

Squamish United Church
Rev. Karen Millard
Christmas Eve

December 24, 2021

Ah Christmas. It is a day filled with nostalgia at the best of times perhaps in this pandemic time even more so. Many of us are gathering with family a little more than we did last year. Still, there may be a smaller gathering than years gone by and most other events still aren't the same. We don masks and distance at Christmas concerts and some pivoted to go online because many of us are still not comfortable to go to those.

A last minute shift to online worship meant many of us had to get our head around safety first before sentiment, nostalgia and a desire to worship together in one room. Still here we are. It's Christmas. Christmas wasn't cancelled last year and it hasn't been cancelled this year but it is different and perhaps that is something to take note of.

Over the weeks of Advent we have had this big box in our sanctuary - each week we have transformed it into something new.

On the first Sunday of Advent, we explored hope. When we have hope we can see a world of possibilities, even in a seemingly empty box.

On the second Sunday of Advent, we imagined the box as the Table of Peace, a table where everyone is welcomed.

On the third Sunday of Advent, our box was a Drum of Joy playing some of the joyful rhythms of the season.

On the fourth Sunday of Advent, our box was a crib, a baby bed, prepared for a new arrival.

If we were gathered in person tonight we would have looked at this gift of possibility once more and we would have made a welcome place for the holy family with open doors. We would have place a light in the centre in such a way that the light shone out. We would have talked about how we might open the doors of our buildings and our hearts, it's not just to let others in, but to let the light out – the light of hope, peace, joy, and love. The light that says:

We are open.

There is room.

You are welcome.

You have a place here.

That is what the prophet Isaiah suggests we do. Isaiah is pointing out an opportunity for a change of regime. He is saying look here is the light coming out of the unexpected places. God is breaking through even now. Isaiah says it's time to look to a new way of being - Immanuel, God with us is coming to take this upside down world and turn it right side up again. Can you see the light?

Perhaps more than ever this Christmas calls us into a time of letting go so we can see the light.

So even though we are not in the same room I want to invite you to pause with me for a moment. Think about how in our story of this night the stars align. Close your eyes - can you see the great light of the star illumined about the nativity? That star revealed a new world, a new way of being, a new hope.

Now move back a little and imagine yourself walking on a dark path towards that light holding a lantern much like the ones we have carried into the sanctuary each Sunday of advent. It's not a super bright light but it is exactly what you need in the dark. If the light is behind you it does nothing for you. You block it and you might as well be back in the dark, you have no knowledge of what's in front of you. But if you look to the light.... The path becomes more clear, less scary.

Shine your light as you walk towards the light of love, of hope, of peace, of joy and possibility.

And when you get to that place where the baby is born, sit in wonder, sit in the hope of new possibility that this baby, this Immanuel God with us brings. Don't snuff out your light and don't try and transform the light into what you think it should be, let the light shine into you and transform you.

Let the light break into your weary soul
Let the light remind you that it is shining bright and you are not alone
Come and see the light

Will you come and see the light from the stable door? It is shining newly bright, though it shone before. It will be your guiding star, it will show you who you are. Will you hide, or decide to meet the light?

Let the light shine for you this Christmas so that you may witness the hope and love born this night.

Amen.