

Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

As we come to worship in Jesus' name we acknowledge with gratitude and respect the Lkwungen people – the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ – on whose traditional and unceded territory we gather.

Celebrations / Joys and Concerns

*God's blessing on you. God's blessing on you.
God's blessing, dear friends. God's blessing on you.*

Advent Candle Lighting

In this season of Advent, we celebrate God's peace.

Jesus Christ, born the Prince of Peace, calls our community to justice and leads us in the way of peace.

*We call one another to honesty and humility
and respond to each other with abundant grace and forgiveness.*

***Our community values relationships. We live in harmony with one another even when we disagree,
and strive to glorify God in everything we do.***

*Our community longs for unity. We work together with other churches and organizations,
and live out God's reconciling love for all the world to see.*

Together, we are a sign of God's peace in the world. (The candle is lit)

***Let us pray... God of all people and all nations, you break through the cynicism of our world
and lead us like a gentle shepherd. Open our eyes to see the signs of your coming kingdom
and inspire us to participate in all you are doing in Jesus' name. Amen***

➤ *Prepare the way of the Lord*

112 (repeat)

† Prayer

Holy and loving God, you create pathways where there is no path and prepare us to receive wonders beyond imagining. In every time and place, you have raised up leaders who point to your glory and honour your greatness. You have called us by name, baptized us with water and with the Holy Spirit. You bless us for abundant living and set us in the world to serve you. We are your people, and we worship you as Creator, Redeemer, and Breath of our lives.

John the Baptizer called people to repent and so we join together in confession, seeking your abundant grace. We confess that we often resist changing our hearts and minds, even when your Word compels us to reconsider cherished opinions. We are more comfortable remaining as we are than taking up your challenge.

Forgive us for being set in our ways. Forgive us our reluctance to forgive each other as we have been forgiven. By the power of your Holy Spirit, transform us by your great love and mercy. Give us new eyes for seeing – new ears for hearing. We pray together in confident hope. Amen

Words of Hope

Jesus said, *“Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.”* Trust that peace and forgiveness are God’s gift to you this day. Be renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit and may the peace of Christ be with us all.

➤ *There’s a voice in the wilderness crying*

128

† Prayer for Understanding

God of grace, still our busy minds so that we will hear your Word speaking through scripture today. By your Spirit, create a space within us to receive your wisdom – your mercy – your invitation to live for you. Amen

Scripture **2 Peter 3: 8-15a**

But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed. Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire?

But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

Mark 1: 1-8

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, *“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,’”*

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, *"The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."*

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Message

Advent – it is a season of waiting – intended to be unhurried, preparatory, safe, expectant, peaceful...

This year it feels like we have been waiting since March! Waiting in line-ups outside stores, waiting for things to be delivered, waiting for our turn at limited resources like elective surgery and toilet paper, waiting to see family again and waiting to visit friends, waiting for it to feel safe to get a haircut, waiting to travel, waiting for life to return to "normal". We have been waiting for the numbers to go down, waiting for people to settle down, waiting for some folks to get sensible and quit griping about wearing a mask, waiting for others to remember God's command to love one another and stop gathering – for parties or for worship! There has been plenty of waiting it seems to me, yet here we are in a season of the church year that is dedicated to doing just that – waiting – preparing – expecting.

That is one thing I really like about waiting – the anticipation – the getting ready – the looking forward to. I love that sense that something amazing is going to happen – soon.

The Gospel of Mark begins with that kind of anticipation – *prepare the way of the Lord!* John the Baptist is the herald announcing the coming Messiah and encouraging everyone to get ready – to wait expectantly because something amazing is going to happen – soon!

Each time we come to the Lord's Table we are reminded that we are to eat and drink in remembrance of Jesus. The passage from 1 Corinthians, chapter 11 that outlines the institution of the Lord's Supper ends with this verse: *For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.* Each celebration of communion is both a remembering and an anticipation of something amazing to come.

Sometimes we are in such a hurry for Jesus to come that we rush the experience – peer constantly toward the end and miss the present. We forget what we need to be doing today while we urgently plan what we will do tomorrow. This impatience is addressed in the epistle reading for today. The author is responding to concerns that the promised return of Jesus is

taking too long – so long in fact that some were saying he wasn't coming at all and since he wasn't coming it would be fine to indulge one's lusts – to live any way we want.

The author of this letter declares that God's measure of time is different than ours and that God is patient with us. He assures us that God wants all to come to repentance. He deals specifically with the reason for the delay in Christ's return saying that it is due to God's patience so that no one may perish but come to repentance and faith in a renewed relationship with God.

We are ready and waiting for Christ to come again. So where is he already? The passage ends with the words *...regard the patience of our Lord as salvation*. The longer it takes for Christ to return, the more chance people have of finding salvation. God doesn't want anyone to perish but wants all to come to repentance. Waiting – embracing the patience of God – is to be seen as a source of hopeful peace rather than a source of spiritual frustration.

We can be encouraged because of the patience of the Lord and seek to be similarly patient. We need to be ready and alert, to watch and wait for Jesus but it is important to experience God's patient regard for us within the Advent theme of waiting for God to come. God gives us time to prepare – time to receive – time to respond. God's patience with us comes from divine love.

Love that is patient – kind – not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude – love that does not insist on its own way – is not irritable or resentful...

The love of God for us is patient – allowing us time to learn to love God – to repent – to rid ourselves of those things in our lives that are unworthy – to remove the barriers and make a clear path for the Lord to come to us. That is the point of *John the baptizer [appearing] in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins*.

God wants everybody to be reconciled, no matter how long it takes. We are not waiting to escape this world but wait hopefully for a reconciled world. And as we anticipate the wondrous coming of Christ, we can live for God's tomorrow. God's patience is our salvation.

The famous mathematician and Christian thinker, Pascal, made everyone a wager. *"Live as if you would see God in the end,"* the wager went. *"If you see God, your faith has been justified. If not, you have lost nothing."* The author of 2nd Peter would likely agree with that challenge. Live for God's tomorrow. That way, you can live in peace, no matter the outcome.

Maybe there is good advice in that for us today with all our pandemic waiting. We can live as faithfully as we are able and strive to be at peace with circumstances we cannot change. During this season of Advent let's all take a deep breath and enter into the peace of Christ because something amazing is going to happen – soon! **Amen**

PWS&D Sharing **Rohingya Family Carries on Despite Challenges**

Fleeing at a moment's notice wasn't an option for Nosomakatun and her two children who are dependent on wheelchairs for mobility. But facing the increasing violence against Rohingya people in Myanmar, Nosomakatun's family were eventually forced to leave their homes.

Since 2017, almost 750,000 Rohingya refugees have been forced to leave their homes in Myanmar. The journey to safety brought about new challenges for the family, most crucially a lack of nutritious food. Thankfully Nosomakatun and her family were able to receive food vouchers from a PWS&D-supported Canadian Foodgrains Bank project. With the vouchers, families can purchase a variety of nutritious foods to complement the rice, oil and lentils they are receiving from the World Food Programme.

These days, Nosomakatun is grateful to see her family safe, better nourished and more resilient to illness. "We are so thankful for the food," she shares.

This Advent season help those displaced by conflict find strength and nourishment for their bodies as they journey to find peace. Go to www.werespond.ca / (416) 441-1111

† Offering and Prayer

God of promise, we bring you our gifts in Jesus' name. We know his peace through forgiveness and faithfulness. Receive our offering and bless our gifts and our lives. Help us share the peace you offer wherever we are and with whomever we meet. Amen

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

➤ *Put peace into each other's hands*

560

Gathering at the Lord's Table

Laura The celebration of communion is always a festival of friends – where we gather around the table with all our hopes and dreams, longing for a glimpse of the holy.

Peter It is here where bread is broken, and the cup is shared that we can be most truly ourselves – seeing ourselves and others as children of the living God.

Laura Here, that which is earthly becomes divine and that which is human becomes more than have ever been dreamed.

Peter Come to the table – you are all welcome. Christ invites us to meet him here.

Laura The Lord be with you.

ALL ***And also with you.***

Laura Lift up your hearts.

ALL ***We lift them to the Lord.***

Laura Let us give thanks to our Creator God.

ALL ***It is right to give God thanks and praise.***

Laura Gracious and loving God, we praise and thank you, for you are the creator of all goodness and the source of abundance...

In the beginning, your Spirit danced on the waters and brought us life. In your generosity, you created a garden of delights and nourishment – you called us to live with respect in creation and to care for one another.

You brought your people out of slavery into a land of milk and honey – flowing with streams of living water and planted with groves of olive trees.

When we turned away from you – living in greed and violence – you sent us prophets to call us back and remind us to live for a day when no one would be hungry and we would live together in justice and peace.

And so, with every generation before us, with all who will come after us, we lift our voices in joyful praise...

ALL ***O holy, holy, holy God, O God of time and space. All earth and sea and sky above bear witness to your grace. Hosanna in the highest heav'n, creation sings your praise. And blessed is the one who comes and bears your name always!***

Laura Generous God, we give you thanks for Jesus, who came to live with us... We remember how he called his disciples to follow him and become fishers of all people. He told stories and taught us to pray. We thank you that he loved eating and drinking around tables where strangers became friends and where outcasts were included.

Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried, but you raised him from the dead – and like his disciples we meet him again in the breaking of bread as we gather around his table.

We remember and give you thanks, O God, that as he sat at the table with friends – sharing the fruit of the vine and the harvest of the fields – he took bread, blessed it, broke it and shared it, saying: ***Take – eat – this is my body which is for you. Do this to remember me.***

When supper was over, he took a cup of wine and raised it, saying:
This is God's new covenant, made possible because of my death. Drink this all of you, to remember me.

As we gather in the promise of Christ, we proclaim the mystery of faith...

ALL ***Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen, Christ will come again! Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen, Christ will come again!***

Laura Pour out your grace upon us, O God, and upon the simple gifts of this meal. Send your Spirit on us and on what we do here as we gather at the Lord's Table to eat and drink of the living Word. May we be one in Christ and one with your vision of peace and plenty.

ALL **...In Christ, with Christ, through Christ – by the power of the Holy Spirit – all glory is yours, now and forever and so we sing...**

ALL ***Amen, amen, O Holy One! Hosanna and amen! Amen, amen, O Holy One! Hosanna and amen!***

Sharing Bread and Wine

The one who was with God in the beginning, is with us in this bread.

The one of whom the prophets spoke now speaks to us in this cup.

The bread of life – the cup of grace – we remember and share with thanksgiving these gifts in which God comes to us so that we may come to God.

Everyone consumes the elements in their own space...

† Prayer

Holy One, your world waits: in the longing of the persecuted for justice – in the longing of the poor for prosperity – in the longing of the privileged for riches other than wealth – in the longing of each heart for a better life and in expectant song of the church: *Come, O Come Emmanuel*.

God of sweet bread – God of tart juice and wine – we give thanks that you have fed us again. So much more is received than just what we swallow. So much more is absorbed than just what we taste. We give thanks for each person present with us today. Bind our hearts by the receiving of this sacrament. Bind us firmly with all who do this in remembrance of you. Bind us always in your Spirit as we sing together...

➤ *Our Father in heaven (The Lord's Prayer – no repeats)* 469

Blessing

In accordance with God's promise, we wait for a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. *Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting, strive to be found at peace, without spot or blemish; and regard the patience of our LORD as salvation.* And may the boundless love of God, the grace of Jesus Christ, and the presence of the Holy Spirit embrace us all. Amen

➤ *We will go out with joy*

539 (PCUSA)

GODBURST ~ by Ann Weems ~

When the Holy Child is born
into our hearts
there is a rain of stars
a rushing of angels
a blaze of candles
this God burst into our lives.
Love is running through the streets.

