

First United Church

December 10, 2023

10:30 a.m.



Purpose: Building Relationships,
Living God's Transforming Love.

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Bulletin Art: The nativity scene at the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church
in Bethlehem, Palestine Territory

December 10, 2023

- Is a request to stand in body or in spirit

Handbell Prelude O Little Town of Bethlehem

arr. Sondra K. Tucker

Listening as we Gather

Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

ONE: Let us pause for a moment and consider our role in reconciliation.

ALL: First United Church resides on treaty lands known as the Haldimand Tract, which straddle either side of the Grand River, from Lake Erie all the way to north of Shelburne, and upon the traditional territory of *Chonnonton, Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee people. We recognize this gathering place where we worship and serve is home to many past, present, and future First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. May our honouring of the land and worship of Creator this day plant a seed that will grow into relationships of justice and healing between settlers and Indigenous peoples in our midst.

ONE: We aspire to create a safer space for everyone. We welcome you and the gifts you bring as part of your sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, race, cultural background or abilities.

Opportunities for Ministry and Fellowship

- Introit/Candle Liturgy:

The first blue candle is lit.

ONE: On this second Sunday of Advent, we light this second candle symbolizing peace—the proclamation that God calls us to live peacefully in understanding.

The second blue candle is lit.

ALL: Noticing the tiny flame, we wonder when the next puff of air will blow it out. We ponder that, if this candle were outside, it would quickly be extinguished.

ONE: Still the flame flickers and flourishes—a symbol of the Prince of Peace living within us, a powerful image of strength despite perceived weakness.

All sing: “Hope is a star,” (v. 2) *“Peace”*

VU 7

ONE: We come to affirm that divine peace thrives within us, a seed of inspiration strengthened by Spirit breath.

ALL: We come to seek wisdom and daring to live lives of peace, transforming into a community of faith that builds bridges.

ONE: We enter into prayer to receive the blessings of the peace that passes all understanding:

ALL: Whisper to our hearts this morning, O God, helping us to notice the chasms we create between one another. Breathe into our intentions that we become ever more aware, believing we can make a difference, no matter how small we may feel. Lead us through the Way of Jesus to listen to one another in love. Amen.

Gord Dunbar, Kincardine P.C., Kincardine, Ont.

- **Call to Worship**

ONE: People came to the banks of the Jordan to see John the Baptist.

ALL: We are called to leave the Christmas preparations behind and turn toward the spiritual challenge of Advent.

ONE: John told the people, “You have traditions to leave behind and sharing to begin because God’s chosen one is coming to you.”

ALL: We are challenged to change our actions and attitudes in the light of the coming Jesus Christ.

ONE: John refused to compromise with the leaders of his time; he would not accept the easy way.

ALL: We are called to engage with the issues of our day and make our stance for justice and truth.

ONE: Are we willing to go to the banks of the Jordan River to encounter John the prophet?

ALL: It will take courage to venture out, but the joy of Advent will be our reward.

ONE: Then, come, let us worship God.

David Sparks, Summerland, B.C.

- **Opening Hymn** Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

VU 2

Prayer of Approach

ONE: As we witness to fear, in the news and in our streets,

ALL: we make space for hope in our lives.

ONE: With broken hearts, faltering steps, and a desire for healing,

ALL: we make gestures of peace with each other.

ONE: As we greet strangers, neighbours, and friends,

ALL: we make a place for joy in the chaos of our concerns.

ONE: Awaiting a future announced and promised by the Living God,

ALL: we make room for love in our habits, hearts, and homes.

ONE: Holy One, you make the crooked ways straight and mend the broken soul. On this day, as we offer simple gifts in the face of profound need, remind us how your grace grows in our giving and receiving. Inspire the rebirth of love—in our world and in our lives—as we dedicate ourselves to your justice and mercy.

ALL: Amen.

Hidden in Plain Sight: White Gift Sunday.

Listening For God's Word

- **Hymn** Jesus Came Bringing Us Peace MV 33

The Story for the Young at Heart

Scripture Readings

Isaiah 40:1-11

(Reader: Pauline Williams)

One: Herein Lies Wisdom.

All: Thanks Be To God.

Responsive Psalm 80, Part 1,

VU 794

Mark 1:1-8

One: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

All: Thanks Be To God.

Ministry of Music - Gallery Choir: Gaudete

Anne Mizen

Reflection: Make Ready the Way of Our God

Rev. Hoeun Lee

- **Hymn** There's a Voice in the Wilderness

VU 18

Responding to God's Word

Time of Offering

Handbell Offertory O Come, O Come Emmanuel

arr. S. Geschke

- **Dedication of Offering** In the Bleak Midwinter (verse 4)

VU 55

- **Prayer of Dedication**

Prayers of the People

Call to Prayer: Come Now, O God of Peace

VU 34

Lord's Prayer

- **Sending Hymn** Prepare, the Way, O Zion

VU 882

Sending Forth and Benediction

- **Benediction Response** Peace Shines as a Solitary Star

MV 220

Recession of the Light and Word

Handbell Postlude: O Come, All Ye Faithful