

Knox United Church - Greening Service - Nov 27, 2022, Advent 1

Gathering Song: VU 44 It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

Announcements

Welcome: Olive McIlldoon

Lighting the Peace and Affirmation Candles

One: We light the Peace candle (*Elder lights Peace Candle*) as a reminder that Jesus taught us to live in peace with all Creation. As the congregation of Knox United, we acknowledge that we live, work, worship and play within the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people. As those who follow Jesus' path of peace,

All: we commit ourselves to upholding the Treaties of Peace and Friendship so that we will live in a good way with all peoples, the land, the waters, and all of Creation, for we are all treaty people.

One: We light the Affirmation Candle (*Elder lights Affirmation candle*) as a celebration of all the wonderful diversity in which God creates us and calls us good! In this community of faith, we celebrate that all are welcome in this place.

All: All are welcome by God's grace.

Introduction to the Greening Service

As we begin the Christian Year, we also celebrate the Holy Season known as Advent. We celebrate these days of Advent in expectation and preparation for Christ's arrival. In Isaiah 9 verse 6 we read "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Advent—the season of preparing, and Christmas, both have long histories and rich customs that have developed through many centuries, cultures, and countries. And so, today, we will learn about some of the origins of these customs and observances, as well as reflect on what they might mean for us as Christians today. As we make ready for Christ's birth by preparing this sanctuary, we make ready ourselves and the sanctuary of our own hearts.

Call to Worship

Come, people of God,
begin the journey to Bethlehem once more.

**Step by step by step,
let us journey through the gift of these Advent days
until, like Mary and Joseph,
of necessity and weariness,
we find our place at the manger.**

Let us make the journey in hope, in confidence,
and in trust,
for God is with us.

Come, and let us worship God.

Opening Prayer:

All: In a spirit of hope, we come, Holy God, on this first Sunday of Advent.

As we enter a season of anticipation and waiting, help us to appreciate each day of this sacred time. Prepare our hearts, we pray, to receive your child in welcome and love. All this we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Singing: VU 29 Hark! The Glad Sound

Advent Wreath and Candle Lighting

Nancy Kent

Advent is a time of expectation - a four-week period of preparation. Each Sunday we light a candle in the Advent Wreath. The flame of each new candle reminds us that something is happening, and something more is still to come. The candles are arranged in a circle to remind us of the continuous power of God, which knows neither beginning nor ending, and the large white candle in the centre is the Christ Candle. Today we light one of the purple candles, the candle of hope which symbolizes the promises of God delivered through the prophets. As Isaiah 40, verse 31 says, "but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles: they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." and is also a symbol of the hope we have in Christ. Over the next three Sundays we will light the candles of peace, joy and love and On Christmas Eve we light the Christ candle on as we celebrate the birth of baby Jesus.

The theme of our worship during advent this year is From Generation to Generation.

For our advent candle liturgy today over a hundred people from the ages of two to eighty years old, were asked the question, "What gives you hope?" Here is a selection of their answers.

Advent Candle Lighting:

Vanessa Voerman and John Butler

Reader 1: My two-year-old son.

Reader 2: Dogs wagging their tails.

Reader 1: Kindness from strangers.

Reader 2: Spending time in the woods.

Reader 1: Waffles.

Reader 2: Hands clasped in prayer.

Reader 1: Social progress.

Reader 2: The way my son calls everyone "buddy."

Reader 1: The ringing of church bells.

Reader 2: Babies trying over and over to take their first step.

Reader 1: The turning of seasons.

Reader 2: Christian community.

Reader 1: Books.

Reader 2: Friendship with my adult children.

Reader 1: Advocates for justice.

Reader 2: Hearing children in the pews sing the hymns.

Reader 1; The sunrise every single morning.

Reader 2: What gives you Hope?

Reader 1: Today we light the candle of hope to remind ourselves that God is at work in the world.

(Candle is Lit)

Reader 2: From generation to generation, God has brought good news of love and compassion, justice and community.

Let us rise as we are able and abide in the good news as our Knox Choir introduces our song for the Advent candle-lighting this morning.

Ministry of Music: We Light A Candle

- words: Valerie Kingsbury; music: Christopher Bowman, © 2014 Tidal Bore Music

We light a candle for all people
who hear the Spirit's call
to nurture hope and bring to birth
the light of life for all.

A candle's light will guide our way.

The gift of hope is ours today.

A candle's light will guide our way.

The gift of hope is ours today.

The Sanctuary Evergreens

Dianne Levy

One of the most striking and universal features of Christmas is the use of evergreens in our churches and homes. Among ancient Romans evergreens were an emblem of peace, joy, and victory. The early Christians placed them in their windows to indicate that Christ had entered the home. Holly and ivy, along with pine, and fir are called evergreens because they never change color. They are ever - green, ever - alive, even in the midst of winter.

At this time of year Christians would use the holly bush and the ivy plant to remind them of Christ's entire life. The holly's thorns reminded them of the crown of thorns that Jesus wore at his crucifixion, and the red berries reminded them of his life's blood. They symbolize the unchanging nature of our God and remind us that God gives hope for resurrection and new life. (Place evergreens at front of church)

Singing: "The Holly and the Ivy":

The holly and the ivy, when they are both full grown,

Of all the trees that are in the wood, the holly bears the crown.

**(refrain:) The rising of the sun and the running of the deer,
The playing of the merry organ, sweet singing in the choir.**

The holly bears a blossom as white as lily flower,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ to be our sweet Saviour. *(refrain)*

The holly bears a berry as red as any blood,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ to do poor sinners good. *(refrain)*

The holly bears a prickle as sharp as any thorn;
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ on Christmas day in the morn. *(refrain)*

The holly bears a bark as bitter as any gall;
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ for to redeem us all. *(refrain)*

The holly and the ivy now both are full well grown,
Of all the trees that are in the wood, the holly bears the crown. *(refrain)*

The Story of the Christmas Tree **Ted McIlDoon**

As well as wreaths and evergreen boughs we also have evergreen trees in our homes and churches. In Isaiah 60:13 we find these words: "The Glory of Lebanon shall come unto you, the fir tree, the pine tree and the box together, to beautify the place of your sanctuary." In the 8th century, an English saint named Saint Boniface used a fir tree to teach other Northern Europeans about the incredible nature of God by using the three points on the tree. Each side of the tree represents the Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit, but as you can see, it's still one tree. As such, it teaches us about the everlasting love of God, as well as teaches us about the nature of God as being One, while still having three distinct relationships to us in our lives.

Lights were added later. The story is told that one Christmas Eve Martin Luther wandered outdoors and became enraptured with the beauty of the starry sky. Its brilliance and loveliness led him to reflect on the glory of the first Christmas Eve as seen in Bethlehem's radiant skies. Wishing to share with his wife and children the enchantment he had felt, he cut from the forest an evergreen, glistening with snow, and took it home. He placed upon it candles to represent the glorious heavens he had seen. The use of candle-lighted trees inside the home caught on, and a tree covered in lights has come to be regarded as the central ornament of Christmas. *(plug in Christmas-tree lights)*

Singing: "O Christmas Tree"

O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree!
Thou tree most fair and lovely!
O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree!
Thou tree most fair and lovely!
The sight of thee at Christmastime
Spreads hope and gladness far and wide,
O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree!
Thou tree most fair and lovely.

**O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree!
Thou has a wondrous message:
O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree!
Thou has a wondrous message:
Thou dost proclaim the Saviour's birth
Good will to all and peace on earth.
O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree!
Thou has a wondrous message.**

**O Christmas Tree, O Christmas tree,
O evergreen unchanging.
A symbol of good will and love,
You'll ever be unchanging.
Each shining light, each silver bell,
No other sight spreads cheer so well.
O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree,
You'll ever be unchanging.**

The Nativity

Jean Collier

Scripture: The Birth of Jesus Luke 2: 1-7

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

The nativity scene here in our sanctuary is very special to many of us here at Knox. It was given to us by Angie MacRae, who was a member of our Spiritual Oversight Committee and sadly passed away two years ago. A nativity scene is one of the most heart-warming expressions of Christmas. It speaks of the mystery of God's wisdom. Why God chose to send his son into our world as a baby of humble birth, born in common surroundings, we do not know. What we do know is that God reached out to all people including the poor and wealthy, the simple and the wise, the powerless and the powerful. All who found him knelt in humility before him. Whenever we see a Nativity scene we find ourselves with Mary and Joseph; with the Shepherds, and with the Wise Men; bowing before the manger, overwhelmed by God's expression of love in coming to us.

Singing: VU 46 Gentle Mary Laid Her Child

The Gifts of Christmas and Invitation to Offering

Olive McIlDoon

The Wise Men Visit the Baby Matthew 2: 9-11

And the star they had seen in the east went on ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. They were thrilled and excited to see the star. When the men went

into the house and saw the child with Mary, his mother, they knelt down and worshipped him. They took out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh and gave them to him. From the beginning of Christmas celebrations, gift giving has been part of the season. The wise men gave their treasures, and the shepherds gave of themselves. Both express the gift of God in giving Christ as the saviour of the world. And so, this morning in the midst of our preparations during this busy season, we bring gifts to share so that God's love will shine brightly through the ministry of our church and in our own lives as well. Our offering will now be received.

Singing during Offering: VU 55 In the Bleak Midwinter

Offertory Response: "Each of us has treasures"

words Valerie Kingsbury, music Christopher Bowman, © 2014 Tidal Bore Music

Each of us has treasures,
offerings we can share.
Arms to hold and comfort,
words to show we care.
Gifts of time and talent
at the manger lay.
All we have to give,
we offer on this day.

Offertory Prayer:

All: We give these gifts God, knowing that all that we have is a gift from you. Your creative wonder surrounds us every day, and the bounties of your world enable us to share what we have received. As we give thanks for what we have, encourage us to share these gifts for the care and service of others, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen

Prayers of the People

Judy Hayes

The Lord's Prayer

The History of Carolling

The actual origin of carolling as a part of the Christmas celebration is really unknown. Several countries have claimed to be the birthplace of the custom. From the first, music of some kind was a part of the church festivals in honor of the birth of Jesus. We know that caroling existed in Germany in the 15th century because Martin Luther wrote that when Christmas was celebrated he went with others from house to house and village to village singing popular Christmas carols. Perhaps the first carolling done by the Choir of Angels who sang, "Glory to God in the Highest and on earth peace and good will to all people."

Singing: VU 48 Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Blessing:

As you leave this place,
may you go knowing that
from generation to generation,
we have been claimed and loved.
From generation to generation
God has been by our side.
From generation to generation
we are not alone.
The God of yesterday
and the God of tomorrow
knows you by name, loves you, and calls you forth,
saying: Go be the person you are called to be,
love wildly, do justice, and come back soon,
May it be so. Amen.

Parting Song: MV 220 Hope Shines as the Solitary Star (*with "Hope" only*)

Opening Prayer written by Cindy Randall, Humbervale U.C., Etobicoke, ON.
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Blessing of the Christmas Tree adapted from

<http://processandfaith.org/resources/liturgy/hanging-greens-first-sund>;

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Candle lighting Liturgy and Blessing written by Rev Sarah (Are) Speed | A
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