowly in spirit.

We are blessed, we are loved and we are forgiven. Thanks be to God. Amen

**WE LISTEN FOR GOD’S WORD**

**Scripture Reading** - Luke 1: 26-38

**Meditation**

**Hymn of Meditation** - My Soul Gives Glory - 899 VU

**WE RESPOND TO GOD’S WORD**

**Prayers of Thanksgiving and Concern**

One week left, Lord, just one week left. Can we get all the things done that we have set before us? Have all the cards been mailed, the greetings extended, the gatherings coordinated and placed in our calendar for this last rush before the BIG DAY? Have we forgotten anything? Have we forgotten anyone? It would be easy to say, we have forgotten the reason for the season....that phrase which is imprinted on key chains and coffee mugs. We think that if we post the note that says "Jesus is the reason for the season", we will truly be fulfilling our Christmas commitment. How foolish we are! Placing the words on the wall, taped to a bulletin board, on a refrigerator, does not place the words in our hearts. We replace the glorious story of God’s Incarnate word, with tinsel and wrapping paper and believe that we are ready to celebrate. When will we learn? Come to us now, comforting God, with your powerful words of healing. Help us to remember the witness of Mary, a young girl, who never expected to play such a role in salvation history. Put the brakes on our rushing and sit us down to hear the story of your absolute Love for us. Get us ready for the birth of your Son who will become our Savior. Move us from the focus of our festivities to a focus on witnessing about your love through serving others. Challenge us to reach out to people in need, not only with a check to support a particular endeavour, but with actual contact in ministries of sacrifice and service. In such times as this remind us that we are called to proclaim your love through witness and service. AMEN.

**Final Hymn** - Gentle Mary Laid Her Child - 46 VU

**Blessing and Commissioning**

God of Hope and Peace, in whom there is no darkness, cause your light to shine on us and through us to others, that they may know of you and of your Love. Let us witness to your gift of Jesus who came and taught us how to live as children of Light. Go in peace, dear friends, and know that the God of hope, peace, joy and love goes with you. AMEN.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**



**Your Church friends miss you!  Wish them a Merry Christmas by sending your greetings to them by recording a video, audio or even print wish to be included in the service on Dec. 27th.  All messages due by Dec. 21st.  For technical support call Rev. Cheryl at the Church and leave a message!**

**Annual Reports should be in to Susan by January 20, 2021. You can email them into the church office or drop them off in person. Please note that the Annual meeting is postponed until such a time that it is safe to proceed.**

 **The Broadview Magazine will be renewed in January. Anyone wishing to be a new subscriber please contact Margaret Hutchison 519-633-1105. I will be sending the form in by Dec 23rd.
The monies will be due mid January $25.Please place a cheque or money in your church envelope marking it Broadview.**