

**ZOOM Worship for, December 5, 2021  
Second Sunday of Advent with Communion**

**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: “It Came Upon A Midnight Clear” VU 44 v 4**

For, lo! the days are hastening on,  
by prophets seen of old,  
when with the ever-circling years  
shall come the time foretold,  
when peace shall over all the earth  
its ancient splendours fling,  
and the whole world send back the song  
which now the angels sing.

**Call to Worship and Opening Prayer**

One: Today we gather physically and virtually seeking God’s peace  
in a world that is often restless and ill at ease.

Two: *Today we yearn for God’s peace in our homes and in our communities.*

One: Today we yearn for God’s peace in our hearts and our minds.

Two: *Today we are called to make rough places smooth  
and crooked places straight to get ready for the Prince of Peace.*

One: Today we are called to prepare the way -  
for peace to be known

Two: *for hope to be experienced*

One: for joy and love to be shared.

Two: *Today God calls us to proclaim, to prepare, and to worship.*

One: Let us pray:

Holy and Mysterious God,  
you touch hearts and minds with grace, love and peace.  
In this Advent time, lead us to prepare the way  
for your Love and Light to be reborn in us,  
even as we work to share your peace  
with the world around us.

We pray in the name of our Prince of Peace, Jesus.

Amen

**Opening Hymn: “O Come. O Come, Emmanuel” VU 1 verses 1, 5, 6, 7**

O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
and ransom captive Israel  
that mourns in lowly exile here  
until the Son of God appear.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, O Key of David, come,  
and open wide our heavenly home;  
make safe the way that leads on high,  
and close the path to misery. R

O come, O Dayspring, from on high,  
and cheer us by your drawing nigh;  
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
and death's dark shadows put to flight. R

O come, Desire of nations, bind  
all peoples in one heart and mind;  
O bid our sad divisions cease,  
and be for us the Prince of Peace. R

**Lighting the Advent Candle of Peace**

One: Our journey to Christmas continues with a declaration of God’s Peace  
represented in the light of a small candle.

In a world that continues to know anxiety and conflict,  
violence and unjust actions, we proclaim that peace is part of our lives  
*The second Advent Candle is set alight*

Two: In a world filled with broken relationships, broken hearts, and broken spirits,  
we are called to reflect God’s peace so that it shines into the world.

One: It is a peace that can live in our own hearts, and grows when we  
work together to bring justice and compassion  
to individuals, communities and nations.

Two: God’s peace is built when we recognize our own failures  
to accept others just as God has created them –  
Black, Asian, Indigenous, Gay, Queer, Trans or Two-Spirited.

One: Peace is found when we seek relationship with others.  
peace is found when we seek relationship with God.

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

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

**All: Through our words and actions, may God’s peace 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:**

Luke 1:68-79 *(from VU 900)*

‘Blessed be the God of Israel,  
who has come to the people and set them free,  
who has raised up for us a mighty saviour  
born of the house of the servant David.  
Through the holy prophets of old,  
God promised to save us from our enemies,  
from the hands of all who hate us,  
to show the mercy promised to our ancestors,  
to remember the holy covenant,  
the oath that God swore to our ancestors Abraham and Sarah,  
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,  
free to serve God without fear,  
holy and righteous in God’s presence  
all the days of our life.

And you, child,  
will be called the prophet of the Most High;  
for you will go before the Lord to prepare the way,  
to give his people the people knowledge of salvation  
by the forgiveness of their sins.  
In the tender compassion of our God,  
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,  
to shine on those who sit in darkness  
in the shadow of death,  
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.’

Luke 3:1-6

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

‘The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

“Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight.  
Every valley shall be filled,  
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,  
and the crooked shall be made straight,  
and the rough ways made smooth;  
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.” ’

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

**All: Thanks be to God.**

**Choir: “Prophets Knew”**

**Reflection: “Restless Peace”**

**Hymn: “There’s A Voice in the Wilderness” VU 18**

There's a voice in the wilderness crying,  
a call from the ways untrod:  
prepare in the desert a highway,  
a highway for our God!  
The valleys shall be exalted,  
the lofty hills brought low;  
make straight all the crooked places  
where God, our God, may go!

O Zion, that bringest good tidings,  
get thee up to the heights and sing!  
Proclaim to a desolate people  
the coming of their King.  
Like the flowers of the field they perish,  
like grass our works decay;  
the power and pomp of nations  
shall pass, like a dream, away.

But the word of our God endureth,  
whose arm is ever strong;  
God stands in the midst of nations,  
and soon will right the wrong.  
God shall feed the flock like a shepherd,  
the lambs so gently hold;  
to pastures of peace will lead them,  
and bring them safe to fold.

There's a voice in the wilderness crying,  
a call from the ways untrod:  
prepare in the desert a highway,  
a highway for our God!

The valleys shall be exalted,  
the lofty hills brought low;  
make straight all the crooked places  
where God, our God, may go!

**Virtual Offering:**

One: God of love, today we mark the sharing of gifts from hearts and hands,

Two: *gifts of warm mittens and hats, nourishing food,  
dollars and gift cards.*

One: Some have arrived in envelopes, some in bags -

Two: *all of them offered and wrapped with love and care.*

One: Bless them, and all our offerings, Giving One,

Two: *as they spread your love into our community. 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.**

**Sacrament of Communion**

*Written by Alydia Smith, Program Coordinator, Worship, Music, and Spirituality,  
General Council Office*

One: As we come to this table,  
we are reminded that this is the table of Jesus Christ,  
a banquet prepared for everyone.  
All who seek to be nourished and sustained  
in the journey of faith,  
all who seek wholeness and compassionate paths to peace and justice,  
are welcome here.

One: God be with you.

**All: And also with you.**

One: Lift up your hearts.

**All: We lift our hearts in prayer.**

One: Let us give thanks to God.

**All: It is good to give God thanks and praise.**

One: Blessed are you, Breath of peace,  
Giver of all life,  
Source of love that knows no boundaries.

Your song of wisdom rang out before the world began;  
 throughout the ages, your song of liberation has impregnated us with your hope for a world  
 where:  
 those considered last and least are first and most;  
 violence is overcome by the power of your ancient love; and,  
 all siblings work together for peace.

Two: You bring our longings to birth,  
 and send prophets to awaken us  
 to your approaching Advent among us.

We thank you for those who, like Mary,  
 have the strength and courage  
 to give birth to your love in the world;  
 for those who, like the shepherds,  
 dare to seek out the Child of Bethlehem;  
 for those who, like the wise ones,  
 actively challenge violent and oppressive powers.

One: We praise you that your everlasting light is shown to us  
 in womb and tomb,  
 in cradle and cross,  
 in tenderness and compassion.  
 We join in the Advent prayer of all your people,  
 "O come, Emmanuel."

And, as we wait and watch for your coming among us,  
 we proclaim your goodness.

**All: (sung – tune 'O Come. O Come, Emmanuel')**  
**O Holy, holy God of power and might,**  
**We sing with all creation of your Light.**  
**Blest is the One who comes in your name,**  
**Hosanna we declare through time and space.**  
**Rejoice! Rejoice!**  
**Emmanuel will come to us as prophets do foretell.**

Two: At this time, we also remember  
 all with whom you would have us share your feast.  
 We pray for all who are in sorrow or in pain...  
 all who are ill or alone...  
 all who are close to our hearts...

all our sisters who live with fear, oppression, or hunger...  
all whose lives have been blighted by violence, racism, or poverty...  
for all whom the world counts as last and least.

We pray for the church and its many ministries,  
for nations as they strive for peace and justice,  
for an end to violence against women.

God of hope, make this bread the means of our rebuilding,  
this wine the medium of our transformation,  
this table the foundation of our renewal,  
and this community the place of our rebirth. Amen.

One: At this time, we remember Jesus,  
Who on the night before he died,  
took a loaf of bread,  
gave you thanks, broke it, and said,  
"Take and eat; whenever you do this, remember me."  
Likewise, after supper, he took the cup, saying,  
"This is the new covenant; remember me."

Gracious God, Breath of peace,  
Source of love,  
we pray for your Spirit.  
Make us, while many, one.  
Make us, though broken, whole.  
Make us, despite death, alive.  
And so we pray:  
Come, Holy Spirit, come.

And so we join with our siblings around the world in the prayer of Jesus:

### **The Lord's Prayer VU 960**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

Sharing the bread and cup

One: The body of Christ,

Two: the Bread of life.

One: The lifeblood of Christ,

Two: the cup of blessing.

One: Let us eat and drink together  
for our strengthening in the faith,  
and for the sake of the world.

*Communion is served*

**Prayer after communion**

**All: We thank you, God,  
for breaking into our world  
and pouring into our lives and our experiences.  
We thank you, God,  
for this meal of thanksgiving  
and the stories of love, grace, and hope that it tells. Amen**

**Closing Hymn: "Go Tell it On the Mountain" VU 43**

Go, tell it on the mountain,  
over the hills and everywhere.  
Go, tell it on the mountain  
that Jesus Christ is born.

While shepherds kept their watching  
o'er silent flocks by night,  
behold, throughout the heavens  
there shone a holy light. R

The shepherds feared and trembled  
when lo, above the earth  
rang out the angel chorus  
that hailed our Saviour's birth! R

Down in a lonely manger  
the humble Christ was born,  
and God sent our salvation  
that blessed Christmas morn. R



**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 Peace" MV 221**

We are walking a path of peace,

We are walking a path of peace,

We are walking a path of peace,

lead us home,

lead us home. (Repeat)

We are home.

**Reflection****"Restless Peace"**

Each year during Advent, we revisit the stories of John the Baptist, that camel-hair-wearing, locust-and-wild-honey-eating preparer of the way of the Lord, as the gospels of Mark and Matthew describe him. It is only in this third year of our lectionary schedule when we focus on the Gospel of Luke during this season, that we get both the story of John's baptizing ways and the story of his birth.

Our first reading is the culmination of the writer of Luke's retelling of John's birth story, which is much closer chronologically to the story of Jesus' birth than our second reading. We hear the words of Zechariah, John's father and a priest in the temple, who was unable to speak for the entirety of his wife Elizabeth's pregnancy after disbelieving the angel Gabriel who came to him – as he came to Mary – to announce that they would have a son and name him John. When Zechariah was able to speak, standing in the temple with his eight-day-old baby boy, whose name he confirmed, his first words were of praise and of prophecy, coming as he was filled with the Holy Spirit.

"And you, child,  
will be called the prophet of the Most High;  
for you will go before the Lord to prepare the way"

If we had read the next line after the end of that passage in Luke's gospel, we would have heard that "The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel." When we again meet John in our second reading, many years have passed. He has been visited by God's Spirit in his wilderness time, and he at last comes to prepare the way, offering a baptism that could change lives.

Preparing the way – that is what we do in Advent, that is what John was born to do in his time. Prepare the way for people to be able to accept God's light and love in the one named Jesus. Prepare the way for individuals to repent – change their minds or change their course in life – and allow God in.

In our second reading, the gospel writer began by setting us firmly in history as they named the various powerful leaders of the time – just as they do at the beginning of the nativity story. In both instances, naming the political and powerful, the rulers of the day, is in sharp contrast to where God's presence and God's Word is revealed and heard. God chooses not the powerful in their seats of power, but

instead the wild one, the desert one, the young woman, and the humblest of settings, the most unlikely messengers - shepherds and wilderness wanderers.

The prophet Isaiah is quoted when we are reminded how the way will be prepared – mountains will be leveled, valleys filled, crooked paths made straight. All barriers removed - a clear path to God's love known, experienced, and lived in and through Jesus. We, along with John in his time are called to prepare, to clear the way for ourselves and others to know God.

On this Second Sunday of advent when we light our candle of peace, we could look back to Zechariah's prophecy that we will be guided onto a path of peace. How is God's peace woven into this story of John's proclamations and preparations? For me, peace comes into hearts and minds when we remember John's call to repent – to give to God our worries and our short-comings, our mistakes and our distractions. When we are able to do this, when we are able to change our way of thinking, when we can empty ourselves of those burdens, we have a chance to experience God's peace for ourselves.

We might experience God's peace as calmness in difficult times, or courage when we face difficulties, or a sense that we are not alone. I also believe that God's peace is not the absence of action! It can instead be an inspiration to act in ways that could bring peace and hope to others. It can be a restless peace. I think that John the Baptist knew God's restless peace, and was able to use that peace in his heart to offer a tangible action that might help others to open themselves to God.

It is restless peace that opens us to be able to act – to smooth the road for the marginalized, to tear down mountainous barriers for those who have been treated unjustly. These images of ways made straight and barriers removed stayed with me throughout this week, especially on December 3<sup>rd</sup> the UN International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Have we done enough to bring a sense of peace and belonging to those who live with disabilities? Tomorrow, December 6, marks the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. Have we made the rough places smooth for those who experience gender based violence? Have we helped to eliminate mountain-like barriers for those who are different from ourselves? Has our own sense of restless peace encouraged us to take tangible actions that might make a difference in our world?

Not unlike the early first century in which our gospel stories are set, very little seems certain or peaceful about the world. There are still some in power who seem to care little for God's creation or humanity, we are still living with pandemic restrictions and worries, and we are still struggling to find ways to bring equity and peace to all people. But John's proclamation that God does not remain distant still stands – in this time, in this space, in this period of history, God is still with us, urging us to find the peace that will help us to both proclaim and act.

May you find your own restless peace this Advent, as we proclaim with John and prepare the way for Jesus.