**January 3, 2021 Epiphany One**

**News and Announcements**

**Prelude**

**Lighting of Candle**

We light this candle to remind us that the love of Christ shines

upon us each and every day.

We worship the God revealed through
Jesus the Christ, in spirit and in truth.

**Singing**MV 81 *Love Us Into Fullness*

**Call to Worship**

In the year gone by,

in the year to come,

and right at this moment,

**you are with us, Holy God!**

**Thank you!**

For your leading and loving,

for your teaching and caring,

**for your changing love at work in all of us,**

**thank you!**

In your love, you hold all creation.

In your hope, you give new life.

In your peace, you begin again!

**So, for the year gone by,**

**for the year to come,**

and for this moment right now,

we declare,

**Alleluia! Alleluia! Thank you, Holy God! Amen!**

**Opening Prayer**

Discipleship can be tiring.

God will give us tenacity for the tough days.

Discipleship can cause us to lose friends.

God will show us where our true loyalty lies.

Discipleship can show us where we should place our trust.

God will enable us to sort out our faithful priorities.

Discipleship can be life-changing,

We will find authentic experience in the Christian life.

We gather here to find support and wisdom for our life as disciples.

As a group committed to discipleship, we join our hearts to worship God.

Reading from Scripture:

**Ephesians 3:1-13**

This is why I, Paul, am in jail for Christ, having taken up the cause of you outsiders, so-called. I take it that you’re familiar with the part I was given in God’s plan for including everybody. I got the inside story on this from God himself, as I just wrote you in brief.

As you read over what I have written to you, you’ll be able to see for yourselves into the mystery of Christ. None of our ancestors understood this. Only in our time has it been made clear by God’s Spirit through his holy apostles and prophets of this new order. The mystery is that people who have never heard of God and those who have heard of him all their lives (what I’ve been calling outsiders and insiders) stand on the same ground before God. They get the same offer, same help, same promises in Christ Jesus. The Message is accessible and welcoming to everyone, across the board.

This is my life work: helping people understand and respond to this Message. It came as a sheer gift to me, a real surprise, God handling all the details. When it came to presenting the Message to people who had no background in God’s way, I was the least qualified of any of the available Christians. God saw to it that I was equipped, but you can be sure that it had nothing to do with my natural abilities.

And so here I am, preaching and writing about things that are way over my head, the inexhaustible riches and generosity of Christ. My task is to bring out in the open and make plain what God, who created all this in the first place, has been doing in secret and behind the scenes all along. Through followers of Jesus like yourselves gathered in churches, this extraordinary plan of God is becoming known and talked about even among the angels!

All this is proceeding along lines planned all along by God and then executed in Christ Jesus. When we trust in him, we’re free to say whatever needs to be said, bold to go wherever we need to go. So don’t let my present trouble on your behalf get you down. Be proud!

John 1:1-18

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’”) From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known.

We respond:

In ages past, disciples, prophets, priests and historians wrote down their faith.

**This is a faithful witness of our ancestors.**

Word of God for us today.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Sermon** Empathy, Love and Justice

**Singing:**#VU **679** *Let There Be Light*

Giving Our Offerings:

**MV #191 (sing twice through)**

Offering Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ,

we bring all we have—

**our faith, our doubts,**

our hopes, our dreams,

**our lives in all their untidiness,**

and we offer to you some of the gifts that you,

in your generosity, have shared with us.

**Bless these gifts, and bless us, we pray,**

**for the good of your love at work in the world. Amen.**

**Prayer of the People**

Loving God, we come to you in all our many colours.

Our sad blues and excited rosy reds.

We come, bringing our grief and joy.

We come to you in our shifting colours,
moods changing with the seasons.

We come, bringing our chaotic selves.

We come to you in fantastic sparks of colour.

We come, bringing our creativity,
our passions, and our talents.

We come to you in all our muted hues.

We come, bringing our frustrations,
losses, and disappointments.

We come to you, as we are, as you made us,
with all that we have to offer.

We come, bringing our entire being, knowing that in us “you are well pleased.”

The Lord’s Prayer

We gather these prayers, and we turn to you as our Mother who loves us and say the prayer Jesus taught us:

**Modern spoken**

**Singing:** MV 79 *Spirit Open My Heart*

**Commissioning**

The hope of Christ leads us into the world.
 The hope of Christ illumines our own shadowed places.
 The hope of Christ within us lets us love the world.
 May this hope go before you and go within you.
 And may we recognize Christ’s hope everywhere we go.

***Robin Wardlaw,*** *Toronto, Ont.*

Today’s prayers were written or inspired by ***Richard Bott,******Bill Steadman, Bob Root, David Sparks, Deborah Ambridge Fisher, Robin Wardlaw,***and are used with permission from *Gathering’s* Christmas Epiphany, 2020-2021 edition.