

South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges

First Sunday of Advent – November 29th, 2020

Prelude: “I Wonder As I Wander” – Christie Coatsworth

Welcome & Announcements:

Good morning - just a few announcements to share following Talbot Street’s Board Meeting on Thursday Night. You are welcome to donate to the Wheatley Community Chest, the Wheatley Food Bank and / or the Potato Project (which supplies potatoes to the Community Chest). Please make cheques payable to “Talbot Street United Church” (writing in the memo which projects you wish to support), and give or mail to Don Jackson by December 13th.

Welcome to our service today.

The book, “Memories of Merlin” – which is a collection of stories from the village of Merlin, is in its second print. It is available for order from the Merlin Friendship Club. Call George Darnley or Sue Drew to order your copy. Cost is \$25 each.

Thank you for your gift last week. This Christmas all families in Chatham Kent will have a blessed Christmas because of your love and offering.

We have also been collecting socks and underwear for the homeless. We dropped another good size load off to the Reach Out Chatham Kent Mission on Monday. Thank you for your gifts.

St. Luke’s is collecting donations for the Chatham Kent Children’s Services to help them with Christmas for their clients. Donations will be matched up to \$300. You can donate online or send your donation to George Darnley. Today is the last date to donate.

Continue to keep in touch with others and to share our websites; at southbuxton.ca, and talbotstreet.ca

Thank you to Christie Coatsworth for our music this morning. Thank you to Tracey Major for putting together the Power Point slides.

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.

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 1

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.

Lighting of the Advent Candle:

Video: "Jesus, Our Teacher"

Eric: Who do you say Jesus is?

Annette: To me, who is like a student, Jesus is like a teacher, who helps me to learn and grow.

Eric: To me, who is 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 2

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.

Acknowledgement:

Annette: 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.

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:

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.

Scripture: Isaiah 64: 1 - 9 (in Story Form)

Down the road walked Isaiah – down the road to the city of Jerusalem. Isaiah had a message from God. Now he wanted to give that message to the people. But would the people listen?

Many of the people shook their heads. “No,” they replied. “Does God still care about us? Everything has crumbled around us. Our places of worship have been destroyed. Our homes are no longer here. All our dreams are gone. We are left with nothing. Life is so difficult, and God has forgotten us,” they said.

Isaiah knew that was not true. God had not forgotten them. Isaiah could see the sadness in the people’s eyes. He could hear sorrow in their voices and how they longed for things to be different. The people were living in scary times. They had returned to Jerusalem with great hope of rebuilding their nation again. But things were not as they expected. They felt abandoned. They felt as if God was hiding from them.

“Listen,” Isaiah said, “God cares about you. God loves you. Just imagine a potter holding a piece of clay. The potter moulds and shapes the clay gently with strong hands. God is like that potter. God lovingly shapes us and cares for us. We are God’s people. God will never abandon us.”

“But what do we do while we wait through this terrible time?” the people asked.

“There are two things that God wants you to do,” replied Isaiah. “Keep on loving God and keep on loving each other. And always, always remember that we can feel God everywhere. Never give up hope. Someday soon, we will feel love and joy all around us. And we will feel at peace.”

The people looked at each other and thought, “Life may be difficult now, but with God’s help, perhaps it will get better. We must trust God.” The people wanted to believe Isaiah’s message. They waited and hoped for peace and love and healing in their land. And with tearful prayers to God, they waited and hoped for the time when they would feel happy and full of joy again.

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. 2020 is such a different year and chances are our 2020 Christmas will be much different than previous Christmases. Maybe 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 (most churches will not be decorating their sanctuary this Christmas), 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 being so different - 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 are going to find this Christmas so strange and unsatisfying. 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 2020?

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 not attending church in the church building. Has not being in the church building changed our understanding 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. Do we feel the same way?

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 regulations – will we be able to sing our favourite carols with others this Christmas? 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”.

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 Share Our Gifts:

Eric: 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:

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:

Eric: Spirit of Hope, in a time of busyness that threatens to overpower the sound of your voice, and blind us to the needs of those around us, we pray for ourselves:

People: that we might not become so preoccupied with our own schedules, that we forget we live within your time, that we might not be anxious about tomorrow that we may trust you to bring about your love and peace, that we might work together to share Good News with those around and beyond us.

Eric: You keep us waiting.

People: You, the God of all time,

Eric: want us to wait

People: for the right time in which to discover

Eric: who we are, where we must go,

People: who will be with us, and what we must do.

(pause)

Eric: Thank you . . . for the waiting time.
(pause)

People: Return now to our world with its pain and wonder,

Eric: remembering the words of the prophets,

People: and the longing of all who yearn for a sign of hope.

Eric: And may the blessing of God who is ever faithful, the blessing of Christ who still comes to us,

People: and the blessing of the Holy Spirit who moves within us and throughout our world,
rest upon us and abide with us

Eric: – giving us hope as we wait. We pray Jesus' special 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.*

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: "Silver Bells" – 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

Accident: Lyle
Carl
Keith

Cancer: Zoe
Wayne
Karen
Ian
Jasmine
Gary

Recovering: Florence

Passing: Angie
Mary Bunning

Mike St. Peter
Reverend David Fuller

Special: Bob
Doug
June
Melonie
Becky

