



December 13, 2020
3rd Sunday of Advent
White Gift Service



Words of Welcome & Announcements ~ Jan Richardson

White Gift Sunday dates back to 1904 in Ohio. The wife of a Methodist minister and her two daughters came up with the idea of giving gifts wrapped in white paper, keeping the focus on the giving not the gift. White Gifts are shared in the spirit of Christ. We give gifts of love, which all people need.

Video option: St. Paul's United Church (Tisdale, SK) retells the story of how the White Gift Sunday tradition started.
<https://youtu.be/EVurJPBb9S4>

Lighting the Christ Candle, with song ~ *I Danced in the Morning* #352 VU (verse 1 & chorus)

Words, Harmony: Sydney Carter © 1963 Hope Publishing Company, Stainer & Bell Ltd.

Music: Shaker melody. **Public Domain.** Used with permission of OneLicence.net Annual Renewal A-605521.

Gathering Words:

(Written by Ted Dodd. Based on Luke 1:13-14, Luke 1: 39-44, Matthew 2: 9-10, Luke 2: 8-11)

With music and song; laughter and mirth; movement and dance,

**We celebrate the source of joy,
the spirit of life born in our midst.**

With stillness and prayer; wisdom and depth; passion and heart,

**We celebrate the source of joy,
the spirit of life born in our midst.**

With action and care; service and love; respect and grace,

**We celebrate the source of joy,
the spirit of life born in our midst.**

With planning and rushing; shopping and feasting; worship and candle-lighting,

**We celebrate the source of joy,
the spirit of life born in our midst.**



Advent Candle Lighting *(light two blue candles)*

We have lit the first two candles, one for hope and one for peace. Today we light the pink candle; the candle of joy.

(light the pink candle)

This should be the easy one, because joy is all around us - in people, the lights, the music, the gathering together. But how often do we let our preparations - or our memories - push joy to the side?

Joy is like an underground spring that wells up within us, but joy is also a choice, an attitude. Like a muscle, it needs to be exercised. So, today, we open ourselves to joy, trusting that God has already planted it in us.

What joy is springing up in you today? *(Pause to respond)*

Unison Prayer:

Loving God, we open ourselves to you, trusting that this is how you made us: you created us for joy-filled hearts and lives. Show us the creative power of hope. Teach us the peace that comes from justice. Fill us with the kind of joy that cannot be contained, but must be shared.

Prepare our hearts to be transformed by you, that we may walk in the light of Christ. Amen. Adapted from the liturgy written by Andrew Schwartz processandfaith.org

Interlude ~ *Heaven, Earth Rejoice*

United Church Homeland Board VOL 1 OCP, Seasons of the Spirit curriculum. Used with permission of OneLicence.net Annual Renewal A-605521.

Congregational Story-Theme Time ~ *The Shepherd's Christmas*, written by Beth Atchison, is *virtually* shared with us by the McKenzie family.

Special Music ~ *The First to Hear*, by Paul Rumbolt & shared by Bob Richardson on guitar

<https://www.paulrumbolt.com/blank-xhpa4>

1) A little boy at rest, on a night so blessed
Asleep on his father's arm.
In the hills they'd stayed. So, the flock
wouldn't stray
Far away, or come to harm
Then the night sky filled; with light and song
As the angel voice they heard
Saying Christ your lord, has this day been born
And you're the first to hear this word

Chorus

And they sang:

peace on earth, goodwill to all
form our God, who's love is true
Joy shall come, to all the world
And you're the first to hear the news

2) Now, when the angel had gone, the glorious
song
still echoed in the night
And they decided to go, as the angel had told
That they might see this child of light
Down in Bethlehem, no room at the Inn
Just a manger for his bed
The holy child was born, in the chill early
morn

Just like the angel said

Chorus

3) This good news, of a child,
born in a humble place
And in this child, for all time
We see God's amazing grace...

Final Chorus

Pause for Reflection

When it must have seemed that her life couldn't get more difficult, I wonder how Mary found it in her to celebrate?

Mary's Magnificat - Luke 1:46-55

*(Mary lifts the good news of God's reign and rejoices in the coming restoration.)
My soul proclaims your greatness, O God. And my spirit rejoices in you, my Savior.
For you have looked with favor upon your lowly servant
And from this day forward, all generations shall call me blessed.
For you, the Almighty, have done great things for me, and holy is your Name.
Your mercy reaches from age to age, for those who fear you.*

*You have shown strength with your arm: You have scattered the proud in their conceit; You have deposed the mighty from their thrones, and raised the lowly to high places.
You have filled the hungry with good things, and you have sent the rich away empty.
You have come to the aid of Israel your servant, mindful of your mercy - the promise you made to our ancestors - to Sarah and Abraham, and their descendants forever.*

Advent prayer for children: *What child is this?*

(hymn #74 VU plays in the background)

What child is this?

This hungry child, this child with AIDS,
this child afraid of bombs and soldiers,
this child too poor to go to school,
this child from a refugee camp,
this child abused and neglected,
this child crying and uncomforted.

What child is this?

This child is not a statistic,
this child is not collateral damage,
this child is not a mistake,
this child is not the enemy.

What child is this?

This is a child of God,
this is a Christ child,

this is our child.

Lord Jesus, born a child and yet a king,
you remind us that each baby
is a holy infant, tender and mild.

We say a prayer for all the dear
children in your tender care,
all the children in the world.

In a world where so many do not sleep
in heavenly peace,

empower us to be your peacemakers.

Thank you for the gift of each baby,
each child of hope.

<http://carolpenner.typepad.com/leadinginworship/peace/>

Dedication of White Gifts & Offerings:

J. Philip Newell's prayer from Celtic Benediction gives words to express Advent longing and Christmas hope in our mission and ministry:

I have tasted the fruit of the earth, O God. I have seen autumn trees hang heavily with heaven's gifts. I have known people pregnant with your spirit of generosity.

Let these be guides to me this day.

And may Mary, who knew her womb filled with your goodness, teach me the wisdom that is born amidst pain. May I know that deeper than any fallowness in me is the seed planted in the womb of my soul. May I know that greater than any barrenness in the world is the harvest to be justly shared.

<http://pwrdf.org/2014/christmas-reflection-and-prayer/>

Closing Hymn ~ *Go Tell It on the Mountain* #43 VU

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Video version from Strathdees Music site: <https://vimeo.com/user118426861/download/475757579/cb9cfba518>

