



Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge of the United Church
Sunday January 3rd, 2021
Minister: Rev. Tammy Allan



As we worship we gratefully acknowledge that we are on the ancient and traditional lands of The Blackfoot Nation, the people of the Treaty 7, and of Metis Region 3. May we cherish and care for these lands and the people, just as those who came before us did.

Prelude

Opening Call

Light shines in shadowed places.

Hope abounds where once there was fear.

God's child is born into our hearts.

**We honour the Christ Child with gifts of love,
compassion and devotion.**

We worship with glad hearts!



Music for meditation VU 59 Joy to the World

Opening Prayer

God of the ages, you called the wise ones, the magi, to travel from far away to find Jesus. You call us to journey into the unknown, as well. We know that you are with us, even in the midst of the uncertain and the unfamiliar. Grant us courage, that we may open our lives to the new opportunities that lie before us in this new year.

Time with Children

Share the story "Humphrey's First Christmas" by Carol Heyer

Music for meditation VU 87 I am the Light of the World

Scripture

Isaiah 60:1-9

Images of light – symbolic of the season of Epiphany – abound in this passage. It speaks of the hopes for Israel, as the exiled peoples returned from Babylon.

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. ²For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. ³Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. ⁴Lift up your eyes and

look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. ⁵Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. ⁶A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord. ⁷All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered to you, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to you; they shall be acceptable on my altar, and I will glorify my glorious house. ⁸Who are these that fly like a cloud, and like doves to their windows?

⁹For the coastlands shall wait for me, the ships of Tarshish first, to bring your children from far away, their silver and gold with them, for the name of the Lord your God, and for the Holy One of Israel, because he has glorified you.

Matthew 2:1-12

Today's gospel reading tells of the coming of the Wise Ones, or Magi, to see the Christ Child. It is in this story that we begin to get a hint of Herod's fear of the implications of this birth on his rule.

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ²asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." ³When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: ⁶'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" ⁷Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage."

⁹When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.



Reflection

There's a funny thing making the rounds of social media – the statement that this year, hind sight really will be 2020.

It has been a year unlike any we have known. Words and phrases that have entered into our vocabulary, now in almost daily use – pandemic; bend the curve, pivot, (apologies Karel); Corona (not the beer); COVID 19; isolate, quarantine; cohort; social bubble.

Who knew a year ago that we would have closed the doors on the church for months; changed all our important rites of passage – from baptisms to weddings to funerals and memorial services?

None of us can say our lives have not in some way, in this past year, been touched and changed by the pandemic.

Yet, in spite of all the change – there is a constant – in the presence of God, walking with us in these times of transition and change. In spite of being faced with uncertainties, unknowns, and a whole lot of change – the light shines; the love cannot be extinguished.

I invite you to take a moment and reflect on the places where you experienced that light of God's love shining with you, with someone you love, with the world, in 2020...

And then reflect on where you find rays of the light of hope shining as we enter into 2021...

Share...as you are willing – where you saw the light, and where there is hope shining forth for 2021...

In my written Christmas message, I wrote and spoke about being a participant in an on-line Advent retreat, offered by poet, artist and writer Jan Richardson, from the US. In that earlier message I shared words from a song her late spouse had written and recorded. Today, I leave you with Jan's words for Christmas Day – words equally as fitting for this time of Epiphany – of the coming of the light. Richardson speaks of the call to be open to that light, as it comes into our lives anew. She prefaces the poem with these words from John's gospel:

*What has come into being in him was life,
and the life was the light of all people.*
—John 1:3–4, NRSV

How the Light Comes

Written by Jan Richardson, December 2020, as shared in ADVENT Retreat, 2020

I cannot tell you
how the light comes.

the hand,
the heart.

What I know
is that it is more ancient
than imagining.

I cannot tell you
how the light comes,
but that it does.
That it will.

That it travels
across an astounding expanse
to reach us.

That it works its way
into the deepest dark
that enfolds you,
though it may seem
long ages in coming
or arrive in a shape
you did not foresee.

That it loves
searching out
what is hidden,
what is lost,
what is forgotten
or in peril
or in pain.

And so
may we this day
turn ourselves toward it.
May we lift our faces
to let it find us.
May we bend our bodies
to follow the arc it makes.
May we open
and open more
and open still
to the blessed light
that comes.

That it has a fondness
for the body,
for finding its way
toward flesh,
for tracing the edges
of form,
for shining forth
through the eye,

This Week's Minute for Mission

Offertory Music VU 542 We Give You But Your Own

Offertory Prayer

Holy one, our light and our guide, receive our gifts we pray. We bring not gold, but our time, and our talent, and our gifts of money. We bring not frankincense, but our devotion. We bring not myrrh, but our dedication and love. Bless our offerings we pray. Amen.

Music for meditation VU 82 A Light is Gleaming

Celebration of Communion

Prayer

(adapted from a prayer written by Don Uhryniw, **Gathering**, Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, 2014-15. Used with permission.)

A star has brought us to this place, its warm glow has set our path, for this star is not fixed in the heavens...

This star is the presence of the divine in our midst.

This star is not aloof and distant.

This star is here and now, part of our story, the foundation of our story. This star does not stop. We may pause under this star but it propels us forward

Forward as people of faith, forward to serve all creation.

For with the glow of this star, we see with great clarity the fear, the hate, the intolerance this star will elicit.

For this star causes us to focus on the things that hurt the children of the Divine – intolerance, discrimination, economic disparity, racism...

Because the star of Jesus causes us to see with greater clarity,

we are called to work together as the people of God.

To do this work, we need to be fed by the Spirit, food for our souls and for our bodies. This star asks so much of us, that our spiritual acuity is enhanced when we work together as community.

For together we are the people of God. We gather around the table to share these simple elements, bread and the fruit of the vine.

We remember when the star was at it's brightest...

that horrible night when the Empire flexed its power and the radical hospitality of Jesus was shattered.

Take and eat, this body, this community, this communion of the faithful,
who have been healed, and have touched hope.

Take and drink, remember...

our vocation to give life, affirmation, justice, to those who may not have seen the star because of their burdens, those who know hopelessness and despair.

We gather in the glow of the star,

Reflecting its warmth, reflecting its power, reflecting the infinite possibility of holy love.

And we share in this meal in the glow of the star,

in the depth of the universe, in the hollow of God's hand.

Words of Consecration

Distribution

Post Communion Prayer

(adapted from a prayer written by Kate Gregory, **Gathering**, Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, 2014-15. Used with permission.)

We give thanks to you, God, and Christ; thanks to Mary and Joseph, angels, shepherd, magi from afar; for you have lived the story.

**You have fed our souls with the story of the Word that came among us.
Be in us, with us, beside us, this day and always, we pray. Amen.**

Prayers for This Day followed by

Gracious God, whose light persistently breaks forth into our lives, we give you thanks this day, for the abundance of your grace.

The year that has past came with many challenges, and we are grateful for your loving companionship on the journey. We are grateful, too, for simple things: bodies to take us where we want to go; warm beds on cold nights; food on the table; coats to keep us warm.

We give you thanks for special times and holidays in which we share the love of family and the ties of friendship. Even having to change with way with celebrate those special times, we give thanks that we have ways to stay connected.

We pray for those for whom the changes brought feelings of loss and isolation, and hope that with the coming of safe vaccines, there will be opportunities for more in person visiting and sharing time together.

We thank you especially for Jesus Christ, your child, whose birth marks the breaking in of the light of your love, and an age of peace and justice. Make we be agents of that mission of peace and justice, and willing servants to a hurting world.

Help us to be light and love where ever we can. We lift to you those close to us whose lives need your healing touch; the conflicts around the world and the conflicts within us; the hurts and harms of all who suffer from broken relationships, depression, lost jobs, illness, isolation, grief.

We lift to you in a moment of silence, the prayers of our hearts....

God of love and light, we know that each prayer we offer is held in your embrace, and we are grateful.

May we feel your presence among us as we join our voices in communal prayer, sharing the words Jesus taught his people to pray.....

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed 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, for ever and ever, Amen.

A Blessing for Today

May our souls magnify God!

**May our spirits rejoice in God,
the source of love.**

God has looked upon us with
affection.

We are truly blessed!

Blessed be God!

Amen.



Happy New Year!

*Thanks for taking time to be part of the
Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge worship
experience. We are having in- person
worship with careful COVID precautions:
Olds – 9:30am and Sundre - 1:30pm.
The bulletin and sermon will to be
posted to the websites, for those who
are unable to join us. Messages will also
be posted to the Facebook Group, Olds-
Sundre Pastoral Charge.*

***Questions? Wish to financially
support our ministries?***

Please call or email.

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