**St. Andrews**

 **United Church**



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**December 22, 2024 Advent 4 – Love**

**Prelude**

**Welcome & Announcements**

**Acknowledgement of Kinship**

As we gather in this time of expectant waiting, we begin by acknowledging the gifts we have already received and thanking Creator God, from whom all blessings flow, for this land on which we live and worship.  We acknowledge and give thanks to those who were stewards of the land before our ancestors came and we give thanks to them for the blessing of the sharing of this land. With open hearts we commit ourselves to living into Advent with hope, peace, joy, love and respect with all our relations.

**Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy**

A: As we light the candles hope, peace, and joy today,

B: we reflect on these good gifts from God, for us.

A: As we now light the candle of love,

B: we make space for the grace of love.

A: Love abolishes ableism and prejudice

B: and lifts up the lowly.

**Many: Let us share God’s love for all.**

**Candle lighting Hymn - Prepare the Way of the Lord - 10 VU**

**Call to Worship**

O Lord of our hearts, you are coming

**to share in the conflict, turmoil, and terror of our world.**

O Lord of our minds, as weprepare for your arrival,

**still our anxiety and fear for you come to do God’s will.**

O Holy one of hope, peace, and joy, Shepherd us in the strength of your love.

**Ready us to receive your love and to be love in the world.**

**Amen.**

**Hymn - Come Thou Long Expected Jesus - 2 VU**

**Prayer of Confession**

**Loving God, in your forgiving love we confess that even with the best of intentions, we are not yet your beloved community. Inequity abounds. While some have more than they need, too many lack proper food, safe shelter, clean water, and reliable health care. Fear of difference deepens divisions. When we value the White, able body/mind over all others, remind us, O God, that you came to us a weak and dependent infant of colour, and that your risen body carries the wounds of death. Humble us, O God, and shine your face on us that we may *be* healing love in a heartbreaking world.**

### **Words of Assurance**

In God’s forgiving love, we are redeemed. May we love others as God loves us. Amen.

**Hymn - People Look East - 9 VU**

**We Listen for God’s Word**

**Scripture Reading - Luke 1: 39-55**

**Ministry of Music**

**Meditation - Mary’s Song**

**Hymn - O Ancient Love - 17 VU**

**Invitation to Offering -**

Friends, this is difficult. Hearing the words of Mary as recorded in the Bible, too often we believe we are the chosen ones; we believe we are the ones God raises up and fills and protects. However, many of us are the rich, the proud, and the powerful. Yet there is good news for us, too. When you choose to generously share all that God has given you to feed and house, to comfort and heal, to seek justice and resist evil, you ally yourselves with the love of God you have found. Let us share our gifts, that all may know God’s love.

**Offering Hymn - In the Bleak Midwinter - 55VU - Verse 4**

What can I give him, poor as I am

If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb

If I were a Wise man, I would do my part

Yet, What I can I give him - give my heart.

**Offering Prayer**

Loving God, we give you thanks for the grace and love you show us. As we share and give, may your love be revealed in our lives, in the lives of others, and in the world. Amen.

**Prayers of the People**

**The Lord’s Prayer**

**The Sacrament of Holy Communion**

God be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them up to God.**

Let us give thanks to God.

**It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

In the rich dark of winter, God makes an astounding promise:

“I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up.”

In the wilderness, a voice cries out, longing for

the Refiner’s fire, repair, and renewal,

the promised birth and rebirth of hope.

Called to bear the weight and fruit of promise,

Mary sings ancient trust—the song of generations—

that God comes to fill the hungry and lift the humble.

She sings that love and truth will meet, that justice and peace will kiss.

In the midst of uncertainty, Jesus assures his disciples:

Just as the tree blooms, so the signs are clear

that the kingdom of God is near.

In the deep of our own winter, we look for them:

bud of hope, branch of peace, sprig of joy, blossom of love.

While around us the snares of fear and conflict lie in wait of infant hope, you, O Wisdom, O Endless Love, O Radiant Dawn, are there, keeping vigil with us, in this season of expectation.

We gather at this table, praying that crooked ways be made straight, that valley’s peace be lifted up and mountain’s might brought low

so that all God’s people might rejoice together, saying:

**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 that comes in the name of the Lord.**

**Hosanna in the highest!**

We give thanks for the mystery and wonder revealed that first night, as humble people led by hope gathered in a quiet stable and were witness to your promise reborn.

We give thanks for the blessing and love Jesus shared

with all whom he met, in food and story.

We remember that, on the night before he was handed over to die, Jesus broke bread with his friends, blessed it, gave thanks, and said,

“Take, eat. This is my body, which I give for you. When you share it, remember me.”

We remember that he took the cup and, giving thanks, said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. When you drink it, remember me.”

Revealed in stable, cross, and empty tomb, we give thanks, O God, for your limitless love for all.

With your people of all times and places, we await with hope the fulfillment of your vision for all creation.

**Bless us, O God, and these your gifts.**

**Encourage us to share your life and love,**

**which make us, and the gifts we share, truly holy.**

Transform us, God, and your world, and bless your children:

those who feel alone or afraid…

those who whose souls and homes are broken by violence…

those who will go hungry, thirsty, and cold tonight…

those who long only to hear that they are loved…

God made known in Jesus Christ,

**hear our prayer.**

We pray these things, trusting in God’s faithfulness revealed:

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

**Sharing the Bread & Cup**

**Prayer after Communion**

At this table, Christ is the host, welcoming all who hunger.

At our tables, may Christ be our guest this day and always,

that we might welcome hope, peace, joy, and love into our lives, and become hosts to God’s presence and people.

God of Love, guide us to the stables of our world,

where the lonely and longing gather.

Lead us to the mangers of our time,

where hope and renewal are born again.

Make us heralds of your love and joy. Amen.

**Closing Hymn - Away in a Manger - 69 VU**

**Commissioning and Benediction**

May you go forth
to carry God’s love, as Mary did.
A love that is radical, powerful, and life-affirming;

a love that honours the unique and different ways each of us bear God’s image.

**Choral Amen**

**Announcements**

**Coming Events**

* **Christmas Eve at SAUC at 5:00pm**
* **Office Closed December 25, 26**
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December 24th Christmas Eve Service at St. Andrews at 5pm. Don’t miss this wonderful service with lots of musical offerings.



December 29th will be a combined service with New Vision. It will be a carol/hymn sing service and a potluck to follow.

**Railway Museum Christmas Trees**

**Dec.13,14,15, Dec. 20, 21, 22 ~ Decorated trees, Lego village, Miniature railway display. Times: Friday 5pm-9pm, Saturday 2pm-10pm, Sunday 12-5pm. Free Admission and donations accepted. Dress warmly!**

**Please Save your clementine boxes for summer camp. You can drop them off any time during office hours or any Sunday and we can store them here. Thank You.**