

South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges

First Sunday of Advent – November 26th, 2023

Prelude: - Christie Coatsworth

Welcome & Announcements:

Call To Worship:

Eric: Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth. Restore us, O God; let your face shine.

People: **God of hosts, stir up your might! Reshape us, O God; let your face shine.**

Eric: We bring all that we have and all that we are to this space and time; our tears, our laughter, our hope, our anxieties.

People: **We bring it all to you this day. Reclaim us, O God; let your face shine.**

Eric: Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may remember you and worship you this day.

Hymn: VU 1 “O Come O Come Emmanuel” Verse 1

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lowly exile here
until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.

Advent Reflection:

Eric: On this first Sunday of Advent, we focus on hope. At its basic level, to hope is to want something to happen or be true. To hope is to recognize that things are not as we wish they were. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, while in prison, said: “The celebration of Advent is possible only to those troubled in soul, who know themselves to be poor and imperfect, and who look forward to something greater to come.”

People: **Many of our scriptures for today speak of pain and hurt and tears...but they also speak of hope in God. So, as we begin our journey through Advent, let us ponder:**

- In what ways is our world poor and imperfect? *(pause)*
- What are you looking forward to? *(pause)*
- How are you or those you love troubled in soul? *(pause)*

Hymn: VU 1 “O Come O Come Emmanuel” Verse 2

O come, O Wisdom from on high,
who orders all things mightily;
to us the path of knowledge show,
and teach us in her ways to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.

Lighting of the Advent Candle:

Eric: Who do you say Jesus is?

People: We are like a student, Jesus is like a teacher, who helps me to learn and grow.

Eric: We are like an explorer, Jesus is like a guide, leading me in new directions.

People: We wait for Jesus, the wise teacher and guide, who leads us to hope.

(Light first Advent candle for Hope)

Eric: We wait for Jesus.

Hymn: VU 1 “O Come O Come Emmanuel” Verse 4

O come, O Rod of Jesse's stem,
from every foe deliver them
that trust your mighty power to save,
and give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.

Acknowledgement:

People: The prophet Isaiah speaks to people in pain, to people who feel far from God. We too, live in a hurting world and can only move forward in worship and our lives when we acknowledge that hurt. We call out to God and say what is sometimes hard to say.

Eric: O God, how we wish that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence.

People: We feel as if we are fading like a leaf; that our wrongs, like the wind, take us away.

Eric: There are many days when it feels as if you have hidden your face from us, that we have all become unclean, and that the good we do does not matter.

People: But today you remind us that you are our God. We are the clay, and you are our potter. We are all the work of your hand.

Eric: Forgive us, O God. Reshape us, reclaim us.

People: Help us to remember you. Help us to remember that we are all your people. Amen.

Hymn: VU 1 “O Come O Come Emmanuel” Verse 7

O come, Desire of nations, bind
all peoples in one heart and mind;
O bid our sad divisions cease,
and be for us the Prince of Peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.

Affirmation:

Eric: Long ago, these words were given to a group of people who were divided, who had forgotten who they were and to whom they belonged. These words were given as a reminder that despite our best efforts, God does not leave us. Hear these words and remember that we are children of God:

People: I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and

knowledge of every kind – just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you – so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by God you were called into the fellowship of Jesus the Christ. Know that you are loved and be at peace.

Responsive Psalm: Psalm 80: 1 - 7, 17 - 19

Help Our Nation

Shepherd of Israel, you lead the descendants of Joseph, and you sit on your throne above the winged creatures.

Listen to our prayer and let your light shine. Save us by your power.

Our God, make us strong again! Smile on us and save us.

Lord God All-Powerful, how much longer will the prayers of your people make you angry?

You gave us tears for food, and you made us drink them by the bowlful.

Because of you, our enemies who live nearby laugh and joke about us.

Our God, make us strong again! Smile on us and save us.

But help the one who sits at your right side, the one you raised to be your very own.

Then we will never turn away.

Put new life into us, and we will worship you.

Lord God All-Powerful, make us strong again!

Smile on us and save us.

Scripture: Isaiah 64: 1 - 9

Rip the heavens apart! Come down, Lord; make the mountains tremble. Be a spark that starts a fire causing water to boil. Then your enemies will know who you are; all nations will tremble because you are nearby. Your fearsome deeds have completely amazed us; even the mountains shake when you come down. You are the only God ever seen or heard of who works miracles for his followers. You help all who gladly obey and do what you want, but sin makes you angry. Only by your help can we ever be saved. We are unfit to worship you; each of our good deeds is merely a filthy rag. We dry up like leaves; our sins are storm winds sweeping us away. No one worships in your name or remains faithful. You have turned your back on us and let our sins melt us away. You, Lord, are our Father. We are nothing but clay, but you are the potter who molded us. Don't be so furious or keep our sins in your thoughts forever! Remember that all of us are your people.

Message: “We Wait in Hope”

Today is the New Year's Day of the Church Year. This is the First Sunday of Advent. Some part of us knows that rushing through the days and weeks of our lives is not how God wants us to live as individuals or as communities. It's hard to slow things down when everything around is pushing us toward the next new thing. It's especially hard to slow things down when we are heading toward Christmas. To slow down the season, we need to approach the Season of Advent with great care and some planning. If we simply have good intentions to “slow things down this year,” our society and traditions will push

us quickly along, and before we know it, the Boxing Day Sales have passed and we are into a New Year.

These weeks leading up to Christmas is a busy time, with all the preparation and gatherings, with extra church services and office parties – there is so much to do. These past few years have been so different, and chances are 2024 may not be all that different, with new things, new experiences and new challenges. Hopefully this year we are looking for traditions that are meaningful. Looking at the Advent Wreath may help us to slow down this year and enjoy this Christmas - without all the busyness.

On the Advent wreath, not all five Advent candles are lit at once. Instead, tradition calls us to light one candle each Sunday, so the light grows stronger each week as we draw nearer to Christmas, and the birth of Christ. What else might we approach slowly and progressively to mark the coming of Christ this year? Perhaps, when you put up your tree, decorate it progressively, such as; an empty tree placed in the room on Advent 1, lights added Advent 2 and so on. If you put out a nativity scene, don't put it out all at once, but add characters and animals throughout the season. Hang your greens progressively. You might add wreaths the first week, a tree the second week, garland the third. Save certain songs or certain recipes or certain traditions for later in Advent, or even wait until after Christmas Day – there are twelve days in which to celebrate Christmas – right up to Epiphany on January 6th.

This year, the idea for slowing down might not be popular because it involves taking time to discern what traditions we might drop from the season this year. We have to consider our traditions to figure out which ones no longer holds significant meaning for us this year. What have you done every year just because someone told you “you're supposed to” or “it's what we do for Christmas”?

Some traditions may have once been meaningful or important (maybe when your parents were alive), so it may be not very easy to let go of them. Releasing them should be done with great care. However, by letting go of those things that are no longer life-giving, provides new and important

opportunities for you to celebrate those precious gifts of hope, peace, joy, and love.

Isaiah 64 invites us to stand back and think how we might be more into Christmas at a time were many people find Christmas so different from past years – maybe because of COVID or because someone is missing this year. The people of Israel are in turmoil. The people of the Babylonian exile are returning to Jerusalem and are meeting those who where left behind. One group holds to what has always been. Those who were exiled come with a different perspective on whom they are - as people of God. Both groups remember their past traditions. Both groups are trying to desperately reclaim what was lost during the exile. Now both groups need to reshape who they are together - as the people of God.

Isaiah the prophet cries out as one voice - for both groups, who look for God to break open the heavens and be revealed. Does any of this feel real to us? Especially in 2024?

What does it mean to us individually to reshape, reclaim, and remember who we are as Christians this Advent? What does it mean for us as a church to reshape, reclaim, and remember who we are as a Christian Community this Advent? Much like the Israelites, we too are in turmoil in these strange times of the 21st Century. What do we understand of who God is calling us to be?

Isaiah 64: shares the mix of emotions of the Israelites; such as fear, impatience, and longing for a sign of God’s guiding presence. The people feel God has hidden from them and recount the breakdown of their relationship with God.

Isaiah then speaks of heavens torn open and mountains shaken to reveal that God is always with us. There is the Hope of us finding God has been with us all along.

On this first Sunday of Advent, each of us will come to worship with a wide variety of feelings and experiences. Some of us are thrilled that “Christmastime is here” and can’t wait to hear the Christmas stories and sing our favourite carols. Some of us are overwhelmed with the changing world

around us. Some of us are already overwhelmed by all that needs to be done in a few short weeks. Some of us feel sorrow because “the most wonderful time of the year” wouldn’t so wonderful for them this year – maybe they are missing the one they have shared family traditions with for so long.

Isaiah shares the message of Hope. Not all is lost. We can do this. Stand back, reflect – take what is important and leave that which seems to be holding you back. Rip open the heavens! Shake the mountains! We have Hope! We hear once again, “We are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God”.

Relection Hymn: VU 654 “All My Hope Is Firmly Grounded”

- 1 All my hope is firmly grounded
in our great and living Lord;
who, whenever I most need him,
never fails to keep his word.
God I must wholly trust,
God the ever good and just.
- 2 Tell me, who can trust our nature,
human, weak, and insecure?
Which of all the airy castles
can the hurricane endure?
Built on sand, naught can stand
by our earthly wisdom planned.
- 3 But in every time and season,
out of love's abundant store,
God sustains the whole creation,
fount of life forevermore.
We who share earth and air
count on God's unfailing care.
- 4 Thank, O thank, our great Creator,
through God's only Son this day;
God alone, the heavenly potter,
made us out of earth and clay.
Quick to heed, strong in deed,
God shall all the people feed.

Invitation to Communion:

People: In thanks and praise to God, whose love for us is mirrored in the lives of all who have ever struggled to live faithfully; as an expression of our love for God and all our sisters and brothers; young and old, rich and poor, and in remembrance of all the meals Jesus shared with saints and sinners, we invite all to feast in joy and harmony.

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: As we wait in Hope - let us give in love.

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: God of restoration and remembrance, we have brought our pain and our hopes, our hurts and our tears. But the words of Paul remind us that these things we have handed to you do not mean that we lack gifts as we wait in hope. You strengthen us in so many ways, and we thank you for receiving all that we are. We ask that you take our gifts and mould them, craft them, shape them into those things that bring your hope to all the world. Amen.

Hymn: VU 400 “Lord, 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:

Call to Give Thanks:

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Lift up your hearts.
We lift them up to God.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Eric: We give you thanks, God of peace and promise.

People: Through the words of your prophets and the faith of your followers you prepare the way of our redemption and bring hope to birth.

Eric: And though we often grow weary of waiting, your signs call us to keep watch for that day when all things shall be made new.

People: In assurance of this hope, we join with all the company of heaven and earth to give you praise:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Remembering Jesus at the Table:

Eric: Let us remember together that vision of God's reign shown to us in Jesus at table: he shared food with followers and friends, with saints and sinners, with crowds of thousands on the hillside, and a few friends in an upper room.

People: On the night before he died, he had supper with his companions. He took a loaf of bread, and after giving thanks, he broke it, and gave it to them, saying: "Take, eat. Do this in remembrance of me."

Eric: Then, he took a cup, and after giving thanks, he passed it among them, saying: "Drink this. Do this in remembrance of me."

People: Through this loaf and cup, Jesus lives within us.

Eric: In word and deed, Jesus lives among us.

Distribution of the Bread and the Juice:

(please wait, so we can all partake as one)

Eric: The Body of Christ broken for you.

(please wait, so we can all partake as one)

Eric: The Blood of Christ poured out for you.

Prayer After Communion:

Life-giving God, may we, who share Christ's body, live his risen life; we, who drink his cup, bring new life to others; we, whom the Spirit lights, give light to the world. Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us, so that we and all your children shall be free, and all creation will live to praise your name. Amen.

Closing Hymn: VU 424 "May the God of Hope Go..."

May the God of hope go with us every day,
filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.
May the God of justice speed us on our way,
bringing light and hope to every land and race.
Praying, let us work for peace,
singing, share our joy with all,
working for a world that's new,
faithful when we hear Christ's call.

May the God of healing free the earth from fear,
freeing us for peace, both treasured and pursued.

May the God of love keep our commitment clear
to a world restored, to human life renewed.

Praying, let us work for peace,
singing, share our joy with all,
working for a world that's new,
faithful when we hear Christ's call.

Benediction:

Eric: Go out into the world, reminded of God's steadfastness, revealing God's glory, and waiting into preparation for the dawn of God's holy light. Go in Hope, now and forever more.

Hope Is a Star:

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.

Amen, Amen, Amen.

Postlude: – 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”.

In hospital:	Cleata Ken	Passing:	Angie Mary Bunning Mike St. Peter Reverend David Fuller
Accident:	Lyle Carl Keith Zoe	Special:	Bob Doug June Melonie Becky
Cancer:	Wayne Karen Ian Jasmine Gary		
Recovering:	Florence		