

St. Matthew's and Hardwood Lands Presbyterian Churches

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**January 16, 2022 ~ The Second Sunday after the Epiphany  
The Baptism of the Lord**

**Welcome**

- † Welcome! To the second Sunday after Epiphany!
- † And the celebration of the Baptism of our Lord!
- † (many churches celebrated the Baptism of our Lord last Sunday; however, we took the day to reflect on Jesus' younger years)
- † It is so nice to have you join in this time of worship!

**Announcements:**

- † **Thank you** for being patient with our canceling in-person services once again! It was not an easy (or unanimous) decision, but it was made out of an "abundance of caution" since covid-19 cases continue to surge in our province over the past weeks. We are praying that we will be worshipping again in-person soon!
- † **Thank you** to all those who have spent time un-decorating our churches! Although we could only enjoy them during Advent this year, may we continue to celebrate the gift of Jesus everyday!
- † **Wednesdays** ~ St. Matthew's hosting of the Knitting and Crochet group has been postponed until at least January 26<sup>th</sup>! It usually runs from 10am-12noon in room 102 at 224 Highway 214. Come learn how to knit or crochet, help others, and share what you are working on. Come join in the fun! (We will have to check the pandemic restrictions as that time)
- † **January 18-25** ~ Week of Prayer for Christian Unity!
- † **January 26** ~ There will be a special meeting of the Presbytery of Halifax & Lunenburg is at 10:00am on ZOOM

to deal with a suggested to the Preamble at the Ordination of Ministers, Diaconal Workers and Elders and other comments members wish to add to comments made re 2021 General Assembly referrals.

- † **January 30 ~ ANNUAL REPORTS** are due! More details in the days ahead!!
- † **Prayer list** – if you or someone you know would like to be included for extra prayers, please let Rev. Beth know!
- † We are also looking ahead and planning some things for 2022 – if there are any ideas for Bible Study, or a book study, or a type of group you would like to see our congregation host, please let us know!
- † Even though our in-person worship services have been canceled, our expenses continue. If you would like to make a donation to support the ministry done in and through our churches you can do so by the offering at worship services (when held), mailing a cheque, or sending an e-transfer:
  - † For the Hardwood Lands Church send to [hwtreasury@gmail.com](mailto:hwtreasury@gmail.com)
  - † For the St. Matthew's Church send to [stmatthews.elmsdale@gmail.com](mailto:stmatthews.elmsdale@gmail.com)
  - † Please include your name and mailing address in the e-transfer for receipt purposes!
  - † Thank you again for your support!

**Thank you** for joining in this time of worship!

**Let's take a moment to quiet our minds and focus on God!**  
*(you're invited to light a candle to remind you Christ is with you)*

**WE GATHER IN GOD'S PRESENCE**

**Call to Worship:**

As you come to this time of worship, read Isaiah 43:1-7...  
The Lord, our God, the One who created and formed us says:  
"Fear not, for I have redeemed you;  
I have summoned you by name; you are mine."

He promises to be with you no matter what you are going through.

He says that you are precious and honoured in His sight, and that He loves you.

So you do not need to be afraid, for He is with you!

A few of the reasons for us to join in worshiping God –

Come let us worship God!

**Hymn:** “There’s a voice in the wilderness crying”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlCLGw5qy90>

There’s a voice in the wilderness crying,  
a call from the ways untrod:

prepare in the desert a highway,  
a highway for our God!

The valleys shall be exalted,  
the lofty hills brought low;  
make straight all the crooked places  
where the Lord our God may go!

O Zion, that bringest good tidings,  
go up to the heights and sing!  
Proclaim to a desolate people  
the coming of their king.  
Like the flowers of the field they perish,  
like grass our works decay,  
the power and pomp of nations  
shall pass like a dream away,

but the word of our God is steadfast;  
the arm of the Lord is strong;  
God stands in the midst of nations,  
and soon will right the wrong.  
God shall feed the flock like a shepherd,  
the lambs will gently hold,  
to pastures of peace will lead them,  
and bring them safe to the fold.

### **Prayer of Approach and Confession:**

Creator of the sun and moon and stars,  
You stir in our midst to reveal Your Light.  
By the work of Your Spirit, You lead us in new directions.  
Your beloved Son has called us to new life  
and by His grace, reconciles the divisions among us.  
Holy One, we praise You for the blessings You give us  
in our baptism into Christ,  
and through Your love that surrounds us day by day.  
To You we give all praise, glory and honor,  
through Jesus Christ,  
Who is one with You and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and always.

Merciful God, in baptism You promise forgiveness and new life,  
but we confess that we prefer our old, familiar ways.  
We cling to destructive habits rather than welcome Your way of  
living, we nurture grudges instead of Your grace,  
and we are reluctant to welcome a stranger or forgive one  
another.

Nostalgia for the past prevents us from exploring new  
possibilities.

In Your loving kindness, forgive us.  
Have mercy upon us and move among us  
so that we might pursue new life in Christ together.

### **Assurance of Forgiveness**

Do not be afraid, for Christ has redeemed you.  
Baptised in the deep waters of death, He has washed away  
your sins.  
Risen from death, He invites you to be washed in the cleansing  
tide of God’s mercy.  
Your sins are forgiven; be at peace with God, with yourself, and  
with each other. Amen.

**GOD SPEAKS TO US**

## Time for the Young and the Young at Heart

- † Items: piece of paper and pen
- † *Humour me... and try this...* ☺
- † On the paper, write your name in the middle near the top of the page (*you can make it fancy or decorate it if you want*)
- † Think about your name – is there a story of why your parents gave you that name?
- † Think about how important a person's name is
- † Think about how it is said or how it is used makes a difference (tone of voice; sentences of praise or rebuke)
- † When Jesus was Baptised, the heavens opened, and God's Spirit came down on Him like a dove. Then a voice said: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."
- † How do you think Jesus felt when He heard those words?
- † How do you feel when people tell you they love you? That they are proud of you?
- † When our spouse, siblings, or friends tell us how special we are, maybe we can feel a little bit like Jesus felt when God told Jesus He was well pleased with Jesus.
- † On your paper write in the top left corner "God says:"
- † Then under your name write...
- † "you are my beloved [son/daughter]. And I am very pleased with you!"
- † How does it feel when you read your name in this sentence? Do you believe that God does call you His beloved son or daughter, and that He is very pleased with you?
- † It is very important for us to remember that God loves us, He knows each of us by name
- † Parents and others, we need to remember how important it is to tell our children and grandchildren (all children... everyone) how special they are and how much God loves them. When we do, God speaks His message of love through our words.
- † Let's pray: Dear God. It is such good news that You love us so much. When things are hard and it seems like we aren't special to anyone, help us to remember that You love us so much you gave your only Son, Jesus, for us. Thank You for loving us that much. In the name of your Son, Jesus we pray. Amen.

- † (*Place your paper where you will see it often!*)
- † (*I would love to see a photo of your page with your name on it! You can email it to [elmsdale.hardwoodlands@gmail.com](mailto:elmsdale.hardwoodlands@gmail.com) or send it through facebook messenger... let me know if you would allow me to share it on our facebook page!*)

### Hymn: "Your Beloved"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7p6MMeUpV8o>

Lord it was You that created the heavens  
Lord it was Your hand that put the stars in their place  
Lord it is Your voice that commands the morning  
Even oceans and their waves bow at your feet

Lord who am I compared to Your glory, Oh Lord  
Lord who am I compared to Your majesty  
I am Your beloved, Your creation  
and You love me as I am  
You have called me chosen for Your kingdom  
Unashamed to call me Your own  
I am Your beloved

*(repeat all of above)*

I am Your beloved  
I am Your beloved, Your creation  
And You love me as I am  
You have called me chosen for Your kingdom  
Unashamed to call me Your own  
I am Your beloved

### Prayer for Understanding:

Holy Spirit, you blessed Jesus in His baptism, proclaiming Him beloved of God. As we give our attention to God's holy Word, descend on us, we pray. Speak to us of God's love for us and renew our faith and commitment to follow Jesus, God's living Word. Amen.

### Scripture Readings:

Psalm 29  
Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

Acts 8:14-25

**Sermon:** Baptism with “the Holy Spirit and with Fire”

Thirty years have passed since the birth of Jesus, and now we hear His cousin, John, preaching to a crowd of people who have gathered around him on the banks of the Jordan. Some of the people talk quietly among themselves: ‘Is John the Christ?’ ‘Is he the one?’ John, hearing the rumblings, answers: “I am not the Christ, I baptise you with water; but there is another who is coming that is so powerful that I’m not even worthy enough to be His lowest servant, who would untie His sandals! And He, He is so powerful that He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”

“He [Jesus] will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire!” Do we usually think of our baptism as being this – a baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire?

In the *Living Faith*, the statement of Christian belief of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, Baptism is explained this way in section “7.6: **Baptism**

7.6.1 Baptism is a sign and seal of our union with Christ and with his church.

Through it we share  
in the death and resurrection of Christ  
and are commissioned to his service.

7.6.2 In Baptism, water is administered  
in the name of the Father,  
and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit.

The water signifies the washing away of sin,  
the start of new life in Christ,  
and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

7.6.3 By the power of the Holy Spirit  
God acts through Baptism.

It is the sacrament not of what we do  
but of what God has done for us in Christ.  
God's grace and our response to it  
are not tied to the moment of Baptism,  
but continue and deepen throughout life.  
It is a sacrament meant

for those who profess their faith  
and for their children.

Together we are the family of God.

7.6.4 Baptism is also an act of discipleship  
that requires commitment  
and looks towards growth in Christ.  
Those baptised in infancy  
are called in later years  
to make personal profession of Christ.  
What is born may die.  
What is grafted may wither.  
Congregations and those baptised  
must strive to nurture life in Christ.

7.6.5 Baptism assures us that we belong to God.  
In life and in death  
our greatest comfort is that we belong  
to our faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Well, it mentions the Holy Spirit – that we are baptised in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as commissioned by Jesus in Matthew 28:18; that baptism signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit. And that it is by the power of the Holy Spirit that God acts through baptism.

One thing this statement of faith doesn't mention is the 'fire' that John mentioned – where's the fire? He said Jesus would baptise with the Spirit and with fire! Well, I must admit, I had never really paid much attention to the whole story before – when we think of Jesus baptism, we think of the importance of God's voice announcing Jesus as His Son, which is very important! But because He is God's Son, He is able to baptise with the Spirit and with fire.

Dr. Craig Evans, wrote in his commentary on this, the following: “John is saying that those prepared and ready to receive the Messiah will experience a baptism of the Holy Spirit but those who refuse him will undergo a baptism of fire.” If they refuse Jesus, or don't have a right heart, then it seems they will go to the place of eternal fire (hell). I can see how he comes to this idea, since Luke 3:17 states: “His [Jesus] winnowing fork is in His hand to clear His threshing floor and to gather the wheat

into His barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” This definitely sounds like John is connecting the baptising Jesus will do with judgment. The winnowing fork was like a great flat wooden rake or hay fork with the tines close together; as one scooped up the grain and shook it or sifted it, the heads of grain would fall through and onto the floor; and the chaff was left on the fork to be thrown into a fire. So just as the chaff was separated from the grain; so Jesus would separate the good and the bad.

This is what Peter was warning Simon about in Acts 8:14-25. Simon (not Simon Peter, but Simon the sorcerer) had believed the preaching of Phillip about the Kingdom of God and about Jesus Christ, and had been baptised with the others in the name of Jesus; but they had not yet received the Holy Spirit. When Peter and John came along, they prayed and laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

Simon was so excited that he wanted to be able to do the same, so he offered Peter money to give him the ability to lay hands on people and have them receive the Holy Spirit – wrong thing to do Simon! The Holy Spirit is a gift, it can't be bought – If we think we can buy it or earn it, then we are not “receiving” it from God, are we? And so like Simon, we have to realise this and change our ways before it is too late. Peter warns Simon that he had better repent and pray to the Lord, and perhaps then he will be forgiven; because Peter could tell Simon believed with his head and not with his heart. Perhaps Simon was thinking about the power and prestige that would come to him if he could lay hands on people and they would receive the Holy Spirit. Perhaps he could see a way to make money by doing this, just as he did with his sorcery practices. Whatever he was thinking, Peter points out because of it, Simon's heart was not right before God. Something was causing a blockage between him and God, and Simon would have to get rid of it, to set things right.

Even though Simon “believed” and was baptised, he still had a lapse. Simon shows us that no one is safe from going the wrong way. There will be times when each one of us is tested, to make sure that we are true believers, that we adhere to the

promises, the vows we made or will make at our baptisms, or our children's baptisms:

- ✠ Do you turn away from sin, and turn to Jesus Christ, accepting and confessing Him as your Lord and Saviour, trusting in His grace and love?
- ✠ Do you promise, in dependence on the Holy Spirit, to mature as a Christian in the church, to seek the guidance of Christ as you listen for His Word, to celebrate His death and life at the Table He provides, and to engage in His mission to the world?
- ✠ Do you as the parent (or parents) promise, in dependence on Divine Grace, to raise your child(ren) in the love and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ within the home and the fellowship of the church?
- ✠ Or as a congregation:  
Do you, as members of the church of Jesus Christ, promise to guide and nurture \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, by word and deed, with love and in prayer, encouraging him/her (*them*) to follow the way of Christ and to be (a) faithful member(s) of His Church?
- ✠ Then there is the affirmation of our beliefs by reciting The Apostle's Creed.
- ✠ (*Do you remember making these vows at your Baptism, or at your child's Baptism; or maybe when you made your Affirmation of Faith?*)
- ✠ (*If you would like to talk about baptism, please just let me know!*)

These are important vows, made in the presence of, and with the help of God's Holy Spirit.

We need to acknowledge that the Holy Spirit with us all the time, to strengthen us, to empower us; to keep us in God's way; and to help us discern the Scriptures.

Perhaps like Simon though, we also need to feel the heat of the fire sometimes, to make us realise that if we get too close, we will get burned. The winnowing fork for us is the trials that we go through, to see if we are truly believers in Christ. We may come close to the fire on the fork but can also be saved by the One who holds the fork, pulled back from the flames at the last

moment if we hold on; if we change our ways. The fork is also what separates us from those who do evil, and from the eternal fire. And if we don't change our ways to follow God's, then we will be like those who end up on the fork and thrown into the fire.

However, as you know, there is HOPE! Hearts can be changed, made right with God. Simon shows us this when he asks Peter to pray for him. Now we're not told what happens to Simon in the end; but we do know that God desires no one to be lost; He gives us as many chances as possible. And that is why He gives others to pray for us, to help us. And when we don't know what or how to pray, God gives us the Holy Spirit who will also pray for us with such deep signs that we cannot even understand (Romans 8:26), and who will help us to get right with God. There is the transforming and energizing power of the Holy Spirit!

This leads us to another meaning of "fire" in the Luke passage. The idea of 'fire' could also mean that when we are baptised with the Holy Spirit we will also be baptised with fire – we will be lit on fire by the Holy Spirit – receiving the Holy Spirit and the spark to proclaim Jesus with a right heart and with the passion to change other hearts.

At first, I thought these were two conflicting ideas of the 'fire' Luke spoke of, but now I feel they are not. Jesus does baptise us with the Holy Spirit and with fire. The Holy Spirit gives us the power and the fire to go out and proclaim the good news; and to baptise others. However, if we do not accept Jesus' baptism with the Holy Spirit, then we are destined, like the chaff, for the fire.

We see this in the apostles, as mentioned earlier, after the Resurrection, Jesus commissions the disciples to go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The disciples had to first receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, which they do on the day of Pentecost. Then once they received the Holy Spirit, they are sparked to go teach and preach, and baptise others. They have received so then they can in turn give.

It is a gift we can all receive and can pass on: through our baptism and by prayer, our personal concern and care for others – like Peter and John did. There are many who believe,

like those in Samaria, but who do not realise the fire in them, or have let the fire go down or out completely. We can help them ignite or re-kindle that fire. If we don't reach out to help others to believe, not only with their heads but also with their hearts that God's Holy Spirit is in them, then we are helping to throw them into the fire – this is tough to think about! So don't let others struggle without the knowledge of the presence of God in their lives – pray for them – reach out to them – and together give praise and thanks to God and to Jesus Christ His Son for the gift of the Holy Spirit!

## **WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD**

### **Prayer of the People and the Lord's Prayer**

Eternal God, make us aware of Your Holy Spirit within, around, and among us; because we remember today, O God, that we are the people You have called and set apart for ministry in the name of Christ. You have granted us the fire of the Spirit in our most inward beings and graced us with the gifts that we need to live each day in the fullness of hope and love. Grant, O Lord, that we might always be aware of the power that You are willing to channel through us - and make us a people who eagerly seek to grace those around us with it.

Make all the people of this church come alive in faith - let them show passion and energy in Your cause - make their light shine brightly and their faith glow with the warmth of conviction and compassion and certainty. Purge us, we pray, of worldly loves, and fill us with the love of all things that are sacred to You.

We pray today, Sustaining God, for transformation - for ourselves and for others:

- We ask for Your truth and Your assurance for those who find meaning only in worldly honour and praise...
- We ask for Your energy and for Your power to flow in the veins of those whose only encounter with You so far has been in the pleasure and the assurance of our rituals and ceremonies...
- We ask for Your living Word to speak to and guide those who only experience of You is that of belief in empty doctrines and

creeds.

Grace, we pray, each one of us with Your healing touch, Your peace and comfort. Grant us the gift of discernment and the willingness to reach out and to bring the wholeness You promise to those around us. Lord we hold before You those who suffer alone this day; those who ache and throb with pain or hunger; those awaiting tests or diagnosis; those who tremble in fear and anxiety; and those who feel empty and unfulfilled. We pray for them and for those whom we name... *(take time to pray for those whose names and situations God brings to you mind and heart)*

We pray for Your Church in every place, around the world and in our Presbytery. We thank You for their dedication in the ministries, and their desire to share Your love with individuals and groups of all sizes. We rejoice that their vision is to faithfully serve You in the communities around them. And we pray for You to give them strength and hope as they continue and grow in sharing Your Good News with others.

All these things and so many more we pray through Jesus the Christ, who taught us to pray together...

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

### **Offering:**

In the season of Epiphany, God's gift to us in Christ is revealed to the world. Our gifts to God in Christ's name reveal our commitment to the love and mercy, the forgiveness and hope we have received. Our gifts proclaim that we are beloved to God and God is beloved to us.

### **Doxology:**

"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."

### **Offering Prayer:**

Loving and Eternal God - we dedicate ourselves and our offerings to You this day as a sign of our thanksgiving and an expression of our trust in You. We pray that You will bless all that we give to You, touch it with Your Holy Spirit and use it to accomplish Your purpose - both in heaven and on earth, now - and forevermore. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

### **Hymn:** "When Jesus comes to be baptized"

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iVIU\\_K2nBVY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iVIU_K2nBVY)

*(Tune: "Ride on, ride on in majesty")*

When Jesus comes to be baptized,  
He leaves the hidden years behind.  
The years of safety and of peace,  
To bear the sins of humankind.

The Spirit of the Lord comes down,  
Anoints the Christ to suffering,  
To preach the word, to free the bound,  
And to the mourner, comfort bring.

He will not quench the dying flame,  
And what is bruised he will not break,  
But heal the wound injustice dealt,  
And out the death his triumph make.

O Spirit help us be like Christ:  
To live in love and charity,  
To walk in truth and justice now,  
And grow in Christian dignity.

We praise you, God, source of all life,  
We praise you, Christ, eternal Word,  
We praise you, Spirit, gracious gift:  
Your triune presence fills our world.

**Benediction:**

Go in peace, love and care for one another in the name of Christ

- and may the blessing of God Almighty -

of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

be poured out upon you

- and may you remain His faithful servants, His beloved children, this day and always. Amen

**Hardwood Lands:** Choral Amen

**Elmsdale: Parting Song:** "Go now in peace"

Go now in peace, never be afraid

God will go with you each hour of every day,

Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true,

Know He will guide you in all you do.

Go now in love and show you believe

Reach out to others so all the world can see.

God will be there watching from above

Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.