

Sunday, December 14, 2025 - Advent 3 - JOY

Jesus, Our Brother, VU # 56

Jesus, our brother, kind and good, Was humbly born in a stable rude, And the friendly beasts around him stood, Jesus, our brother, kind and good.	"I", said the donkey, shaggy and brown, "I carried the mother uphill and down, I carried his mother to Bethlehem town; I" said the donkey shaggy and brown.	"I" said the cow, all white and red, "I gave him my manger for his bed, I gave him hay to pillow his head; I", said the cow, all white and red.	"I" said the sheep with curly horn, "I gave him my wood for his blanket warm; He wore my coat on Christmas morn; I" said the sheep, with curly horn.	"I", said the dove, from the rafters high, "I cooed him to sleep that he should not cry, We cooed him to sleep, my mate and I; I", said the dove, from the rafters high.	Thus all the beasts by some good spell, In the stable dark were glad to tell Of the gifts they gave Emmanuel, The gifts they gave Emmanuel.
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Still, Still, Still, VU # 47

Still, still, still: the night is calm and still. The Christ-child in his crib lies sleeping, Angels round him watch are keeping. Still, still, still: the night is calm and still.	Sleep, sleep, sleep: sweet Jesus, softly sleep, While Mary sings and gently holds you, Safely in her arms enfolds you. Sleep, sleep, sleep: sweet Jesus softly sleep.	Joy, joy, joy: glad tidings of great joy! For through God's holy incarnation Christ is born for our salvation. Joy, joy, joy; glad tidings of great joy!
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Advent Poem -by L. Schneider

Restless now the expectant woman lies
Yes the world is unknowing of her sighs,
Her belly swells, her heart at peace,
This child, unborn, our salvation sees.

Welcome & Announcements

Sung Call to Worship Advent Canon -DUC Choir

Come, O come, Anointed Saviour,
Come and set the captives free.
From the chains of sin release us,
Set our hearts at liberty.

Come, O come, Divine Redeemer,
Come and heal our broken hearts.
Change our grieving to rejoicing:
Hope and joy your love imparts.

Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy -Breen Family

(Candles from previous week are lit.)

We gather

One: Arise and celebrate, good news of deep joy is here!

All: The warm glow of the Divine lightens our hearts.

One: Here we are together. We are not alone. We gather on this third Sunday in Advent with gratitude and overflowing generosity, blessed multiple times by our give-away God. We are witnesses to joy.

We listen Invite someone to testify/tell their experience of delight, generosity, and joy and what such meant for them and others. After their brief testimony invite all to respond:

All: The Joy of Christ is good news, unexpected and surprising in its overflowing.

We pray God-who-lights-up-life give us joyful, generous, and courageous hearts. As we lean on your love may your joy well up in us so that our joy may overflow and flourish, witnessing to a life of constant gratitude, full of grace, cathartic hilarity, and goodness. Amen.

Gathering Hymn **People Look East**, VU # 9

People look east. The time is near	Furrow's be glad. Though earth is bare;	Birds, through you long have ceased to build;	Stars keep the watch, When night is dim	Angels announce with shouts of mirth
Of the crowning of the year.	One more seed is planted there;	Guard their nest that must be filled;	One more light the bowl shall brim,	Christ who brings new life to earth.
Make your house fair as you are able;	Give up your strength the seed to nourish,	Even the hour when wings are frozen	Shining beyond the frosty weather,	Set every peak and valley humming
Trim the hearth and set the table.	That in the course the flower may flourish.	God for fledging time has chosen.	Bright as sun and moon together.	With the word, the Lord is coming.
People look east, people look east:	People look east, people look east:	People look east, people look east:	People look east, people look east:	People look east, people look east:
Love the guest in on the way.	Love the rose is on the way.	Love the bird is on the way.	Love the star is on the way.	Love the Lord is on the way.

Gathering Prayer The Advent story of hope and mystery, anticipation, preparation, a kingdom of this world and the next, and a king appearing when we least expect. Heaven touching earth, the footsteps of the divine walking dusty roads as once they did in Eden, and a people, searching for a Saviour, and walking past the stable. Open our eyes and hearts, that this might be an Advent of hope to the world. Amen.

Ministry of Music **Dream a Dream**

Learning with God's Children *A Christmas Wish List*

The Lord's Prayer

Children leave for Sunday School

Prayer of Illumination *-from Faithandworship.com*

In this Advent of expectation, draw us together in unity, that our praise and worship might echo in these walls and also through our lives. In this Advent of expectation draw us together in mission, that the hope within might be the song we sing, and the melody of our lives. In this Advent of expectation draw us together in service, that the path we follow might lead us from a stable to a glimpse of eternity. Amen.

Hymn **My Soul Cries Out**, MVU # 120

My soul cries out with a joyful shout	Refrain My heart shall sing of the day you bring.	Though I am small, My God, my all,	From the halls of power to the fortress tower,	Though the nations rage from age to age,
That the God of my heart is great,	Let the fires of your justice burn.	You work great things in me,	Not a stone will be left on stone.	We remember who holds us fast:
And my spirit sings of the wondrous things	Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near,	And your mercy will last from the depths of the past	Let the king beware for your justice tears	God's mercy must deliver us
That you bring to the ones who wait.	And the world is about to turn!	To the end of the age to be.	ev'ry tyrant from his throne.	From the conqueror's crushing grasp.
You fixed your sight on your servant's plight,		Your very name puts the proud to shame,	The hungry poor shall week no more,	This saving world that our forebears hears
And my weakness you did not spurn,		And to those who would for you year,	For the food they can never earn;	Is the promise which hold us bound,
So from east to west shall my name be blest.		You will show your might, put the strong to flight,	Thee are tables spread, ev'ry mouth be fed,	'til the spear and rod can be crushed by God;
Could the world be about to turn?		For the world is about to turn.	For the world is about to turn.	Who is turning the world around.
		Refrain	Refrain.	Refrain

Scripture Readings

Isaiah 35: 1-10

The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the Lord, the splendor of our God. Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you." Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow. And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness; it will be for those who walk on that Way. The unclean will not journey on it; wicked fools will not go about on it. No lion will be there, nor any ravenous beast; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, and those the Lord has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

James 5: 7-8

Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.

Matthew 11: 2-11

When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"

Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me."

As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: "'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Hymn Be Still, My Soul, VU # 652

Be still, my soul, for God is on your
side;

Bear patiently the cross of grief or
pain.

Trust in your God, your saviour and
your guide;

Who through all changes faithful will
remain.

Be still, my soul, your best, your
heavenly friend

Through stormy ways leads to a
peaceful end.

Be still, my soul, your God will
undertake

to guide the future surely as the past.
Your hope, your confidence let

nothing shake;
All now mysterious shall be bright at
last.

Be still, my soul, life's tempests still
obey

The voice that once the waves' wild
fury stayed.

Be still, my soul, the hour is hastening
on

When we shall be forever in God's
peace;

When disappointment, grief and fear
are gone,

Love's joys restored, our strivings all
shall cease.

Be still, my soul, when change and
tears are past,

All safe and blessed we shall meet at
last.

Message Where do we find true joy?

Running from our past and present, unable to enjoy life because we are too caught up in our regrets, our problems, and our broken relationships. The fears of what lies ahead, bills, illnesses, appointments, death and dying, the loss of loved ones. Taxes, cost of groceries, savings for retirement, our children, and grandchildren. The list of things about which we worry can be seemingly endless, but...

Man and the two lions, rope, delicious plant, strawberries story...

It's a wonderful vision and promise of joy we receive from Isaiah this week, and yet it's one that seems so out of place: out of place in the middle of all the dire warnings Isaiah proclaimed in the preceding thirty-four chapters and against all the mounting evidence of what was in store for Isaiah's people. This vision and promise of joy might even seem out of place for us today. Flowing streams and blossoming deserts sound far-fetched in the face of the climate catastrophe. The people of God being safe from ravenous beasts seems like a lofty dream against the news headlines. Even the promise of joy might feel unreachable amid health challenges, tight finances, or family tensions.

But perhaps the whole point of the proclamation is, in fact, how out of place it all seems. Perhaps we are being invited to recognize the truth that, even in the “out of place” places, God is still with us and is still coming to embrace, restore, and save. Walter Brueggemann comments that this passage “invites us out of our managed rationality to affirm that God does what the world thinks is not possible.” That is the deeper joy that Jesus brings. Sure, we rightly wonder when the world is going to turn. But in the meantime, the world is already turning.

Prayers of the People -by Steve Garnaas-Holmes

O Coming One, give us a steadfast spirit to wait for you with grace. Give us patience to listen for your breathing in the breath of your people, attuned to hear their pain, their need, and their hopes. Give us courage to trust your continually blossoming presence even in the unseeing darkness. Give us wisdom to see your manger in rough places, your star in dark nights. Give us gentleness to receive you as a child amidst the shouting of kings and warriors. O Blossoming One, you are the love with which we wait tenderly for the coming of your love. O Holy Child, come to us that we may fall in love with you, and become wholly yours, in faith, in love, in steadfast hope. Amen.

Offering Invitation & Prayer In God’s Kingdom there is joy. Great joy! It comes from taking care of others and being taken care of ourselves. Your gifts to this church do that locally, while your gifts to the Mission and Service of the United Church of Canada do it across Canada and globally. It feels so good to be generous!

O God, may gifts given here today, and those we have given by PAR, help to create joy: joy across the world, joy within our homes, and joy within ourselves. Amen.

Advent Sung Closing **God of Still Waiting**, MVU # 20, V 3

Word who comes to us,
Word who lives with us,
Word who disturbs and heals;
Silence our chattering fears,
Waken our unconscious faith.

A Joyful Benediction Be people of joy. Let joy live in your heart and share the joy of Christ with all you meet. Share joy by seeing the good in each other. Share joy by remembering good times and hoping for good times to come. Share joy by praying for our world. In this Advent season, we need to see, feel, and share joy. As you go out into the wonder of God’s creations, share joy, peace, and hope with those you meet. Amen.

Choral Amen