

**ZOOM Worship for, December 12, 2021  
Third Sunday of Advent**

**Territorial Acknowledgment and Announcements**

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is situated upon traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron - Wyandot, the Haudenosaunee and later the Mississauga of the Credit First Nations. The territory is mutually covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibway and other allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.

Today, this remains the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in their community, and to share and respect Mother Earth.

**Centering Music: "Good Christians Friends, Rejoice!" VU 35 Verse 2**

Good Christian friends, rejoice  
with heart and soul and voice!  
Now ye hear of endless bliss: Joy! Joy!  
Jesus Christ was born for this!  
He hath opened heaven's door,  
and we are blest forevermore.  
Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!

**Call to Worship and Opening Prayer**

One: We wait and wonder in this Advent time.  
*Two: We prepare with wonder as Christmas approaches.*  
One: We hope to know joy in our waiting,  
*Two: we hope to know delight in our preparing.*  
One: God calls us into joyful waiting,  
*Two: God calls us to blissful preparation,*  
One: God calls us to worship in all the ways we can,  
gathered in person or through technology.  
*Two: God calls us to share our joy in praise and prayer  
and so we join our voices together*

**All: God of hope and joy,  
continue to guide us through the waiting time,  
through challenges and continued distances,  
through joyful moments and moments of disappointment.  
Be with us as we worship, but also as we work  
to bring your love into the world.  
In the name of your Joy and our Bliss,  
Jesus the Christ  
Amen.**

**Opening Hymn: "God of All Places" VU 4**

God of all places; present, unseen;  
voice in our silence, song in our midst,  
we are your people, knowing, unsure:  
come, Lord Jesus, come!

God of all dreaming, near and yet far;  
vision unheard of, wake us to rest.  
We are your presence sent forth, afraid: R

God of all people, dust and the clay;  
breath of a new wind, fire in our hearts,  
light born of heaven, peace on the earth: R

### **Lighting the Advent Candle of Joy**

One: Our journey towards Christmas continues with a declaration of Joy  
represented in the light of a small candle.

In a world where many know despair and distress,  
sadness and loss, we proclaim that joy is part of our lives.

*The pink Advent Candle is set alight*

Two: In a world where anguish and misery are commonplace,  
we are called to reflect God's joy so that it shines into the world.

One: It is a joy that cannot be purchased or packaged,  
and it can come as unexpected delight when we share  
good news and good thoughts with others.

Two: God's joy is known when a smile is recognized even behind a mask.

One: God's joy is expressed when we share our compassion  
and when we share our resources with others.

Two: God's joy is found in hearts filled with wonder and awe.  
God's joy is found when we make decisions that include everyone.

One: God grant us the courage to find and share this joy,

Two: as we prepare the way in our hearts and minds  
for the coming of the Joy of the world  
in Jesus, God-with-us, Emmanuel.

**All: Through our words and actions, may God's joy light up the world.**

### **Sung Response: "Shine the Light of Your Love"**

Shine the light of your love, like a candle in the darkness of our lives.

Shine the light of your love, in our hearts, Lord. Come and shine the light of your love.

Come and shine the light of your love.

### **Scripture Readings:**

Philippians 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Luke 3:10-16, 18

And the crowds asked John the Baptist, 'What then should we do?' In reply he said to them, 'Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.' Even tax-collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, 'Teacher, what should we do?' He said to them, 'Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.' Soldiers also asked him, 'And we, what should we

do?’ He said to them, ‘Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.’

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, ‘I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

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

**All: Thanks be to God.**

**Choir: “Sing for Joy”**

**Reflection: " Joyful Proclamations"**

**Hymn: “Beyond the Beauty and the Awe” MV 80**

Beyond the beauty and the awe,  
beyond the fear and dread,  
we long, O God, to hear your word  
to taste your transformed bread.

Our lives feel torn between the world  
whose needs are grimly real  
and empty talk of peace and joy  
with distant, vague appeal.

Oh, teach us how to hear your voice  
despite the traffic's din;  
to keep the blasts of rancour out  
and let your Spirit in.

In sound or silence, sight or smell,  
may we some token find  
that makes your living presence known  
to body, soul, and mind.

Then help us live as Jesus taught,  
as light and salt and yeast,  
that others may be brought to share  
your promise and your feast.

**Virtual Offering:**

One: Generous and Joy-giving God,  
we bring our best to you –  
our best thoughts, our best efforts,  
our grateful hearts.

Two: *Accept all that we offer, God,  
and may our offerings support your work -*

*so that in our community and in our world  
your creation may know joy, security,  
delight and rebirth. Amen*

**Sung Response: tune 'Good King Wenceslas'**

**God of hope and God of peace,  
God of joy and loving,  
here we bring our gifts to share,  
humbled by your blessings.  
As we wait for Love's rebirth,  
hearts and minds preparing,  
bless the givers and the gifts,  
lights in this world's darkness.**

**Prayers of the People:** Laying Cloth in the Manger with our Prayers

**Closing Hymn: "Give To Us Laughter" VU 624**

Give to us laughter, O Source of our life.  
Laughter can banish so much of our strife.  
Laughter and love give us wholeness and health.  
Laughter and love are the coin of true wealth.

Give to us laughter as sign of deep joy;  
let us in laughing find Christian employ,  
joining with stars and with bright northern lights,  
laughing and praising and sharing delights.

Why do we worry that we will lose face?  
Why act like king for the whole human race?  
Often in family, and often with friend,  
laughing at pride causes anguish to end.

Even in sorrow and hours of grief,  
laughter with tears brings most healing relief.  
God, give us laughter, and God, give us peace,  
joys of your presence among us increase.

**Commissioning /Blessing**

May God, who sang the universe into being, go with you.  
May Christ, who is God's love song to the world, attend you.  
May the Holy Spirit continue to sing God's love  
into each and every heart, each and every day.

**Musical Benediction: "We are walking a path of Joy" MV 221**

We are walking a path of joy,  
We are walking a path of joy,  
We are walking a path of joy,

lead us home,  
lead us home. (Repeat)  
We are home.

### Reflection

#### " Joyful Proclamations"

Joy is the theme for this Sunday as we journey through Advent. What does joy mean for us? Is it a deep delight in our relationships and families? Is it simple happiness or pleasure experienced when we listen to a favourite piece of music or watch a much-loved movie or engage in a hobby or pastime? Is joy an emotion that is too fleeting?

Is a feeling of joy something that we can control?

Have you felt joy this past week?

In the reading from the prophet Isaiah that accompanies our other scripture readings this week; we are told that "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." And that we should "Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel." *Isaiah 12:3, 6* Paul reminds the church in Philippi to "rejoice in the Lord always," and seems to imply that when we rejoice – literally express our joy – we can let go of worry, be reassured that God is near, and will know God's peace.

This is our "joy" Sunday, but instead of angel visits and the joyful miracles of Mary and Elizabeth's pregnancies, our gospel reading for this week continues with the story of John the Baptist preaching by the banks of the Jordan River. I imagine we are eager to be closer to the Christmas story; we want to experience the news of child-bearing and God-bearing once again, and look ahead to the miraculous and joyful events that take place just outside Bethlehem.

Yet we are also told to rejoice on this Joy Sunday, even as we listen to John's instructions about living a life that will reflect God's love and perhaps bring joy to others. We are told to express our joy in God's grace and God's steadfast love even as we share what we have, and make just and fair decisions in our work and our lives that will impact those around us. The last line of this passage seems particularly relevant to our finding joy in John's words – that in many ways, John "proclaimed the good news to the people." News of a coming great one, so filled with the Holy Spirit that he will literally baptize the people with it, such good news that we should be rejoicing.

In response to John's teaching I was reminded of a quote from Bengali poet and Noble Literature Prize winner Rabindranath Tagore: "I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy." Giving our time or our resources can bring joy to others, but also bring us delight. Working to insure that justice is seen and done in our communities can bring us pleasure, but can create elation for those who are finally seen, or have their truth heard. We can be joy, and bring joy – but first we are called to rejoice in God.

Rejoicing is not always an easy task. It can be difficult to call up joy when we are facing another pandemic Christmas, and even when there are no complications and restrictions this season can be difficult for those who have experienced loss or distress. Advertisers manipulate the concept of joy to

encourage us to buy in order to experience delight – or to provide it to someone else. Images of families gathered joyfully beside Christmas trees stacked with presents or tables heaped with food can create an expectation that joy can only be known in these scenarios.

We know that joy and anguish can be close companions. I have a new grandson that brings me such incredible joy, but I live with the anguish of the distance between us, and I am definitely one of many in this community who share similar experiences of distance from loved ones. The joy of love and companionship shared is tempered by the anguish of losing a friend, or a relative, or a life partner. The delight we have experienced in spending time in our gardens, or creating a craft item, or reading a book or taking along walk can become anguish when those activities are no longer available to us through life changes.

Despite all that can challenge us, all which can stand in the way of our knowing joy, sharing joy and rejoicing in God, I believe that God still wants joy for us. Theologian, teacher and L'Arche community member Henri Nouwen wrote that "Joy does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy and keep choosing it every day." For Nouwen, that joy is rooted in a deep and abiding certainty that we belong to God. As Paul wrote "The Lord is near."

May you know the joy that comes from God's love for you, the joy of this season of promise, the joy of anticipation in this time of waiting and preparing. May you choose joy for yourselves, for those you love and for the stranger, for those on the margins and those who share your lives.

"And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." *Philippians 4:7*

Amen