

**BELLS CORNERS UNITED CHURCH**  
**FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT / COMMUNION      December 3, 2023**

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

**9:50am Gathering Music / Carol Sing**

Leaders: Brian Lipsett & Sandra Dean

*\*Indicates stand as able*

**\*Advent Hymn: O Come, O Come Immanuel**      *(Alternative Texts) verse 1&2*

*(Lyrics: Rev. Barbara Lundblad; Music: 15<sup>th</sup> Century plainsong melody)*

O come, O come Immanuel  
And bless each place your people dwell  
Melt every weapon crafted for war  
Bring peace upon the earth forever more. *Ref*

*Refrain:* Rejoice! Rejoice! Take heart and do not fear,  
God's Chosen One, Immanuel draws near.

O come, green shoot of Jesse, free  
Your people from despair and apathy;  
Forge justice for the poor and meek,  
Grant safety for the young ones and weak. *Ref*

**Acknowledgement of Territory:**      Rev. Kim Vidal

*(Jamie Miller, Gathering, ACE 2022/2023 Year A. Used with permission.)*

As we begin our worship service, we acknowledge that we are gathered on the unceded lands of the Algonquin-Anishinaabe peoples. For thousands of years, they have cared for the land even as the land cared for them. Guided by the wisdom of their traditions and their ancestors, they have been taught that the circle of life is embraced and embracing. Let us carry on this wisdom. Let us live into right relations with love and respect.

**Lighting of the Advent Candle: The Advent of Hope**      Acolytes: Wightman family

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**Hope** *Voice 1:* "Come, let us go up to the mountain, to the house of God, so that we can be taught God's way and go on God's path." *(Isaiah 2:3-5 paraphrase)*

*Voice 2:* What do you hope for in the new world?

**Congregation:**

**We hope for a future that is more amazing than anything we could ever imagine.**

**We hope for the healing of creation.**

**We hope for good mental health and wellness.**

**We hope for a world where everyone seeks the good.**

*Voice 2:* Advent is the beginning of this new world, a better world,  
where we can dare to hope boldly.

*Voice 1:* May it be so. Amen.

*(First Advent blue candle is lit.)*

**Sung Response: Hope is a Star** – Voices United #7 (Verse 1)

Hope is a star that shines in the night, leading us on till the morning is bright.

When God is a child, there's joy in our song.

The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong and none shall be afraid.

**Welcome & Centering for Worship:**

Rev. Kim Vidal

Good morning! I welcome and greet you in the name of Jesus Christ, on this first Sunday of Advent - a time of waiting, of preparing, of getting ready, as we welcome and celebrate the birth of Jesus. As our usual practice on this first Sunday of Advent, we are celebrating the sacrament of communion in our service. After the service, you are welcome to join us for coffee and fellowship in the main hall.  
... announcements... SOSA Advent Appeal

Friends, in the quiet of this moment, in the stillness of our hearts, I now invite you to centre yourself in the presence of God as we prepare to receive the gift of Advent hope. Let us gather in worship.

**Ministry of Music: An Advent Awakening - Stratton/Courtney** BCUC Choir/flute:Erin  
(Advent Memorial Flowers)

**Call to Gather: (Responsively)** Sue Morrison (David Sparks, Gathering, ACE 2021-2022)

It is Advent. Be alert.

**In times of joy and abundance, we are ready.**

In the midst of difficulty and danger, we are ready.

**In times of uncertainty and fear, we are ready.**

In times of apathy and despair, we are ready.

With anticipation and with hope,

**We look for God's long promised one.**

We will not be disappointed,

**We will not be disheartened.**

Jesus's birth is coming and we are ready!

**Opening Prayer (Together):** Sue Morrison  
(Larry Doyle, Bob Root & Darrow Woods, Gathering, ACE 2013-2014, Used with permission.)

**We enter, O God, into this season of preparation and anticipation,  
longing to skip ahead and celebrate the coming of your light into our darkness.**

**You would have us first slow down, breathe deeply  
and prepare ourselves to receive your gift.**

**We know that your Holy Spirit comes in powerful  
and unexpected ways and so we pray**

**we might recognize you moving in and through the season.**

**In Jesus' name and in Jesus' way, we pray in hope. Amen**

**Special Music: Advent** – German Folk Tune CGS director: Erin Berard

**Time for the Young at Heart:** Sue Morrison

The Prayer of Jesus / 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: This Joy (Hope)** – traditional arr. Whitmore (sing twice)

This HOPE that I have, the world didn't give it to me; (3x)

The world didn't give it, the world can't take it away!

**Prayer for Illumination: (Unison)** Reader: Johanna Burrows

**Help us, O God, to be alert to signs of your reign breaking into our lives. May your  
Word of hope inspire us to bring your promises to life in our waiting world. Amen.**

**Responsive Reading: Psalm 80** (Voices United pg794 Part One (1-7, 18-19))

**Sung Response: Your face, God, shine on us and give us peace**

Shepherd of Israel, hear us,

**you who lead Joseph like a flock, you who are enthroned amidst the cherubim.**

Shine forth before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh,

**stir up your might, come and save us. R**

God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayer?

**You have fed us with the bread of weeping,  
and given us tears in plenty to drink.**

You have made a mockery of us to our neighbours,

**and our enemies laugh us to scorn.**

Let your hand rest on the one at your right hand, on the one you have made strong for yourself.

**Then we will never forsake you,**

**give us life, and we will call on your name. R**

**The OT Reading: Tear Open the Heavens - Isaiah 64:1-9 (NRSVUE)**

64 O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence—

<sup>2</sup> as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil—to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence!

<sup>3</sup> When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down; the mountains quaked at your presence.

<sup>4</sup> From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him.

<sup>5</sup> You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways.

But you were angry, and we sinned;

because you hid yourself we transgressed.

<sup>6</sup> We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

<sup>7</sup> There is no one who calls on your name or attempts to take hold of you, for you have hidden your face from us and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.

<sup>8</sup> Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.

<sup>9</sup> Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

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

**Sermon: "The Hidden God"**

Rev. Kim

**Prayers of the People:**

Rev. Kim (Source: [faithandworship.com](http://faithandworship.com))

Advent God, as we wait, we journey with you, to Bethlehem's stable, ears attuned to the song of angels, eyes alert for Bethlehem's star.

This is Advent, the season of preparation.

The shops are full of gifts that we might give or receive.

Streets are decorated and carols are being played.

Forgive us, if on our journey, we are distracted by the tempting offers of this world.

Prepare our hearts not only for the celebration to come,

but also, for sharing that Good News with family, friends and strangers.

Grant us courage and a real willingness to talk about the love that came down to earth and walked among us.

Let us be your agents of mercy and healing.

May we conspire to help those who lack resources for medical care, for the homeless, for the hungry,

for those who are broken in body, mind, or spirit,  
for those who are grieving and for all who are struggling.  
Let us not overlook all those who need compassion and comfort and those who yearn for hope.  
Keep our hearts aflame with the hope of Christmas,  
and the promise of birth. All these we ask in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Communion Hymn: One Bread, One Body – Voices United #467** *(Words and Music: John B. Foley, 1978)*

*Refrain:* One bread, one body, one Lord of all, One cup of blessing which we bless

And we, though many, throughout the earth, We are one body in this one Lord

1. Gentile or Jew, servant or free, Woman or man, no more. *Ref*
2. Many the gifts, many the works, One in the Lord, of all. *Ref*
3. Grain for the fields, scattered and grown, Gathered to one, for all. *Ref*

**The Celebration of Communion:** *(Adapt ©2018 The United Church of Canada Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial Share Alike Licence. visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.5/ca.>)*

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.” (Jeremiah 33:15)

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.

We gather at this table, praying that crooked ways be made straight, that valley’s peace be lifted up and mountains might brought low so that all God’s people might rejoice together.

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. 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. Let us pray:

**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.**

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

**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ reigns in our hearts.**

**Sharing the Bread & Cup**

Let us now share and partake the bread and the cup reminding us of God’s unconditional love.

This is the bread – food for the Advent journey. Take, eat and be nourished by God’s love.

This is the cup – drink for the Advent journey. Take, drink and be sustained by God’s grace.

**Prayer after Communion (Responsively)**

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.**

**Musical Offering: Immanuel, God with Us – Williams/Barrett**

**Invitation to Offer:**

We are the work of God's hands, the psalmist says,  
and God continues to shape us each day into a people of goodness and peace. I now invite you to offer  
your gifts of time, talents and resources as expressions of your gratitude to God's blessings. You will  
find the offering plates on the table as you enter the sanctuary. There are many additional ways you can  
financially support the work of the church – through PAR, by dropping into the office or by e-transfer.  
Thank you for your continued love and support of Bells Corners United Church.

**\*Offertory Hymn: In the Bleak Midwinter – Voices United #55, 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 one, I would do my part; yet what I can I give him, give him my heart.

**\*Offertory Prayer:**

*(spaciousfaith.com)*

**Holy One, this Advent season we wait in hope.  
And we give in hope. Hope for your coming reign;  
Hope because of your presence with us even now.  
Receive these generous offerings,  
And use them for your work of healing and hope in our world. Amen.**

**\*Advent Hymn: O Come, O Come Immanuel** *(Alternative Texts) verse 3&4*

*(Lyrics: Rev. Barbara Lundblad; Music: 15<sup>th</sup> Century plainsong melody)*

O come, now living water, pour your grace  
And bring new life to every withered place  
Speak comfort to each trembling heart:  
"Be strong! Fear not, for I will ne'er depart."  
*Ref*

*Refrain:* Rejoice! Rejoice! Take heart and do not fear,  
God's Chosen One, Immanuel draws near.

O come, dear child of Mary, come  
God's word made flesh within our earthly home  
Love stir within the womb of night  
Revenge and hatred put to flight. *Ref*

**Sending Forth: (Responsively)**

*(Bob Root, Gathering, ACE 2018-2019, Used with permission.)*

And now, may the brightness of hope,  
**be our gift as we leave this time and place.**  
May we go out strengthened  
**because we have been together and touched by God's Spirit.**  
May we continue to be a light of hope to the world,  
**that everyone might see the goodness of God! Go in hope. Amen!**

**Sung Blessing: Peace Upon Earth – Medical Mission Sisters** *(sing twice)*

Peace upon earth is the prayer we offer, Peace was the promise when Jesus was born.  
Peace to all, Peace once again to this war-weary, war-worried world this morn.