

January 25, 2026 - Third Sunday After Epiphany

Welcome & Announcements

Creation Connection Light comes in many forms. Human eyes can typically only perceive light between 380 and 740 nanometers, with infrared and ultraviolet beyond our capacity to experience. However, infrared and ultraviolet do exist.

What lies beyond our present "sight," beyond our comprehension, beyond our personal experience, and beyond our rational explanations? How are x-rays, CAT scans, and ultrasounds able to see what is inside of us physically? It is no wonder that God can also see through us, both physically and spiritually!

Lighting of the Christ Candle

L: Christ is the Light of the World. On Epiphany the wise men followed the illumination of the Christ light, a star, from their homes far in the east, the same direction from which our sun rises each day. They knew through their wisdom, calculations and science that something amazing was going to happen in the spot illuminated by this celestial body. They found the source of this light which God had blessed into the world. Jesus' light shines in and with us each and every day. Today as we relight the Christ candle, we do so to honour and remember that this light of love was given for us and will never be extinguished.

P: **Jesus illuminates our lives, our hearts and our way. Let us be true to the pathway which He sets out for us. Amen.**

Prayer for Illumination Loving Creator God, we come today from the busyness and the darkneses of our lives, stepping out from the lack of light into the brilliance of your presence, knowing that You are God's present to us. Open our minds and very essences to realizing that Your radiance and warmth, Your joy and glow are ours for the asking, that Your words serve to bless and guide us, and that Your sacrifice has purchased for us an undeserved boon of God's Grace. Let our service today, and Your Holy Words, kindle anew the flames within us, to sustain us in the hours and days to come, so that our glow can also be beacon of all that is good in you, to others and to the world. Amen.

Gathering Hymn Great is Thy Faithfulness, VU # 288

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| Great is thy faithfulness, | Refrain | Summer and winter and | Pardon for sin and a peace |
| God our Creator; | Great is thy faithfulness! | springtime and harvest; | that endureth; |
| There is no shadow of | Great is thy faithfulness! | Sun, moon, and stars in | Thine own dear presence to |
| turning with thee; | Morning by morning new | their courses above | cheer and to guide, |
| Thou changest not, Thy | mercies I see; | Join with all nature in | Strength for today and |
| compassions, they fail not; | All I have needed thy hand | manifold witness | bright hope for tomorrow, |
| As thou hast been thou | hath provided. | To thy great faithfulness, | Wondrous the portion thy |
| forever wilt be. | Great is thy faithfulness, | mercy, and love | blessings provide. |
| | ever to me! | Refrain | Refrain |

Call to Worship

L: Arise, your light has come,

P: **The mountains burst in song.**

L: The churches and the hills ring loudly in celebration,

P: **Jesus has been born, has been baptized, and revealed to the world.**

L: Leader, teacher, rabbi, and friend

P: **Jesus comes to stand with us all: the poor, the oppressed, the lonely,**

L: To comfort, to inspire, to heal, and to teach.

P: **We come to be comforted, inspired, healed, and taught.**

L: Let us always be eager students and listeners,

P: **Soaking in the words, the music, the prayers, and Jesus' light.**

All: **Let us welcome the changes which God continues to evoke and create in us, to make us blessed, sharing sojourners in His world.**

Ministry of Music Jesus Loved the Little Children and This Little Light of Mine

Hymn Lord, Prepare Me to Be a Sanctuary, MVU # 18

Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary,
Pure and holy tried and true;

With thanksgiving, I'll be a living
Sanctuary for you.

Children's Ministry Poky, the Turtle Patrol

The Lord's Prayer spoken

Children leave for Sunday School

Offering Invitation & Prayer In our offering today we have a wonderful opportunity. Let us be of one mind and one purpose; that we will each be generous and give as we are able. By doing this, not only will great good be achieved, but we will grow closer to the One who calls us.

We thank you, loving God, that you have called each of us, together, to follow your way in Jesus. Bless these gifts, and those given through PAR and online, as steps that bring us closer to you. Amen.

Scripture Readings

Isaiah 9: 1-4

Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honour Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder. For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor.

Psalms 27: 1, 4-9 VU # 754-5

L: God is my light and my salvation, whom, then, shall I fear?

P: God is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?

L: When the wicked close in to devour me,

P: It is they, my enemies and my foes, who stumble and fall.

L: If an army should encamp against me, my heart shall not be afraid;

P: If war should arise against me, even then I will not be dismayed.

Sung Response:

God is my light and saving health, I shall not be afraid.

L: One thing I have asked of God, for which I long: that I may dwell in God's house all the days of my life,

P: To gaze on your beauty, O God, and to seek you in your temple.

L: For in the time of trouble you will give me shelter;

P: You will hide me under the cover of your tent, you will set me high upon a rock.

L: And now you have raised my head above my enemies round about me.

P: Therefore I will offer in your dwelling a sacrifice with great gladness.

Sung Response:

God is my light and saving health, I shall not be afraid.

L: Hear my voice, O God, when I call, have mercy and answer me. Your face, O God, I seek.

P: Do not hide your face from me; do not reject your servant in anger, you, who have been my helper.

L: Do not cast me off, or forsake me, O God, my Saviour.

P: Though my father and mother forsake me, my God will take me up.

Sung Response:

God is my light and saving health, I shall not be afraid.

L: Teach me your way, O God,

P: Lead me on a level path, safe from those who lie in wait for me.

L: Do not give me up to the will of my enemies

P: For liars and false witnesses arise against me.

L: I believe that I shall see God's goodness in the land of the living.

P: Wait for God; be strong and take courage; yes, wait for God!

Sung Response:

God is my light and saving health, I shall not be afraid.

Matthew 4: 12-23 - Jesus Begins His Ministry

When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali - to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah: "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles - the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned." From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." At once they left their nets and followed him. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

Hymn **Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah**, VU # 651

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| Guide me, O though great Jehovah, | Open now the crystal fountain, | When I tread the verge of Jordan, |
| Pilgrims through this barren land. | Whence the healing stream doeth | Bid my anxious fears subside; |
| I am weak, but thou art mighty, | flow; | Death of death, and hell's destruction, |
| Hold me with thy powerful hand. | Let the fire and cloudy pillar | Land me safe on Canaan's side: |
| Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, | lead me all my journey through. | Songs of praises, songs of praises, |
| Feed me 'til I want no more, | Strong deliverer, strong deliverer | I will ever give to thee; |
| Feed me 'til I want no more. | Be thou still my strength and shield, | I will ever give to thee. |
| | Be thou still my strength and shield. | |

Message **Why do we gather as a community of faith?**

To hear God's message and learn the lessons that Jesus taught, yes, but are there other reasons? This meditation is by Susan Lukey, Editor of the United Church's magazine, the Gathering. We invite you to reflect on her words, and your own thoughts on why we gather.

- Gathering in community to receive God's whisper of hope and possibility.
- Gathering at font to feel the outpouring of God's compassion and kindness.
- Gathering at table to taste God's assurance and challenge.
- Gathering in prayer as the work we are called to do for God's world.
- Gathering in song to experience the transcendent rhythm of the Holy.
- Gathering in community to discover the image of God reflected in each other.
- Gathering with others to share pain and joy, disappointments and dreams.
- Gathering to be changed in the encounter with each other and with God's word.
- Gathering to be encouraged for seeking justice and living hope day by day.
- Gathering the gifts of God for the people of God and beyond.
- Gathering is our radical act in a scattered world.

In this week's reading we find Jesus starting his Ministry. He went on to teach many lessons. Here are a few accurate and inaccurate statements of Jesus. We will read a sentence of what Jesus said, and you can respond with either "Oh yes, he did" or "Oh no he didn't".

- Jesus said, "Simon, just give up on the fishing and call it a day." (Oh no he didn't.)
- Jesus said, "Try something different. Cast your net on the other side." (Oh yes, he did!)
- Jesus said, "When it comes to money, make as much as you can and keep it for yourself." (Oh no he didn't.)
- Jesus said, "Be generous. Give to the poor. For where your treasure is there your heart will be also." (Oh yes, he did!)
- Jesus said, "Be quick to pick a fight and if someone hits you on the cheek, punch 'em in the stomach." (Oh no he didn't.)
- Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Oh yes, he did!)
- Jesus said, "Be anxious and fearful, because you never know what's going to happen, and there's lots that's scary in the world." (Oh no he didn't.)
- Jesus said, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life. Give your attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen." (Oh yes, he did!)
- Jesus said, "Go out into all the world and build glorious buildings for all to worship." (Oh no he didn't.)
- Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and God's righteousness, and all else will be given to you." (Oh yes, he did!)

Follow Jesus' teachings and don't be afraid, for God is with you unto the ends of the earth. And may God bless you and keep you, may God's light shine upon you and be gracious unto you, and may God look upon you with kindness and give you joy and give you peace. Amen.

Prayers of and for the People -by Wetaskiwin Writers, Grace Lutheran & First United, Wetaskiwin, AB

God of mercy, Teach us to love. God of open doors and boundless grace, you reach out to welcome us. Forgive us when we take for granted the invitation, the blessing, the abundance of Creation and our place within it. Thank you for the times grace has opened up new possibilities for us. May we offer such grace to others as a means of hope. God of mercy, teach us to love.

Christ, you come to us, asking to be included, to share in our joys and sorrows. Thank you for the gifts of compassion and hope. We pray especially for those who grieve. Help us to offer comfort to one another, to notice those who are hurting, and to reach out to those who feel lonely or lost. Create in us a humble and open heart. God of mercy, teach us to love.

Spirit of life, move throughout the world. We pray for the people who build peace, who work and long for justice. Renew their strength. Disturb the powerful with your compassion that they might use their power to enrich life rather than destroy it. We remember soldiers and peacekeepers, aid workers and volunteers who choose to trust in the midst of fear, who seek to make the forgotten places in our world a safe and welcome home. God of mercy, teach us to love.

In the silence of this time, we offer to you the joys and cares of our living, inviting your guidance as we seek to live faithfully: (a time of silent prayer)

Holy Mystery, beyond all understanding, but as close as a friend's embrace, receive our prayers. May we be open to your response and invitation this day and all days. We pray in the name of Christ who calls us to heal, liberate, and proclaim your love, gathering our hearts and voices together as Jesus taught us. Amen

Parting Hymn**Arise, Your Light is Come**, VU # 79

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| Arise, your light is come! | Arise, your light is come! | Arise, your light is come! | Arise, your light is come! |
| The Spirit's call obey; | Fling wide the prison door; | All you in sorrow born, | The mountains burst in |
| Show forth the glory of your | Proclaim the captive's | Bind up the broken-hearted | song! |
| God, | liberty, | ones | Rise up like eagles on the |
| Which shines on you today. | Good tidings to the poor. | And comfort those who | wing; |
| | | mourn. | God's power will make us |
| | | | strong. |

Commissioning & Benediction Each breath that we take is called inspiration, the taking in of life-giving oxygen, which our body miraculously uses to power itself. When we breathe in God's love, a different form of inspiration takes place, transforming our thoughts and behaviours if we but truly and deeply take these messages and feelings into our very souls. We are blessed this day and all days by God's 'inspirational,' motivating and stimulating essence, extended to us through Jesus, our Christ, and God's Son. Let our spirits be aroused this week to live out our mission as Christians. For they will know that we are Christians by our love.

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

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| God be with you 'til we meet again; | Refrain | God be with 'til we meet again; |
| Loving counsels guide, uphold you, | 'til we meet, 'til we meet, | When life's perils thick confound you, |
| With a shepherd's care enfold you; | 'til we meet at Jesus' feet; | Put unfailing arms around you: |
| God be with you 'til we meet again. | 'til we meet, 'til we meet, | God be with 'til we meet again. |
| | God me with 'til we meet again. | Refrain |

Choral Amen