

Order of Service - December 28, 2025
New Beginnings

Lighting the Christ Candle As we light the Christ Candle this first Sunday after Christmas, signalling that he is with us again, we reflect on the idea that Jesus' light is like that porch light. His light is always on for every person who has ever felt lost, alone, or afraid. His light is on for those people who need to find their way home to him. His light is on for everyone who needs a new beginning. They just have to follow his light, a soft golden glow on a cold night.

-from: Light of Christ, words and music by Pat Mayberry, copyright 2025, The Gathering, Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, 2025/2026

We found this song in The Gathering, the 2025 Christmas Season. As the Christ Candle is lit for the first time since Christmas, please join in with me

P: Light of Christ, shine in and through me. Light of Love be with me now. Take these hands, healing hands, Light of Christ flow through me now.

Praise Hymn Joy to the World, VU # 59

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!	Joy to the earth, the Saviour reigns!	He rules the earth with truth and grace,
Let earth receive her King;	Let all their songs employ,	And makes the nations prove
Let ev'ry heart prepare him room,	While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains,	The glories of his righteousness
And heav'n and nature sing	Repeat the sounding joy	And wonders of his love,
And heav'n and nature sing	Repeat the sounding joy	And wonders of his love,
And heav'n and nature sing	Repeat the sounding joy.	And wonders, wonders, of his love.

Welcome *-by Leigh Sinclair, St. David's UC, Beaumont & d Leduc, AB*

Happy New Year to all of you ... almost! May each of us feel the Spirit filling us up with the hope and compassion we need for this coming year. May each of us feel the welcome of God's love and pass it on to others! All are welcome here.

Announcements

Call to Worship *-by Bill Steadman, Goulais River UC, Goulais River, ON*

This is the season of Christmas. With the birth of Jesus, this is the time of hopes fulfilled and love made real. This Sunday marks the end of one year. This is a time of recollecting past accomplishments and failures, a time of remembering former events, good and difficult. This week anticipates the beginning of a new year. This is a time of seeking new perspective and being open to new opportunities. This is a day that the Lord has made.

Gathering Hymn Behold, Behold, I Make All Things New, MVU # 115

Behold, behold, I make all things new,
Beginning with you and starting from today.
Behold, behold, I make all things new,
My promise is true,
For I am Christ the way.

Gathering Prayer *-by Gord Dunbar, while at Kincardine PC, Kincardine, ON*

Loving God, it's the holiday weekend, yet we're here. As we enter this new year, we yearn to experience your voice, to know with certainty your call, to understand how we live best as followers of your way ... but it isn't easy. Fill our hearts, our minds, our wills today with your love and wisdom, that we may follow the Way of Jesus into this new year. Amen.

Hymn When I Needed a Neighbour, VU # 600

When I needed a neighbour,	I was hungry and thirsty,	I was cold, I was naked,	When I needed a healer,	Wherever you travel
were you there, were you there?	Were you there, were you there?	Were you there, were you there?	Were you there, were you there?	I'll be there, I'll be there;
When I needed a neighbour, were you there?	I was hungry and thirsty, were you there?	I was cold, I was naked, were you there?	When I needed a healer, were you there?	Wherever you travel I'll be there.
And the creed and the colour	And the creed and the colour	And the creed and the colour	And the creed and the colour	And the creed and the colour
and the name won't matter, were you there?	and the name won't matter, were you there?	and the name won't matter, were you there?	and the name won't matter, were you there?	and the name won't matter, I'll be there.

Prayer of Confession *-by Bill Steadman, Goulais River UC, Goulais River, ON*

Holy One, we come before you with an open heart and a desire to be sensitive to your call as we enter this new year. You give meaning to our days and direction to our lives. We are thankful for the many ways that you support us and encourage us.

We admit, however, that we are not always open to your direction. There are times when we feel that we know what is best. There are days when we are not prepared to listen to your word or pay attention to your direction. When we notice that still small voice within, we run the other way.

Yet now, in these moments of reflection, we realize that we are wrong when we refuse to accept your way as being the way to live our lives.

We are misguided when we suggest that the needs of others are beyond what is possible to address. Turn us, God, to your pathway of acceptance, encouragement, commitment, and faithfulness.

In silence, we offer our personal prayers of confession, readying ourselves for the journey of the new year. *A time of silent prayer*

Words of Assurance:

L: God surrounds us with love and loves us, even when we act in unlovable ways. God accepts us and nurtures us, even when we turn our backs on God and refuse to care for the very creation in which we have been placed. God kindles within us a spirit of hope, even when life is bleak and appears hopeless to us.

P: **No matter where we are or what we have done or how we feel, God is there with us and for us, giving us reason to face another day with faith and with hope. Thanks be to God.**

Offertory Prayer *-by Gord Dunbar, while in Kincardine PC, Kincardine, ON*

Servanthood is hard, O God, yet you call us to serve. Following through on a commitment is challenging, O Christ, yet you call us to reach out to others in love. Giving to others beyond our own needs and wants is demanding, O Spirit, yet you give us the direction and the purpose. Bless what we offer here as signs of our servanthood, of our commitment, and of our self-giving in Jesus' name. Amen.

Children's Ministry

The story of two wolves is a Cherokee legend illustrating the most important battle of our lives - the one between good and bad within us. Here is how the story goes:

An old Cherokee is teaching his grandson about life. "A fight is going on inside me," he said to the boy.

"It is a terrible fight, and it is between two wolves. One is evil – he is angry, greedy, feels sorry for himself, and he lies and cheats."

He continued, "The other is good – he is joyful, peaceful, loving, hopeful, kind, compassionate, and does nice things for people.

The same fight is going on inside you – and inside every other person, too."

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win?"

I'll tell you the end in a minute, but I wanted to ask you a few questions about the story.

1. Have you ever had to decide whether to do the good thing or the bad thing?

2. If people had the choice of being angry and lying and feeling guilty and greedy ... that's one side of the person. Or, they could choose to be hopeful, kind, generous, and truthful. Which do you think most people would choose?

Now I'm going to tell you the end of the story. Remember, the grandson had just asked his grampa which wolf will win. The grampa says, "whichever one you feed".

Wow! What does that mean? Well, if you had a little kitten, and you kept feeding it every day, would she grow up big and strong?

Well, that's the same with what kind of person we choose to be – if we are always thinking about and doing good deeds, like being kind and generous, that's like feeding the good wolf. But if we are always thinking about and doing bad things, that side of us will grow strong. So the lesson here is to focus on being truthful, hopeful, and kind.

Dear God. Please help us choose our good side of kindness, love, and hope. We would like to always feed the good side of us so that it will grow big and strong. Thank you for sending Jesus to us. By His example, we can learn to have good feelings and ideas and do good deeds. With your help, we can lead a good life. We are grateful to you. We are thankful for the adults in our lives that are a good example of how to be honest, nice, and kind. We love you God. Amen.

Children's Hymn **Jesus Bids Us Shine**, VU # 585

Jesus bids us shine
with a pure, clear light,
Like a little candle
burning in the night.
In this world of darkness,
so let us shine;
You in your small corner,
and I in mine.

Jesus bids us shine
first of all for him;
Well he sees and knows it
if our light grows dim:
Jesus walks beside us
to help us shine,
You in your small corner,
and I in mine.

Jesus bids us shine,
then, for all around,
Many kinds of darkness
in the world are found:
Sin, and want and sorrow,
so we must shine,
You in your small corner,
and I in mine.

Lord's Prayer spoken

Children Leave for Sunday School

Prayer of Illumination *-by Beth W. Johnston, Bridging Waters PC, Nipawin, SK*

As we receive the words of scripture on this end of one year and the beginning of the other, we celebrate that the good news remains constant. We know that you, O God, love us with an everlasting love. We know that you seek to be our faithful guide and companion as we travel the path of becoming all we were created to be. Open our hearts to your word, your good news that will guide us into a new year and new beginnings. Amen.

Scripture Readings

Isaiah 63:7-9 - Praise and Prayer (NIV)

I will tell of the kindnesses of the Lord, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the Lord has done for us - yes, the many good things he has done for Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses. He said, "Surely they are my people, children who will be true to me"; and so he became their Saviour. In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them. He lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

Colossians 3:12-17 (NIV)

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Reflection -by Dave Khanoyan as posted on Facebook

I'm 72 years old. I'm a deacon at my local church, I pay my taxes, and I've never even gotten a speeding ticket. But for the last nine years, I've been running a "scam" right under the nose of the corporate management at the Second Chance Thrift Store. If they found out, they'd fire me before I could hang up my apron. But I don't care. Because in a world that loves to strip people of their pride, I've found a way to give it back.

My job is simple: I sort the donations. I tag the jeans, the heavy winter coats, the work boots that still have a few miles left in them. Most customers don't look at me. To them, I'm just part of the furniture—an old man with arthritic hands and reading glasses, pricing items that smell like mothballs and other people's memories.

But being invisible has its perks. It means I see everything. I see the single mothers calculating the price of school shoes against the price of groceries. I see the veterans staring at suits they need for job interviews, checking their wallets, and walking away. And I remember the boy.

It was mid-November in our rusty little town. The wind was already cutting through the streets like a knife. He walked in wearing a hoodie so thin I could see his t-shirt underneath. He couldn't have been more than fourteen. Skinny, shivering, with that guarded look kids get when the system has failed them one too many times. He went straight to the coat rack. He found a heavy, navy-blue parka - brand name, down-filled, barely worn. It was priced at \$25. A steal for regular folks, but a fortune for him.

I watched him from the corner of my eye. He held the sleeve, feeling the warmth of it. He checked the tag. His shoulders dropped about three inches. He didn't groan, he didn't complain. He just carefully put it back on the hanger and started walking toward the door. My heart hammered in my chest. I couldn't just hand it to him. I've learned the hard way that charity tastes bitter to people who are trying to survive. If you offer a handout, they feel small. They feel like a project. So, I grabbed the coat and intercepted him at the counter. "Hey, son," I called out.

He froze, looking ready to bolt. "I didn't steal nothing."

"I know," I grumbled, putting on my best grumpy-old-man act. "But I got a problem. This coat here? It's got a defect. Zipper sticks at the bottom. Store policy says I can't sell 'damaged' goods for more than three bucks. You got three bucks?"

He looked at me, confused. "The tag says twenty-five."

"Tag's wrong," I lied, peeling the sticker off. "I'm the inventory manager. I say it's three bucks. You want it or do I have to toss it in the bin?"

He hesitated, searching my face for the catch. Then, he dug into his pocket and pulled out three loonies. "Yeah," he whispered. "I'll take it."

He put it on right there. He zipped it up - perfectly smooth, of course - and stood a little taller. He didn't look like a shivering kid anymore. He looked like a young man who had made a smart purchase. He looked protected.

"Thanks," he said.

"Store policy," I muttered, turning away so he wouldn't see my eyes watering.

That was the beginning. Over the next few years, the "Store Policy" became my secret weapon. When Mrs. Miller, a widow living on Social Aid, needed a new toaster but only had \$5, the \$20 model suddenly had a "dented cord" discount. When a young father needed steel-toed boots to start his first construction job, I invented a "Tuesday Morning Workwear Clearance."

I kept a ledger in my head. I'd pay the difference out of my own pocket when the drawer count didn't match, or I'd mark items as "unsellable/discarded" in the system. I was terrified of getting caught.

Then, one afternoon, a woman in a cashmere scarf caught me in the act. She watched me sell a pristine baby stroller to a terrified young girl for \$10. After the girl left, the woman approached the counter. I braced myself, expecting a lecture or a threat to call the manager. Instead, she slid a folded \$100 bill across the glass. "For your . . . inventory errors," she said, winking.

It rippled out from there. Quietly. The regulars caught on. They never said a word aloud. They'd just buy a \$5 trinket, hand me a twenty, and say, "Keep the change for the next time the 'system acts up'." We built a secret economy based entirely on dignity. We weren't giving handouts; we were leveling the playing field.

Last Tuesday, the bell above the door rang. A man walked in. He was tall, broad-shouldered, wearing a crisp EMT uniform. He looked confident, solid. He walked the aisles with purpose, but he wasn't shopping. He came straight to my counter. "You're Arthur," he stated.

I adjusted my glasses. "I am." He smiled, and suddenly I saw the skinny fourteen-year-old boy in the shivering grey hoodie.

"You sold me a navy-blue parka ten years ago," he said. "Told me the zipper was busted."

I felt my face heat up. "I process a lot of coats, son."

"The zipper wasn't busted, Arthur." He leaned in, his voice low and thick with emotion. "I knew you were lying. Even back then, I knew. But you didn't make me beg. You let me buy it. You let me be a customer, not a beggar. You let me walk out of here feeling like a man." He reached into his pocket and pulled out an envelope. "I'm a paramedic now. I save lives. But I don't think I would have made it through that winter without that coat. Or without knowing that someone actually gave a damn." He placed the envelope on the counter. "There's \$500 in there," he said. "Use it. I know your 'store policy' is expensive."

I tried to push it back, my hands shaking. "I can't . . ."

"It's not for you," he said firmly. "It's for the next kid who comes in shivering. Make sure his zipper is broken, too." He turned and walked out, head high, into the autumn sun.

I'm 72 years old. My back hurts, and my feet swell after a long shift. But I have the best job in the world.

We live in a country that tells you your worth is tied to your bank account. We tell people to pull themselves up by their bootstraps, even when they have no boots. But I've learned something powerful in this dusty old store: Dignity is more important than charity. Sometimes, helping someone isn't just about giving them what they need. It's about how you give it to them.

If you can help someone while letting them keep their pride - if you can help them without making them feel small - you don't just feed their body or warm their back. You save their spirit.

So, I'll keep lying. I'll keep bending the rules. I'll keep making up policies that don't exist. Because the price tag doesn't matter. The person wearing the clothes does.

Prayers of the People -from *Celebrate God's Presence*, pg. 60, 61

We thank you, compassionate God, that you hear the prayers of our hearts: all who rejoice at a baby's new birth; all who mourn when the circle is incomplete, when a friend or loved one has died; all who are grateful when their work meets with success; all who suffer because no work is to be found; all who are bored, not having enough to do; all who are tired, having too much to do; all who are surrounded by the love of family and friends; all who are lonely.

Thank you for hearing us in every situation of life. Help us support one another always, rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep. We want to be joined together, as members of the body of Christ, loving one another and serving the world. Like Jesus, we want to respond to each human being who crosses our path with sensitivity and compassion. This we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Parting Hymn **Go, Make a Difference**, MVU # 209

Refrain	We are the salt of the earth,	We are the hands of Christ	So let your love shine on,
Go make a difference.	Called to let the people see	Reaching out to those in need,	Let it shine for all to see.
We can make a difference.	The love of God for you and	The face of God for all to see.	Go make a difference in the
Go make a difference in the	me.	We are the spirit of hope;	world.
world.	We are the light of the world,	we are the voice of peace.	And the spirit of Christ
Go make a difference.	Not to be hidden but be seen.	Go make a difference in the	will be with us as we go.
We can make a difference.	Go make a difference in the	world.	Go make a difference in the
Go make a difference in the	world.	Refrain	world.
world.	Refrain		Refrain

Commissioning -by *Bill Steadman, Goulais River UC, Goulais River, ON*

L: We contemplate and consider the needs of the world, and seek to meet the challenges that we encounter. We contemplate and consider opportunities for service, and seek ways to make real the hope that we share. We understand and accept the reality of grief and disappointment and seek ways to support each other through the journey of life. We anticipate and discover joys yet to be revealed and seek to live with enthusiasm each new day.

P: **As we enter the new year, God will be with us in our times of challenge, hope, sorrow, and joy.**

L: We share the confidence that God is with us each and every day.

P: **Thanks be to God, now and always.**

Choral Amen

Extinguish the Christ Candle