

South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges

First Sunday of Epiphany – January 9th, 2022

Prelude: “What Child is This?” – by Christie Coatsworth

Welcome & Announcements:

Welcome to St. Luke’s today as we celebrate Jesus’ Baptism, and the season of Epiphany.

We are meeting in-person at St. Andrew’s at 11 am each Sunday for 2022, as folks are comfortable. Our Sunday morning Zoom meeting will gather at 9:30 am, the service will be at 10 am.

We are preparing for our Annual Meetings. Proposed dates are St. Andrew’s on Sunday January 16th, St. Luke’s on January 23rd, and Talbot Street on January 30th. For South Buxton folks, please email me your reports to southbuxtonpc@gmail.com, and for Talbot Street folks, email your reports to Tracey at secretary4tsuc@gmail.com. As we get a little closer to these dates, we will determine whether the Annual Meetings will be in-person, electronic (including telephone) or reschedule to a later date.

Thank you for your support of all our past services, which are posted on our websites - Southbuxton.ca and Talbotstreet.ca

Thank you to our production crew; music by Christie Coatsworth, readings by Annette Skillings and the slides by Tracey Major. You make all the difference. Thank you!

Call to Worship:

Eric: The prophets say, “Do not fear, for I have rescued you. I have called you by name, you are mine. When you cross deep waters, I will be with you; and the rivers they shall not overwhelm you”. We move through deep waters toward you, O God.

Sung Response: “*What Child is This?*”

People: God’s voice is heard over the waters; the God of glory thunders, over the mighty waters. We move through the storm and thunder toward you, O God.

Sung Response: “*What Child is This?*”

Eric: God sits beyond the flood, enthroned as ruler for ever. We move through overwhelming waters toward you, O God.

Sung Response: “*What Child is This?*”

People: When Jesus had been baptized a voice came from heaven saying, “You are my Beloved Child, and I am pleased with you.” We hear your voice calling and move toward you, O God.

Sung Response: “*This, this is Christ the King, Whom shepherds guard and angels sing.*”

Eric: Come, let us worship God.

Opening Prayer:

Eric: Many voices speak to us. We are torn in many directions. To whom should we listen? To what should we pay attention? Which voices are the right ones? How do we hear the voice of God in all the noise?

People: Help us, God, to listen with our hearts. To open ourselves to your voice: that forgives us when we do wrong, that calls us to serve you and others, that invites us to use our own voices to challenge injustice in our world. Speak to us, God. We are listening. (*Moment of silence*).

Hymn: VU 74 “What Child is This?” (Video)

- 1 What child is this, who laid to rest,
on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
while shepherds watch are keeping?
*This, this is Christ the King,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him praise,
the Babe, the Son of Mary!*

- 2 Why lies he in such mean estate
where ox and ass are feeding?
Come have no fear, God's son is here
His love all loves exceeding.
*Nails, spear shall pierce Him through,
The cross He bore for me, for you;
Hail, Hail the Saviour come,
the Babe, the Son of Mary!*

- 3 So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;
Come pheasant king to own him.
The King of Kings salvation brings;
let loving hearts enthrone him.
*Raise, raise the song on high,
While Mary sings a lullaby;
Joy, joy for Christ is born,
the Babe, the Son of Mary!*

Scripture: Luke 3: 15 – 17, 21 - 22 “Jesus’ Ministry Begins”- by Susan Pepper

The road was busier than usual, as hundreds of people walked in the same direction. They were all headed for the River Jordan. Many people were already gathered along the river's edge. People were coming for one reason: they wanted to see John.

John was related to Jesus. Their mothers had known each other many years before. But John and Jesus had never met, for John had spent most of his life in the wilds of the desert, seeking to learn about God. He dressed as a man of the wilderness in clothes made of camels' hair and leather. But it was what John said that drew the people to him and what he did for them.

John had learned about the messengers God had sent to people long ago. He knew he had to be a messenger, too. So John would shout his message, “Good news. Prepare the way.

There is one who is coming who will show us God's love." Day after day, John would call out to the people and encourage them to change the way they lived so they would be better people. And then, when the people were ready to change, John would lead them, one by one, into the river until the water was waist-high; and there, John would say a prayer, dip them under the water, and baptize each one. When the people came out of the river, they were wet but smiling, and feeling clean and new inside.

"Maybe John is the one for whom we have been waiting to be our teacher and leader," people began to wonder.

But John would shake his head and say, "No, no, it's not me. Why I'm not even special enough to stoop down and undo his sandals. No, I am here to help you get ready to meet him. I baptize you with water, but this special person will baptize people in a very different way. He will baptize you with God's Holy Spirit."

One day as John was preaching, Jesus stepped out from the crowd and walked up to John. He placed a hand on his shoulder and said, "John, please baptize me, too."

John recognized who this was, but before he could reply, Jesus removed his seamless tunic and waded into the River Jordan. The water came up to his knees, and then up to his waist.

John followed Jesus into the river. He put his hand on Jesus' head, said a prayer, and then dipped Jesus into the water. As he came up out of the water, Jesus prayed to God. And then, looking up, it seemed like the sky split apart and there was light all around. The Holy Spirit hovered over Jesus like a dove, and deep down and all around, Jesus heard a loving voice say, "You are loved by God. I am so pleased with you."

This was the moment when Jesus' ministry began – a ministry of teaching, healing, and showing people the way of God's love.

Message: "We are God's Beloved"

As we begin the Season after the Epiphany, we rejoice that God's word continues to hold promise and power in our lives, calling each of us by name through the living waters of baptism. The voice from heaven blesses each one of us: "*You are loved by God. I am so pleased with you.*" After John immerses Jesus in baptism, God draws near and rejoices in God's child. When we offer a child into baptism we also trust that God draws near and rejoices. In our baptisms, we become new humans who know we are blessed and we strive to listen for God's words of hope and encouragement, and we take part with the Holy Spirit, as together we change our communities for the better.

The Jewish culture which Jesus was born had rigid social customs. People behaved in accordance with their status given at birth, never presuming more or less. Little would be expected of the son of a manual labourer from out-of-the-way Nazareth. For a person like Jesus, the right to speak in public or to interpret the Torah would need to be established and demonstrated. It is not surprising then that when Jesus spoke and taught, people would wonder at his boldness and question the source of his authority.

Today Luke tells us that Jesus receives this authority directly from God at his baptism. God comes to Jesus through the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, identifying Jesus as the “Beloved.” In Luke as we hear Jesus’ baptism story, we understand this voice from heaven as giving both authenticity and authority to Jesus’ ministry. The love that Jesus proclaims in his ministry is that love first extended to Jesus at his baptism. In our baptism, we too, are given the promise that our identity and authority becomes ours as we recognize God’s presence in our lives and we set out to begin God’s work.

In North America in the 21st century many pastors who proclaim God’s authority come from mixed backgrounds. Today many preachers, become pastors in their second or third work career. When you have the Holy Spirit working through you, your background becomes irrelevant, except for the wisdom that you bring in your background experiences. These shared experiences can be very helpful with making future disciples from addicts, homeless and down on their luck parishioners, and others who the pastor can relate to with shared experiences.

That also works with our faith. It is much easier to share with another Christian about the presence of God and the Holy Spirit in our lives, than it is to someone who has never lived in faith. But when pastors can share life experiences with another hurting person - what they share may not be so much about faith than it may be about how they found hope. When people are willing to listen to why we live our lives differently it is usually because they are looking for hope that they too could live a cherished and fulfilled life.

Pastors work with families to reconcile those events that are tearing them apart. A third career pastor may have experiences that are similar to that family’s experience and almost immediately they connect and can start talking about how they can be reconciled with each other. Many times when pastors connect with new folks, it is not so much about faith as it is about life. In the United Church, we believe in “the ministry of all”. We believe that the Holy Spirit is with any one of us when we talk to those who are lost. Many times it is not so much about what you say, but how you show you care. We call this, “The Ministry of Presence”.

When we refer to the lost, let us remember there are many ways to interpret how they might be lost. It could be that in their life experiences they do not feel God or the Holy Spirit in their lives. Without God’s blessing and authority in their lives, they may turn to drugs, alcohol, sex, and many other ways of devaluing themselves. Many Christians would call that sin. But is it they are, “looking for love in all the wrong places”, as the song goes? As Christians we have the opportunity to share

our lost story or maybe we just share our love, which may help them to start their journey towards the light, which we believe is found in Jesus the Christ.

In the Season of Epiphany, we continue to look for and seek out signs of Jesus' reign in our world. Our acquaintances may find their epiphany, by us sharing our voice as we hear God's voice in our life, which we share with those around us that they too, "Are loved by God".

The voice of God still speaks in lives today. It speaks words of love and promise to all who are baptized, offering us identity and belonging as God's children. During Advent, we heard God speak through the prophets who proclaimed the coming of Jesus, the Messiah. Now in Epiphany, God continues to speak. Today God speaks in the living waters of baptism. God draws near. God rejoices over us. God invites us to renewed relationship. God speaks a word of blessing and promise, offering identity and belonging to all God's children. How might we help those here today and those in our community remember that they are "loved"? Let us make some room to hear God's voice in our lives this week. When the Holy Spirit offers a service opportunity into our daily lives, go engage yourself in a service project or action, knowing we never go alone.

Because we are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

Reflection Hymn: VU 644 "I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry" (Video)

- 1 I was there to hear your borning cry,
I'll be there when you are old.
I rejoiced the day you were baptized,
to see your life unfold.
- 2 I was there when you were but a child,
with a faith to suit you well;
in a blaze of light you wandered off
to find where demons dwell.
- 3 When you heard the wonder of the word,
I was there to cheer you on;
you were raised to praise the living Lord,
to whom you now belong.
- 4 If you find someone to share your time
and you join your hearts as one,
I'll be there to make your verses rhyme
from dusk till rising sun.
- 5 In the middle ages of your life,

not too old, no longer young.
I'll be there to guide you through the night,
complete what I've begun.

6 When the evening gently closes in
and you shut your weary eyes,
I'll be there as I have always been
with just one more surprise.

7 I was there to hear your bawling cry,
I'll be there when you are old.
I rejoiced the day you were baptized,
to see your life unfold.

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: We live in the wonderful reality of God's promise, as today we remember Jesus' baptism. We too are baptized - in the name of Jesus Christ. We too are God's beloved. Let us give thanks to God as we share our gifts and make our offerings.

Offertory: VU 541 "Praise God From Whom..."

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Offertory Prayer:

People: To the north, to the east, to the west, to the south, we pray: for all that is possible, wonderful, and joyful as we seek and serve Christ, God's beloved, in all places and all people. **May God be well pleased. Amen.**

Hymn: VU 400 "Listen To Your Children Praying"

Lord, listen to your children praying,
Lord, send your Spirit in this place;
Lord, listen to your children praying,
send us love, send us power, send us grace!

Pastoral Prayer & Lord's Prayer:

Eric: Let us offer our prayers to God, knowing that the love that flows from us will come to those for whom we pray.

People: In scarcity and uncertainty, when jobs disappear and worry about the future gnaws at us, give strength to your people, O God. Bless all people with peace.

Eric: In decline and despair, when social structures collapse and we wonder what will come next, give strength to your people, O God. Bless all people with peace.

People: In conflict and violence, when dreams are destroyed and justice is ignored, give strength to your people, O God. Bless all people with peace.

Eric: In dysfunction and fear, when we fail to share the waters of your love to others, give strength to your people, O God. Bless all people with peace.

People: In sickness and aging, when the vulnerability of our bodies is evident, give strength to your people, O God. Bless all people with peace.

Eric: God, who gives the waters of life and love, strengthen us all in every way so that we may be filled to overflowing, as we share Jesus' 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,
And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.*

Blessing:

Eric: God has called each one of us by name. God goes with us wherever we may go. Go in peace to love and serve God, now and forever more.

This, This is Christ the King:

Refrain: This, this is Christ the King,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him praise,
the Babe, the Son of Mary!

Amen, Amen, Amen.

Postlude: "Love Was When God Became a Man" – Christie Coatsworth

Prayers: - Please include these people in your prayers this week.

We have offered prayer for these people each Sunday morning just before the Zoom Service. It was suggested to share these names with the total group – as "In the Spirit We Are One".

Cancer:	Tom	
	Louise	Louise' Granddaughter - Blake
	Betty	Ingrid
	Alison	Brenda
	Nancy	Jim
	Brian	Jack
	Zoe	Becky
	Barry/ Marsha	Francine
	Adrein	Gary
	Melissa	Karen
	Lloyd	Jim
	Flo	Sherie & Will

George
Jenny
Shawna
Ethan – Brian Surgery
Jeannie
Larry

Hunter – Doctor
Janet / Tracey
Sarah
Donna
Michelle