

ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH



December 13, 2020

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Minister: The People of St. Andrew's

Pastor: Rev. Cheryl Bolton

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WE GATHER

Welcome and Announcements

Lighting the Candles (Light 2 purple and the pink candle)

Reader One: Our lists are long, even in this strange mess where we live these days. And we want to do it right, we want to be safe, but we want to be able to enjoy the season. We've got work to do to put right what has gone wrong, to heal what is broken, to mend the relationships, and to prepare for the company that will come.

Reader Two: The prophet Isaiah reminded us that there is work to be done. "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." When God comes in, then healing is to be found, but we need to make the way; we need to open the door into our lives.

Reader One: So, we light these candles as a sign of our faith that the God we worship is not far from us and that we can clear the way for that God to come and dwell with us. We light these candles in faith that company is coming.

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

Prayer of Approach

Holy God of Joy,
We rejoice in the reality of who you are.
We live within the joy of your love for us.
Our contentment comes and goes.
Our happiness ebbs and flows.
Our feelings depend upon our circumstances,
our physical health, our brain chemistry.
But our joy is deeply rooted
in our identity as your beloved children.

And we give you thanks. Amen.

Gathering Hymn: Hope is a Star

Symbol of the Dove

A universal symbol of peace and love, the dove has long held significance for us. Noah sent a dove from the ark that returned with an olive branch indication the end of the flood and the beginning of God's covenant with man.

The dove also symbolizes the Holy Spirit and signifies marriage and lifelong love. It symbolizes peace and the forgiveness we obtain from God and each other.

Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Pardon

God, you share with us words of hope, words of Good News. But sometimes we are unable to hear them because the source is too familiar.

You call us to share the Good News with those around us. But sometimes we are unable to share, because the people know us too well. You encourage us to send messengers to other places where they will be heard better. But we can be jealous, wanting the Good News to be for us, not them.

In the multitude of ways we can and have subverted your message of freedom and healing, in all the ways we have kept the Jubilee year from happening, we have left the path of true wisdom and call upon your Grace to lead us back on track.

Words of Assurance

This is the time of God's favour, God's grace continues to proclaim release to the captives, sight to the blind, Good News to the poor and freedom to the oppressed.

We live as loved, forgiven and free people through the grace of God! **Hallelujah! Amen.**

Symbol of the Candy Cane

The candy cane begins with a white stick of candy symbolizing the purity of the Christmas season. The red stripes are for the blood shed by Christ on the cross. The candy cane is shaped like a J for Jesus and when you hang it, it looks like a shepherd hook to represent the Good Shepherd. The candy is hard to remind us that the good shepherd is the firm foundation on which we build the church.

Symbol of the Angel - Angels are both guides and messengers; they are loving spirits that protect us and guide us through life but we also remember that throughout the Bible they brought messages to Jesus parents Mary and Joseph to give them the good news of the miracle that they were about to participate in.

Music - Angels We Have Heard On High

Symbol of the Star

The star symbolizes that great light which led the wisemen to the Christ child so many years ago. Throughout much of the world today, the Christian holiday begins with the appearance of the first star on Christmas Eve.

The star also symbolizes the hope for peace and good fortune and demonstrates the fact that people, regardless of their nationality, share the same universe.

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

Prayers of the People

Lord our God, you have revealed yourself as One who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among people. In a world that looks away from injustice, scatter the proud, You cast your eyes on the destitute, the poor, and the wronged; Put down the mighty. You have called us to follow you, to lift up the lowly, to preach good news to the poor, fill up the hungry, to proclaim release for the captives, to send the rich away empty-handed and recovery of sight for the blind. Please set at liberty those who are oppressed and to proclaim the time of your blessing.

Be present with your church, Lord. Fill us with compassion for the plight of the alien, the refugee, and the immigrant. Lead us into ministries that help orphans and widows. Give to us courage to block the paths of the ungodly who exploit the poor. Set us free from pious exercises that prevent us from the true worship you choose: sharing bread with the hungry, sharing homes with the homeless, sharing clothes with the naked, sharing hearts with our own kin. So may your justice roll down like waters, your righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. Lead our footsteps to stand with the poor, that we might stand with you. Have mercy, O God. Amen.

Final Hymn: Joy to the World

Blessing and Commissioning

May the light of this Advent season shine in our hearts, as we respond to your call, your path, and beckon you to God's love and service. Open our eyes to the downtrodden world. Go in Peace and may the God of Peace go with you. Amen.