

BELLS CORNERS UNITED CHURCH
DECEMBER 11, 2022 THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

*Indicates stand as able

* *The live service will be broadcasted and recorded on YouTube, check your email for the link.*

9:45 am Carol Sing / Announcement Slides

***Advent Hymn: All Earth Is Waiting VU5**

1. All earth is waiting to see the Promised One,
And open furrows await the seed of God.
All the world, bound and struggling, seeks new liberty;
It cries out for justice and searches for the truth.

2. Thus says the prophet to those of Israel,
“A virgin mother will bear Emmanuel.”
One whose name is “God with us,” our Saviour shall be,
Through whom hope will blossom in our hearts.

3. Mountains and valleys will have to be made plain,
Open new highways, new highways for our God,
Who is now coming closer, so all come and see,
And open the doorways as wide as wide can be.

4. In lowly stable the Promised One appeared.
Yet feel that presence throughout the earth today,
For Christ lives in all Christians and is with us now;
Again, on arriving, Christ brings liberty.

Welcome & Centering for Worship:

Rev. Lorrie Lowes

Good morning! I welcome and greet you in the name of Jesus Christ, on this Third Sunday of Advent - the Sunday of Joy, as we prepare ourselves to welcome the birth of Jesus.

After the service, you are welcome to join us for coffee and fellowship in the main hall.

(Highlight some announcements.)

Friends, the Advent season seems to be flying by! it is important in all the hustle of preparation and celebration that we take some intentional time to slow down and remember what this season is meant to be: a time of waiting for the birth of Jesus. Let us now gather in worship.

Lighting of the Advent Candle: The Advent of Joy Acolytes: Chris and Kaylee Brown

(Wanda Winfield, Gathering ACE 2022-2023 Year A. Used with permission.)

(The first two Advent candles of hope and peace are lit.)

Reader 1: Today is the Advent of joy.

We light this candle for the joy of the earth, the oceans, the skies, and all that lives.

Reader 2: We live in a world that takes more from the earth than it gives.

Reader 1: We light this candle as our commitment to the joy of living in respect with creation..

Reader 2: We are the caretakers of this earth, our home. We light this candle in celebration of Jesus, the Light of the World. (*The third -pink- Advent candle of joy is lit.*)

Sung Response: A Candle is Burning (Verse 2) VU 6

(Words: Sandra Dean, 1986; Music: James R. Murray, 1887)

**A candle is burning, a candle of joy,
a candle to welcome brave Mary's new boy.
Our hearts fill with wonder, and eyes light and glow
As joy brightens winter like sunshine on snow.**

Call to Gather: (Responsively) Rev. Lorrie Lowes

(Laura Turnbull, Gathering ACE, 2018-2019, Used with permission.)

The sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures of Advent are around us.

The awe and mystery of this blessed season remind us of the coming of the Holy One.

Wonder fills our hearts as we tell the timeless story.

With joy, we herald the good news!

Opening Prayer: (Unison)

(Phyllis Fleming, Gathering, ACE 2022-2023, Used with permission.)

**O Lord our God, we come to you this day with joy and singing.
We praise you, for you strengthen us in our weakness and
water the desert places of our lives so that we blossom like spring flowers.
You open our spirits and unstop our senses.
We never cease praising you.
In your presence, sorrow and sighing fly away,
And we discover joy and gladness.
Draw near to us in this hour of worship, we pray. Amen.**

Special Music: Dance and Sing! – Israeli folk adapt. Gifford

CGS director:Erin

Time for the Young at Heart

Erin Berard

Prayer of Jesus / The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kin-dom 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.
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kin-dom, the power and the glory,
Forever and ever, Amen.

***Song: (Tune - Kumbayah My Lord)**

We're rejoicing, God, come by here (x3)

Oh, God, come by here

Prayer for Illumination: (Unison) Reader: Keith Bailey

(Susan Ivany Gathering, ACE 2020-2021, Used with permission.)

**Gracious God, in this season of gifts and giving,
Help us to accept with joy the great gift of sacred scripture.
As we unwrap the reading for today,
Bless us in the receiving of the wisdom of our ancestors in faith. Amen.**

The Scripture Reading: Isaiah 35:1-10 (The Living Bible)

35 Even the wilderness and desert will rejoice in those days; the desert will blossom with flowers. ² Yes, there will be an abundance of flowers and singing and joy! The deserts will become as green as the Lebanon mountains, as lovely as Mount Carmel's pastures and Sharon's meadows; for the Lord will display his glory there, the excellency of our God.

³ With this news bring cheer to all discouraged ones. ⁴ Encourage those who are afraid. Tell them, "Be strong, fear not, for your God is coming to destroy your enemies. He is coming to save you." ⁵ And when he comes, he will open the eyes of the blind and unstop the ears of the deaf. ⁶ The lame man will leap up like a deer, and those who could not speak will shout and sing! Springs will burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. ⁷ The parched ground will become a pool, with springs of water in the thirsty land. Where desert jackals lived, there will be reeds and rushes!

⁸ And a main road will go through that once-deserted land; it will be named "The Holy Highway." No evil-hearted men may walk upon it. God will walk there with you; even the most stupid cannot miss the way. ⁹ No lion will lurk along its course, nor will there be any other dangers; only the redeemed will travel there. ¹⁰ These, the ransomed of the Lord, will go home along that road to Zion, singing the songs of everlasting joy. For them all sorrow and all sighing will be gone forever; only joy and gladness will be there.

May the God of joy dwell where the word is spoken. **Thanks be to God!**

Ministry of Music: Come Thou, O Saviour - Bach/Thoburn

BCUC Choir

Sermon: "How to Make a Desert Bloom" Rev. Lorrie

Prayers of the People:

Rev. Lorrie

Our prayer today was written by Rev. Ted Dodd, a Diaconal Minister of the United Church of Canada. (Used with permission).

Holy One, Divine Friend, Spirit of Life,
these days of Advent, leading to Christmas, have a special magic,
but these days are also full of
the wrath of gender-based violence,
the raised stones of political polarity,
the tree axing of clear-cut forests, and
the fruitless languishing impact of COVID.
One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire,
renew and change us, and the world, during this Advent time.

One who gathers wheat into the granary,
pull us together as your people.
One who burns the chaff with unquenchable fire,
help us sort out what is important, essential, and faithful.
Holy One, what then shall we do?
You teach us to share, be generous, and to care for the needy and naked.
Encourage us to offer this kindness to those in our lives and
to work to convert the systems that keep poverty and hunger in place.
Divine Friend, what then shall we do?
You urge us to be honest, fair, and to not take more than our share.
Empower us to act in this way of integrity and grace in our personal lives,
and to insist this way is followed in our political, social structures.
Spirit of Life, what then shall we do?
You admonish us and tell us not to extort, not to threaten, not to accuse falsely.
In our relationships, our communities, our world,
inspire us to live without dominating, controlling, and power-grabbing.
Holy One, Divine Friend, Spirit of Life
proclaim your good news.
May joy ring through your children.
Advent heralds the coming of love,
may unexpected and amazing newness arrive in our midst again this year.
All these we ask in the name of the one whose birth we celebrate at Christmas, Jesus,

Musical Offering: (Advent Memorial Flowers)

Christ Came to Bethlehem – traditional/Williams BCUC Choir

Invitation to Offer:

Rev. Lorrie

One of the greatest joys of this season is the joy of giving. Even though the shopping and the wrapping may seem tedious at times, it is all worth the joy we see in the eyes of the person who unwraps our carefully chosen gift on Christmas morning. Let us approach our offering in this same spirit, giving with joy, knowing that we are offering hope, peace, and love to the world through the ministry of this church.

We are not passing the offering plates this morning as we continue to follow health protocols, but you will find those plates on the table in the narthex. There are many additional ways you can financially support the work of the church – through PAR, by dropping into the office or using the mail slot by the kitchen door, or by e-transfer. Thank you for your continued love and support of Bells Corners United Church.

****Offertory Hymn: Verse 4 - In the Bleak Midwinter VU 55***

(Words: Christina Georgina Rossetti, 1872; Music: Gustav Theodor Holst, 1906)

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 him my heart.

***Offertory Prayer: (Unison)**

(Fraser Williamson, Gathering A/C/E 2020/21. Used with permission.)

Gracious God, with thanks and praise, we joyfully bring this Advent offering. We ask that these gifts be used to bring joy to the world. We ask this in the name of the one you sent to bring us joy, Jesus Christ. Amen.

***Advent Hymn: Joy Shall Come** **VU23**

Joy shall come even to the wilderness,
And the parched land shall then know great gladness;
As the rose, as the rose shall deserts blossom,
Deserts like a garden blossom.
For living springs shall give cool water, in the desert streams shall flow.
For living springs shall give cool water, in the desert streams shall flow.

***Sending Forth: (Responsively)** **Rev. Lorrie**

(Wanda Winfield, Gathering, ACE 2018-2019, Used with permission.)

May the candle of joy burn brightly in our hearts, preparing the way for the Christ child.
May we be signs of joy in our world as we prepare during this season of Advent.
And may we always know that we never go alone, for God our Creator, Jesus our Brother, and the Holy Spirit our Sustainer are our constant companions. **Amen.**

***Sung Blessing: Joy Shines as the Solitary Star MV 220**

(Words: Catherine Faith Maclean; Music: Janet Bauman Tissandier)

Joy shines as the solitary star.
Faith is the inner light.
You and I together mirror the Light of Lights,
and illumine the pathway home. (Twice)