

Order of Service for January 11, 2026 - Baptism of the Lord

Welcome & Announcements

Creation Connection *Find the Keepers of the Water Declaration*, Fort Simpson, 2006, which states that "Water is a Sacred gift, an essential element that sustains and connects all life. It is not a commodity to be bought or sold. All people share an obligation to cooperate in ensuring that Water, in all its forms, is protected and conserved with regard to the needs of all living things today and for the generations yet to come," and reminds us of the obligation we have to care for the water. How do we connect this declaration with the ritual of baptism and water becoming holy for us in that action?

Water is the life force source of all living things. Their Elders have told Indigenous Peoples of the Americas that all living things need water; no plant or creature can exist without it. The right to safe drinking water is a human right, and people should have sufficient water supplies to meet their essential needs.

Lighting of the Christ Candle

L: Jesus was born in a flood of water from his mother's womb, as we all are, travelling through the birth canal. Today we celebrate his baptism by water, which illustrates that he is indeed one of us, and yet he also came into this world to be a shining light of hope and love, to guide and lead us to a better way of being faithful humans." We now light the Christ Candle on the third Sunday after Jesus' birth. Our baptized Christ is God's Son, sent to light our way in the darkness.

All: We will let Christ's light shine through us in all that we say and all that we do. Amen

Prayer of Confession Gracious God, our sins are too heavy to carry, too real to hide, and too deep to undo. We look at a world undone by strife, torn by violence, separated by hatred. Yet you call us to walk the way of peace. Forgive us, O Lord, for refusing to follow you on this path because the cost is too high, the direction too confusing, the conditions too harsh. Forgive us for our complacency. Grant us clarity of vision to understand something clearly at last, And the strength to walk behind you. In the power of your Spirit we pray, Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness, from Luke 1 By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God.

Gathering Hymn *I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry*, VU # 644

I was there to hear your borning cry, I'll be there when you are old. I rejoiced the day you were baptized, To see your life unfold.	I was there when you were but a child, With a faith to suit you well; In a blaze of light you wandered off To find where demons dwell.	When you heard the wonder of the word, I was there th cheer you on; You were raised to praise the living Lord, To whom you now belong.	If you find someone to share your time And you join your hearts as one, I'll be there to make your verses rhyme From dusk 'til rising sun.	In the middle ages of your life, Not too old, no longer young. I'll be there to guide you through the night, Complete what I've begun.	When the evening gently closes in And you shut your weary eyes, I'll be there as I have always been With just one more surprise.	I was there to hear your borning cry, I'll be there when you are old. I rejoiced the day you were baptized, To see your life unfold.
--	---	---	---	--	--	--

Call to Worship

L: When we have dirtied our hands,

P: We wash them with soap and water

L: Scrubbing them not just for five seconds,

P: but for at least twenty seconds, to get that cleansing soap into each crevice and each stain on our palms, knuckles, and fingers.

L: So, too, must we pray to you, O Lord, and confess our sins, not just for a moment,

P: But for as long as we need to in order to cleanse our hearts, minds, and souls of our transgressions, the ways in which we have erred, or harmed others,

L: Until we feel refreshed and renewed,

All: As Jesus is refreshed, renewed, and immersed in the cleansing waters, a powerful symbol that He came to take upon his own shoulders the weight of human sin, to give us life anew and expectant, hopeful and cleansed, so that we might let him saturate our very essence with LOVE.

Ministry of Music Just a Little Talk with Jesus

Hymn I Am a Child of God, MVU # 157

I am a child of God, I am a glimpse of God's new creation.	I am an endless prayer, I am a yearning for contemplation, I am an endless prayer, I am an endless prayer.	I am an angry voice, I am compassion and consternation, I am an angry voice, I am an angry voice.	I am a cry for peace, I am commitment and dedication, I am a cry for peace, I am a cry for peace.	I am a song of joy, I am the moment of jubilation, I am a song of joy, I am a song of joy.
--	---	---	---	--

Children's Time Sacred (connected to God) Water

The Lord's Prayer (sung)

Children leave for Sunday School

Mission & Services Video from United Church of Canada

Offering Invitation & Prayer God calls us and names us. When we respond by walking the road of discipleship - sharing good news, praying and worshipping, loving and serving - our footsteps are on the path of God's unending love. Sharing our financial resources through the church community is another important part of our discipleship journey. As faithful disciples, we give generously in response to God's call.

We pray that the gifts we give today will go further in God's world than we can imagine. Bless these gifts, that they will further God's will in His world. Amen.

Scripture Readings

Acts 10: 34-43 Peter's Sermon to the Gentiles

Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached - how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

"We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen - by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Matthew 3: 13-17

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of

the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Hymn *I Heard the Voice of God*, VU # 626

I heard the voice of Jesus say, "Come unto me and rest; Lay down, O weary one, lay down Your head upon my breast." I came to Jesus as I was, Weary and worn and sad; I found in him a resting place, And he has made me glad.	I heard the voice of Jesus say, "Behold I freely give The living water; thirsty one, Stoop down, and drink, and live." I came to Jesus, and I drank Of that life-giving stream; My thirst was quenched, My soul revived, And now I live in him.	I heard the voice of Jesus say, "I am this dark world's light; Look unto me, your morn shall rise, And all your day be bright." I looked to Jesus, and I found In him my star, my sun; And in that light of life I'll walk 'til travelling days are done.
--	---	---

Message *The Baptism of Jesus with the Water of Life*

Set the scene: the warm day, the noise of the crowd, tension and eagerness in the crowd, word of John and his baptism of repentance has spread, and people are eagerly looking for ways to improve their lives, to be freed of the weight of their sin, and to have a closer relationship with God.

It was likely a warm day when Jesus went to the river to be baptized. But it's winter here, so just imagine, for a moment, Jesus trudging through the snow with everyone else, down to the river where John's frantically chopping at the ice, trying to break through. He can't, so he finally gives up and uses snow.... But why couldn't that be a baptism as well? We baptize with water because water is life. John called people to repent, to turn away from sin and turn back to God. The water symbolically washed away that old life and offered something new, a new life with God. In the cold and shadows of winter, life hides in the snow. We know that spring will come, that creation will come back to life. We know that life is still there through all the changing seasons.

Our lives are like that, too. That day Jesus was baptized by John, I wonder how many others were baptized who struggled with their repentance. I wonder how many found themselves making their way through different seasons in their lives, each one with a unique story to tell, a widely varying weight of sins to atone for, and different versions of their hopes for a "better life" once they have been cleansed by the baptismal waters and welcomed into God's loving arms anew.

I wonder how many remembered their baptism, remembered Jesus, and found their way through because of those memories.

What faith memories help us remember that we're all children of God?

Jesus, who knew no sin, who was part human and part divine, really had no need to be cleansed of sin. He, so young as his ministry began, was perfectly incarnated. But he chose to symbolically immerse himself into the bathwater of the human race, murky perhaps with our washed-away regrets, our sins of omission and those of commission – that which we have done or left undone, impervious to sin by his holy, divine nature, but becoming, as he always does in his life and ministry, a scapegoat, a sin eater, for humanity. A sin eater was a common feature of Welsh and English funerals in the 1600's to 1900, whereby food and drink (bread and beer) prepared by the deceased's family, were placed upon the body, and then eaten by the sin eater, who was taking upon himself the sin of the dead person, so that they did not have to enter purgatory (Protestants do not practice a final confession of sin, as do Catholics.)

This somewhat bizarre ritual was a stand-in for the role which Jesus plays for Christians, after his baptism into our "sea or river of sin".

The flowing waters of the Jordan River allowed for a slow stream of moving water, so that the sins were truly washed away by the combination of the immersion, the prayers, and the movement of the water, which carried the sins of the person away.

Jesus was baptized as a sign of his dedication (wholehearted obedience to God), and so too we follow his example. At the same time, his own baptism is transformed in our experience because he is *more* than just a model. We don't simply get baptized because he did. We're baptized into him, and he baptizes us with the Holy Spirit. – The words which the officiant speaks as part of the act of baptizing someone. Though like John the Baptist we may at first be perplexed as to why Jesus was baptized, we can see now that Jesus's baptism is a crucial part of his saving work in the world, always to be remembered.

Parting Hymn **Called by Earth and Sky**, MVU # 135

Refrain	Precious these	Precious this gift,	Precious these	Precious the fire
Called by earth and	waters, endless	the air we breathe;	mountains, ancient	that lights our way,
sky,	seas,	Wind born and free.	sands;	Bright dawning day.
Promise of hope	Deep ocean's	Breath of the Spirit,	Vast fragile land.	Fire of passion,
held high.	dream,	Blow through this	Seeds of our	sorrows undone,
This is our sacred	Waters of healing,	place,	wakening,	Our faith and justice
living trust,	rivers of rain,	Our gathering and	Rooted and strong,	one.
Treasure of life	The wash of love	our grace.	Creation's faithful	Refrain
sanctified,	again.	Refrain	song.	
Called by earth and	Refrain		Refrain	
sky.				

Commissioning & Benediction -by *Julian of Norwich, an early Christian mystic*

Let us leave this service with deep gratitude for the undeserved grace of God's love, and for Jesus taking on the weights and burdens of our wayward lives. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 'All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.' Amen, and amen.

Choral Benediction **God Be With You 'Til We Meet Again**, VU # 422

God be with you 'til we meet again;	Refrain	God be with you 'til we meet again;
Loving counsels guide, uphold	'Til we meet, 'til we meet,	Unseen wings protecting hide you,
you,	'til we meet at Jesus' feet,	Daily manna still provide you;
With a shepherd's care enfold you:	'Til we meet, 'til we meet,	God be with you 'til we meet again.
God be with you 'til we meet again.	God be with 'til we meet again.	Refrain

Choral Amen