

**Welcome to
The Port Dover – Woodhouse Pastoral Charge
Woodhouse United Church and
Grace United Church
Worship From Home Service
Sunday, December 12, 2021**



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Office Hours 9:00 am – 11:30 am (Mon. – Thurs)

3rd Sunday of Advent

We Gather to Worship

Land Acknowledgement

Welcome and Announcements

Choir Christmas Concert

Community Memorial Christmas service at St. Cecilia's

Joke – A Sunday School teacher was telling her class the story of the Good Samaritan, in which a man was beaten, robbed, and left for dead. She described the situation in vivid detail so her students would catch the drama. Then she asked the class, “If you saw a person lying on the roadside, all wounded and bleeding, what would you do?” A thoughtful little girl broke the hushed silence, “I think I’d throw up.”

The Bible is Opened and Christ Candle Lit

Call to Worship

Friends, Mary’s fierce “yes” marked the beginning of a revolution for God’s mission in the world. We are here today to mark the continuing of that revolution, a revolution not of weapons and violence, but of generosity and equality. We come knowing that giving of what we have is a sacred privilege, but also a difficult task, and so we pray together a promise, a commitment to God and to each other that no matter what it takes from us and no matter what we need to sacrifice, we will trust that God is at work, that we are God’s hands, and that the kingdom is coming. And so friends, let us consider:

Shall we renounce sin, so as to live in the freedom of the children of God?

Yes! Gracious God, let us live the freedom of love. Let us choose to make choices that bring us closer to others and

closer to you. Let us reject injustice, violence, and all that violates the dignity of creation.

Shall we reject the lure of evil, so that sin can have no mastery over us?

Yes! Merciful One, we see the rewards of evil. We acknowledge its attractiveness to us and our tendency to fall into habits that encourage it. But we renew our commitment to you and to your law of love, letting all attachments to evil and its empty promises fall away, leaning instead into the assurance of love and blessedness. We ask for courage on the journey, to do justly, love mercy, feel deeply, and move humbly in the path that Jesus trod.

Shall we trust, then, in God, the creator of heaven and earth?

Yes! God, who gives life to all creation, we believe in you. We turn to you and acknowledge our need for grace. We know that without you, we cannot exist, and we commit to a life that embraces you and all that you send to meet us on our paths.

Shall we rely on God's Holy Spirit? Shall we experience God's face in all of creation?

Yes! We are not alone. We live in God's world. Thanks be to God!

Anna Atkinson, Cedar U.C., Nanaimo, B.C.

Advent Candle Lighting Week 2 – JOY

We are three-quarters of the way through Advent. In the last two weeks, we have lit the candles of hope and peace. (Light 2 purple candles) In our culture, this is a time of consumer frenzy and, often, frazzled nerves. At this point many people are beginning to wish this season were already over. Not here. This is a different kind of place and we keep time to a different kind of music. Joy is the theme of this day.

What does joy look like?

Joy has many faces. You can notice it down at the community soup kitchen where people who don't have the money for a decent meal are singing Christmas carols while they wait for their lunch. Joy shines in the eyes of young children for whom the world is an adventure and a mystery and a promise. Sometimes joy shows up at the nursing home when old, familiar hymns stir precious memories or the beat of an old dance tune sets tired toes tapping. Joy can be there when a family gathers to say goodbye to one who has been much loved. It abides even when the heart is breaking for it is deeper than the troubles of the moment and it is stronger than grief. Scripture speaks of the creation time "when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy" (Job 38:7)

What does joy feel like?

Joy does not feel like happiness, not exactly. We are happy when things are going our way and life is sweet. When things are not going our way and the taste of life is sour, we are unhappy. Joy is tougher than that. Joy can feel like a reason to get up in the morning, a purpose to guide us through our days. Joy feels like the sense that all is well, and that all will be well, and that all will be very well. Joy feels like the wonderful surprise that keeps us from sleepwalking through our lives and waits for us at the end of our days.

What is it like to live in joy?

Joy is often very quiet. It doesn't demand attention. It doesn't force itself on anyone. Joy loves company but can thrive in solitude as well. Joy changes things. It makes ordinary things special and ordinary people remarkable. Joy will sing with angels and with the out-of-tune person sitting beside you. Today we light the candle named Joy. May its light help us find our way.

Light the pink candle.

Hymn VU#7 - **Hope is a Star** – verse 3 only

Joy is a song that welcomes the dawn,
telling the world that the Saviour is born.

When God is a child there's joy in our song.
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,
and none shall be afraid.

Opening Prayer

Caring God,
as we rush to prepare our homes and our trees, slow us down
and prepare our hearts.
When we shut you out with worry and fear, renew our trust and
prepare our hearts.
If we are distracted by the clamour of the world, soothe our
minds and prepare our hearts.
In this time of worship, let the warmth of your kindness prepare
our hearts to receive your word.
Let the comfort of your healing prepare our hearts to feel your
peace.
Let the joy of your love prepare our hearts to worship your holy
name. Amen.

Gill Le Fevre, Walton Memorial U.C., Oakville, Ont.

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 kings and the shepherds have found their way home,
the work of Christmas is begun:
'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.

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!
'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.

To free 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!
'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.

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!
'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.

We Listen for God's Word

Time for the Young at Heart – How do Christmas lights remind you of God?

Hymn - VU #14 **To a Maid Whose Name is Mary**

To a maid whose name was Mary,
the angel Gabriel came.

"Fear not," the angel told her,
"I come to bring good news,
good news I come to tell you,
good news, I say, good news."

"For you are highly favoured
by God the Lord of all,
who even now is with you.
You are on earth most blest,
you are most blest, most blessed,
God chose you, you are blest!"

But Mary was most troubled
to hear the angel's word.
What was the angel saying?
It troubled her to hear,
to hear the angel's message,
it troubled her to hear.

"Fear not, for God is with you,
and you shall bear a child.
His name shall be called Jesus,
God's offspring from on high.
And he shall reign forever,
forever reign on high."

"How shall this be," said Mary,
"that I should be with child?"
The angel answered quickly,
"The power of the Most High

will come upon you shortly,
your child shall be God's child."

As Mary heard the angel,
she wondered at his words.

"Behold, I am your handmaid,"
she said unto her God.

"So be it, I am ready
according to your word."

Prayer for Illumination

Gracious and Wonderful God, we come to your word seeking
refuge from the chaos of the world.

Hug us gently so that we may feel your comforting Holy Spirit.

Fill the yearning of our hearts and souls with your love and
peace.

Feed us with your holy word so that our longing will cease.

We come exhausted from fear, anxiety, stress, despair, and
frustration.

Allow us to rest in your love and ease our burdens.

We come, O Lord, to receive the words of scripture. Amen.

Judy Sears, Willowgrove U.C., Sault Ste. Marie, Ont.

Scripture:

Philippians 4:4-7

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Luke 3:7-18

⁷ John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming

wrath? ⁸ Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ⁹ The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”

¹⁰ “What should we do then?” the crowd asked.

¹¹ John answered, “Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.”

¹² Even tax collectors came to be baptized. “Teacher,” they asked, “what should we do?”

¹³ “Don’t collect any more than you are required to,” he told them.

¹⁴ Then some soldiers asked him, “And what should we do?”

He replied, “Don’t extort money and don’t accuse people falsely—be content with your pay.”

¹⁵ The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. ¹⁶ John answered them all, “I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” ¹⁸ And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them.

Anthem

Message

All those people from different walks of life were going to John and asking, “What should I do?” His answer boiled down to the same for all of them. It was: don’t use your position of privilege or power for your own personal gain but share what you have with those who are without.

We hear that same message several times in the New Testament. It is really the key to following Jesus. And that’s what I love about this time of year! I see and hear of people going out of their way to help others. Even our TV shows turn the grinch into caring souls. Like I said, that’s what I love about this time of year.

What I love about being Christian is helping to make this time of year last all year. Each week when we hear the Minute for Mission, I am so proud to be a member of the United Church because they help make a difference to so many throughout the world. And I am even prouder to be a member of this pastoral charge because we provide almost \$20,000 support for that work. But we don't stop there. You have provided our Mission and Outreach committee with money to support local causes as well. It gets even better! We have people in Grace church that also donate their time and talents so that Church Out Serving and our local food bank can indeed serve those in need. Then there's your regular donations to the food bank, donations of socks, seniors helping seniors...the list goes all through the year. Like I said, that's what I like about being Christian.

Being a Christian at this time of year fills me with such joy. To think that God came to us in the birth of a child to simple parents! They weren't in positions of privilege or power; they were just common folk. They couldn't have known then the range and intensity of emotion that Jesus would be the source of. He would be a source for anger, jealousy, hate, confusion, and fear. But the lasting emotion he stirred in others was love. For anyone who wanted to receive his love, he was there. What joy! Two thousand years later, the story is the same. Anyone who wants to receive his love, is loved. The joy lives on.

Today we celebrate the theme of joy. We lit the pink candle, thinking of Mary. When I think of Jesus as an infant, I think of that song, Mary Did You Know? No mother, as they look at the infant in their arms, can know what kind of person that child will become. I think every mother has hopes for her child and most can influence the child as it grows to some extent, but you never know. I wonder what some mothers thought when their babies were born. Mothers of people such as Walter Gretzky, Bill Gates, Lois Wilson, Mother Theresa, Frederick Banting... people who made a difference for a lot of others; some achieving fame that will last for generations to come, some for only one or two.

And there are many more people throughout our history that never became famous at all but they, too, made a difference to others. As mothers, grandmothers, and aunties, we watch our little ones grow into adulthood not knowing for sure where their journeys will take them. But we must have faith that if we model a Christian life and

explain why we do what we do, they will feel called to follow in Christ's footsteps.

It is an even greater individual responsibility for the generation today. When we were young, we had Sunday School where we learned the stories of Jesus and the way to be a good Christian. Sunday School was still there for many of our children and maybe even some of our grandchildren. But very few Sunday Schools are functioning anymore. It is difficult to have a class of one... even two or three, especially if they are siblings. So it is up to us to influence the present generations.

As you know, there can be some very joyful occasions when you realize that a child "gets it." This time of year, I always remember the Christmas when my daughter was 13. She had a few people that she always got presents for. She picked them out; I paid for them. Well, that had been our practice for years. But this particular year things were really tight financially. I knew that I couldn't afford to do that. As it was, I wasn't even going to be able to spend what I usually did on her. So I explained that to her. Then I said, "I've got \$100. Do you want me to spend it all on you or do you want me to give you some of it now so that you can buy presents for other people?" I'll never forget the joy I felt when she chose to receive fewer presents herself so that she could give to others. I thought that was pretty remarkable for a 13-year-old.

As I said, we must teach them the way. Just like those who came to John the Baptist. They don't know what's right if nobody tells them. It is critical that this generation learn the responsibility we have to help care for those who are unable to provide for themselves. I pray that some sort of movement will start. It seems that, at this time, young people are crusading for our environmental well-being. That's great. It needs to happen. But they also need to be aware that empty stomachs need more than clean air. They need to learn how to use their positions of privilege and power (which many have even as children) to build a just society. It is our responsibility to teach them what John the Baptist had to say:

Share your food and clothing with those who have none

The price is the price. Don't pad the bill for personal profit.

Don't use your position to extort money and don't make false accusations to make your own position better; be content

with the compensation that comes with your position. How do we teach these messages? By example. What we say and do in front of children and youth will influence what kind of citizen they become. Praise them when they say or do something that helps make the world more just for those who suffer. If they are visiting you, set your donation for the food bank on the counter and tell them what it's for. Talk to them about a situation where someone can not be all that they can be because they are lacking something. Then discuss ways that you could help. Be sure to teach them as well that not all situations are about money. There are times when their own time or talent can make a big difference for someone else. Again, I encourage you to teach by example, communicating the reasons you are doing whatever it is. And I would also encourage you to say more than just "because Jesus says we should." Tell the why of it as well. You will have the joy of sharing this time together and even greater joy when you see them do for others all on their own. Amen.

Hymn - VU #20 **On Jordan's Bank**

On Jordan's bank, the Baptist's cry
announces that the Lamb is nigh;
awake and hearken, for he brings
glad tidings of the King of Kings.

Then cleansed be every life from sin;
make straight the way for God within;
and let each heart prepare a home
where such a mighty guest may come.

In you, we find abundant life,
our refuge in the midst of strife;
without your grace we waste away,
like flowers that wither and decay.

Stretch forth your hand, our health restore,
and help us rise to fall no more.
O let your face upon us shine,
and fill the world with love divine.

All praise to you, eternal Son,
whose advent has our freedom won;
and praise to God whom we adore,
with Holy Spirit evermore.

We Respond to God's Word

Offering

Chorus – VU# 537 **Your Work, O God, Needs Many Hands**

Your work, O God, needs many hands to help you everywhere,
and some there are who cannot serve unless our gifts we share.
Because we love you and your work, our offering now we make:
be pleased to use it as your own, we ask for Jesus' sake.

Prayer of Dedication

In these days of waiting, O God, as Mary grew Jesus in her
womb, so grow in us a spirit of generosity.
Bring to birth within us a passion for justice and peace.
As we share these gifts, which you have entrusted to us, so
may your dream for the world come closer to fulfillment.
We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Bob Root, Peterborough, Ont.

Minute for Mission

Social Distancing is a luxury

COVID-19 is striking Zimbabwe when it's down. Roughly a year after being ravaged by Cyclone Idai and two years into a drought, Zimbabweans haven't had time to recover between tragedies. "COVID-19 comes when a number of situations are not very good for Zimbabwe. The economy is completely dysfunctional. This month, the inflation rate is about 600 percent. Health institutions are not working, and the doctors have been on strike for six months now. This crisis is a disaster for Zimbabwe," says Kenneth Mtata, General Secretary of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches. Food shortages in Zimbabwe make enforcing lockdown rules difficult. Riot police have been called in to control crowds in food markets. Kenneth Mtata explains that people want to comply with lockdown. "But 85 percent of the population is in informal employment. They can't afford to miss work a single day. People are saying it would be better to die of coronavirus than hunger. This puts them in conflict with the state."

In 1980, Zimbabwe was liberated from British rule and then endured the ruthless dictatorship of Robert Mugabe, who was president of the country from 1987 to 2017.

Having suffered decades of trauma and tragedy, and now facing a deadly virus, hope can be hard to come by. "We celebrate 40 years of independence in Zimbabwe [on April 18]. We don't know if it's a day of celebration or of mourning for the lost years," says Mtata.

A Mission & Service partner, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches has always advocated for social cohesion, good governance, active citizenship, economic justice, and youth empowerment. Now, the needs are more urgent than ever.

"We are pushing the government to reengage doctors and nurses and to provide them with personal protective equipment," says Mtata. "We have also been focusing on communication, encouraging people to take preventative measures. We are working to meet the needs of families who can't afford to be in this lockdown situation."

Your gifts through Mission & Service help transform and save lives in Canada and around the world. Thank you!

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Concern

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass
against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.

We Take Christ's Message Into the World

Hymn VU #59 Joy to the World

Joy to the world! the Lord is come:

let earth receive her King!

Let every heart prepare him room,

and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing,

and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the earth! the Saviour reigns:
let all their songs employ,
while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground:
he comes to make his blessings flow
far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.

He rules the earth with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness
and wonders of his love, and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love.

Benediction and Commissioning

In the name of the Creator, the Holy Spirit, and the Only
Begotten One, may we go forth to spread the warming and joy
of what we have received this day. May the light, love, and
wisdom of God guide our way.

Jani Francis, St. Andrew's U.C., Indian Head, Sask.

Closing of Bible and Extinguishing of Candle

Go Now In Peace

Go now in peace, never be afraid. God will go with you each
hour of ev'ry day

Go now in faith, steadfast strong and true. Know He will guide
you in all you do

Go now in love, and show you believe; Reach out to others, so
all the world can see

God will be there, watching from above. Go now in peace, in
faith and in love.

Amen, Amen, Amen