

2023 12 03

May the grace of Jesus Christ be with you ... **and also with you.** Welcome to worship at Knox Presbyterian Bayfield for the first Sunday of Advent.

**Announcements**

**HYMN Praise God #306**

**CALL TO WORSHIP [responsive]** insert

Prayer of Adoration and Confession [**Responsive**]

Creator God, you made the heavens and the earth. You set the planets in constellations, lit the suns with heat that spreads through the universe, caused the stars to shine and the world to turn. Life springs up wherever your breath moves. In Jesus Christ, you brought hope into a world of fear and despair. You sent your Spirit to nurture our hope and guide us on the way. Now we wait in anticipation. Move in us and in all your creation to bring forth new life, while we wait with hope in your grace and goodness.

**Redeeming God, we confess that waiting is difficult when the world around us is on edge. We are impatient with each other, waiting for someone to make a difference. We are impatient with you, O God, waiting for a sign that things will improve. Forgive us, O God. We ask that you help us to turn our hearts to you and help us how to act in hope for Jesus' sake. Amen.**

**Assurance of Pardon**

Hear the Good News! There is nothing we have done, nothing we will ever do, that can separate us from the love of God made known in Jesus Christ. Take hope in this love, and live as forgiven and forgiving people. May the peace of Jesus the Christ, which surpasses all understanding, be with you. **And also with you.**

**Hymn Hope is a Star v 1 #119**

**To Hear The Word Of God**

**Prayer For Illumination and Scripture<sup>1</sup>**

Your Word, O God, comes to us in the translation of ancient scripture. Send your Holy Spirit to open our minds with understanding and our hearts with wisdom in the name of Jesus Christ, your Living Word. Amen.

**Scripture**

May God bless our understanding of this, God's holy word. **The word of the Lord.**

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<sup>1</sup> Page #'s for pew bibles with Blue or White edged pages

## Message

O holy One, by the power of your Holy Spirit at work in the word read and proclaimed, may the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you. Amen.

It was wonderful to gather with many of you on Friday night for the Christmas potluck. The food was very good and the conversation was wonderful. The weeks leading to Christmas are often filled with extra activities. Special events plus get-togethers with family and friends. Staying “awake,” as the gospel reading stresses, may not be the problem—in fact, we may feel there are not enough hours in the day! Yet, this reading from Mark counsels us to be awake to, to be attentive, to be mindful of our well-being and the well-being of the world: God’s presence, God’s appearing among us. How will you “keep alert” for God in the midst of responsibilities and distractions in the season of Advent? The season of Advent deserves our attention as we anticipate the celebration of the birth of Christ.

Listen carefully to the words of the prophet of the Isaiah. He called out to the people of God to listen with ears that hear and to watch with eyes that see. In his commentary, Donald Booz cautions, “the voice of Isaiah tells us that God may have forgotten us altogether. ... Was it the people who caused God to get angry and hide from the people, or did the absence of God cause the people to do unrighteous things? ... Isaiah implores God to take responsibility for the clay and mold them into the people of God.” Isaiah continues to call out to God’s people to listen and watch as we wait.

During advent we have the opportunity to experience God’s creation in new ways. Advent marks the start of the church year. We anticipate familiar traditions as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ. It seems we become accustomed to repetition and the familiar. Change can be challenging. Think for a moment about new sounds. The initial sound of crashing waves on the beach or the noise of trains on a nearby track can seem loud at first. In time, that same sound can become familiar and lull us to sleep.

The scriptures remind us that familiarity can lull us into not hearing and seeing. You may be familiar with the lull that can happen when driving. Long stretches of familiar roadway can be hypnotizing, lulling the driver into a trance. Rumble strips ahead of stop signs alert the driver. Major highways have rumble strips along the side of the road to startle inattentive drivers. The driver becomes more alert and makes a course correction.

Prepared for Knox Presbyterian Church, Box 565, Bayfield, ON N0M 1G0

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Minister: Rev. Lisa Dolson 519-955-2158 revlisa dot knoxbayfield@icloud dot com

The gospel of Mark tells of Jesus foretelling his return. The disciples were instructed to provide witness about their time with him. Jesus spoke of the time when he will return and, how the in-between time will be challenging. He told of challenges in life that could get worse before they get better. God is faithful and the Spirit guides us to be alert in our faith.

In his commentary, Harrell Davis shared information he learned while on vacation at the Grand Canyon. Davis learned that the eyes of the mule are able to see where each of its four feet land. This is important and the primary reason why mules are used for the long trek down Bright Angel Trail to the bottom of the Grand Canyon. Over the last 100 years there has never been a fatal mule accident. When hikers and mules are travelling in the opposite direction, the mules always pass hikers on the outside of the trail. Their feet will often land very close to the edge. On the way down the left side is close to danger; on the way up it is the right. But their remarkable vision enables them to walk safely with sure footing.

The mules demonstrate the need to be alert and awake on our life journey. To be attentive to the path we are called to walk and the ways in which we are to live our lives. It can truly be a struggle to wait when things seem to be falling apart. Can you remember when it seemed that it would only get worse, and then the situation improved? A helping hand, a kind word, a gift of much needed supplies.

In this world of abundance those with privilege are urged to be awake to the needs of others. Paul writes to the followers in Corinth about their inappropriate behaviour in celebrating the Lord's supper when he became aware of the segregation in their faith communities. Paul's frustration is evident when he described the ways in which their celebration of the Lord's Supper had lost its meaning in their gatherings. The wealthy enjoyed abundance to the point of gluttony and drunkenness. Others with lower social standing had very little. While some ate with abandon, others went hungry. The division within the church was increasing. Paul reminded them to aware and to follow the teachings of Christ.

My mind turns to the mission efforts of this congregation. Efforts led by volunteers provide regular donations of food and money for much needed supplies at the local foodbank. Volunteers share their time and energy to pack and deliver boxes of food. Just take a look at the supplies that are accumulating here from this little church with a big

heart. The generosity of this congregation gladdens many hearts in this community. Sharing your abundance translates into food filling empty cupboards. I am aware that some of us have deep memories of hunger. I mean really hungry, not peckish or just waiting for your next meal. The hunger that faces the reality of an empty cupboard coupled with an empty wallet. A deep hunger that sees no relief in sight. Such hunger goes beyond the physical. It reaches down into your soul and creates a sense of isolation and desperation. Some of us remember this dreadful hunger from earlier in our lives. In this land of abundance there are many who continue to face such hunger. Some must choose between having a space to live or providing food for their family. It is in the sharing of our abundance with gifts of time, money, and talent that these needs can be better met. It is in the sharing that the face of Christ becomes more evident to those in need.

Jesus urges us to be awake and live expecting him to arrive at any moment. Indeed, he is here among us. He is already here, just not quite yet ... in our relationship with God, as we join in communion with Christ with everyday elements of bread and wine. Praise be to God for visions and the movement of the Spirit among us.

**Hymn**                    **O Come, o come Emmanuel v 1, 2, 3    #122**

**THE OFFERING OF OUR LIFE AND LABOUR TO THE LORD**

**Quote**    Since you get more joy out of giving joy to others, you should put a good deal of thought into the happiness that you are able to give.

Eleanor Roosevelt, diplomat, activist, former First Lady - United States of America

The first Sunday in Advent celebrates God's gift of hope. It is not easy to be hopeful in stressful times and God's steadfast presence gives us the courage to hope. So we offer whatever we have to share, knowing our gifts can spread hope in the world God loves by touching lives in Jesus' name.

**Doxology**    We give Thee but Thine own, What e'er the gift may be; All that we have is  
                    Thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from Thee.

**Blessing of Gifts**

God of hope, we offer you our gifts, knowing you are able to do more than we can ask or even imagine. Bless what we offer as tangible signs of your love at work in a world and as symbols of the hope we share in Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Invitation to the Table**

All are invited to the Lord's table. You are welcome to share in the feast which God has prepared. We remember Jesus declared that people will come from east and west and north and south to share at the table in God's kingdom. Taste and see that God is good.

**Hymn                      Jesus calls us here to meet him                      #528**

**Affirmation of Faith**

**The Apostles' Creed**     [in unison]     **#539**

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

**The Story of the Table**

When we gather at this table, we remember how this meal began, how it has promised hope and new life to those who follow Jesus from one generation to the next. We gather and we remember bread and wine shared around a table one solemn, holy night. We share in the elements of grape and wheat. May our eyes be opened to recognize Jesus - present with us each day, as we share in these elements of juice, bread, and wine in the name of our Risen Christ. And, as Jesus offered thanks for the gifts of the earth, let us thank God for what we are about receive with ... the prayer of thanksgiving.

**The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving** [responsive] **#564**

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts! **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

Holy One, on this first Sunday of Advent, we offer you our gratitude and praise with hearts full of love, for we have seen your grace and power, rolling away the stone of sorrow and despair, bursting from the tomb in the gift of new life. And so we join our voices with all your creatures, high and low, with all the saints before us and beside us, in heaven and on earth, to celebrate your resurrecting power. Therefore, with choirs of

angels and archangels and with those of every time and place, we give you praise and glory. We join with the whole creation to lift our hearts in joyful praise.

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Receive our praise and joy this day, O Christ. Your resurrection promises that there are new possibilities for us and our weary world. Even when we falter in discouragement, even if we hesitate at the news that your great love has come back to embrace us, You will not let us go.

You call us by name to assure us of your love. You open your arms to welcome us back to your side. You spread this table for us, offering us not only the bread and wine, but your very self, present with us here and everywhere.

Merciful God, we thank you for the light you shine into our lives as we wait. The signs of our times are worrisome. The earth itself groans in pain, and people have grown suspicious of each other. As the days grow shorter and the nights are longer, comfort those who dread the short days and direct any who have lost their way. Wherever people feel overwhelmed by the demands of this season, let them catch a glimpse of your brilliance.

Generous God, we remember that the days leading up to Christmas are difficult for many people. We pray for those who are hungry and cold, and those stressed by rising costs. Alert us to ways that we can set a feast for the unhoused and for those whose cupboards are bare.

We pray for those who are grieving. Make us patient, compassionate companions to those in mourning, even when we're not sure what to say. May their hearts be filled with your comforting presence. We pray for those who feel like the world is ending; for whose lives have been uprooted by fire, flood, or storm, and for those who worry about the future of the earth itself. Steady us amid the upheavals around us and remind us that your steadfast love will see us through. Help us trust in you, when life is difficult. In joyful anticipation of sharing these gifts, we proclaim our faith And so, remembering Christ's life, love, death, and resurrection, we proclaim the mystery of faith.

**Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.**

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Spirit of Life, rising in us and around us, breathe upon us now and upon this bread and wine. May they be for us Christ's body and blood, gifts of new life, with the power to make us whole. As this bread and wine become a part of us, may we become united with you and with each other in love. Dare us to live for justice and joy, trusting that all things will work together for good through the power of love that raised you from the dead, the power of the love we share in your name. And all the people say, **Amen**

We boldly lift our voices to pray: Our Father who art in heaven, hallow'ed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. **Amen.**

### **Words of Institution and Invitation**

Jesus, in the night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body, which is for you: do this in remembrance of me.'

**[eat]** In the same way, he took the cup saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood: as often as you drink of it, do this in remembrance of me.' **[drink]**

We break this bread, the communion in Christ's body once broken. We drink this cup, communion in Christ's blood once shed. These are the gifts of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

### **Prayer after Communion**

Eternal God, we thank you for this holy mystery in which you have given yourself to us and we praise you for breaking into the world. Send us out in peace for we have seen, have heard, and been fed by your grace. Keep us faithful and alert for signs of Christ's coming and lead us to live lives marked by truth and light.

We give you thanks and praise, O God, that you have built us up in faith and bound us together in love. By your grace, may all that we do honour you and serve the good of your people.

Loving God, by your Spirit, surround us with strength and love.

We ask you to linger with all who are dealing with challenges: Jim; Judith & Gerry; Rob, Valerie, Jim & Jane; Carl; Betty Lou; Ruth; Audrey & Grace; Don, Phyllis, and Shawn; and, Tatjana & family. We lift up all who are on our hearts as they face immense

challenges. Before we call, you answer, God. Before we speak, you know our voices. Hear

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our prayers. Let there be joy in Jerusalem and peace among all nations. Let sounds of weeping and cries of distress turn to shouts of joy and laughter. Let every person find a safe home and enjoy the fruit of their labor. Let the wolf and the lamb live in peace. We pray in the name of Christ, Amen

**Hymn Now Let Us From This Table Rise #556**

**To Go Forth In God's Name Commissioning and Benediction**

Go in hope this day. Stay alert for the signs of God at work around you & within you. May the God of hope fill you with joy and peace. May you abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit and the grace of Jesus Christ. Amen

**Postlude Amen**