

12 January 2025

Welcome/Announcements/Land Acknowledgement **April Watt (worship elder)**

**As followers of Jesus, we are compelled to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God. It is our love of God and neighbour that leads us to acknowledge the land where we gather. We honour God with gratitude for this land and the peoples who have fished, hunted, harvested and gathered here for generations. This is the Coast Salish Territory of Lkwungen people – the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ. It is traditional and unceded land. We pray that past and present injustices can be reconciled as we commit ourselves to just and respectful relationships.**

➤ *There is room for all*

*attached*

Call to Worship

God called Mary from her routine to wonderful responsibility

**And God calls us!**

God called despised shepherds from flocks on the hillside

**And God calls us!**

God called Jesus from a working life to the place of baptism

**And God calls us!**

God showed the saving way to people in Jesus' time

**And God shows the way of salvation to us!**

Let us worship the God of our salvation.

➤ *Today I awake*

*attached*

✠Gathering Prayer / Words of Hope

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. You call us to new life in Christ and by the grace of Jesus you reconcile divisions among us. Holy One, we praise you for the blessings you bestow in baptism and through your love that surrounds us day by day.

Merciful God, in baptism you promise forgiveness and new life, but we confess that we prefer old, familiar ways. We cling to destructive habits – harbour grudges – and are reluctant to welcome strangers or fully forgive one another. In your loving kindness, forgive us. Have mercy upon us and move among us so that we might pursue new life in Christ together. Amen

With confidence we immerse ourselves in God's love – knowing that in faith we rise again as Christ's disciples and our sins are forgiven. Praise be to God!

➤ *Gathered in the love of Christ* (chorus only – repeat/seated) **attached**

✠ Prayer for Understanding Heather Anderson

**Creator God, your word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Open our hearts and minds to you this morning. Illumine us with the scripture that is read and keep us walking in your radiance. Amen**

Scripture **Isaiah 43: 1-7** [OT 672]

But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life.

Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; I will say to the north, "*Give them up,*" and to the south, "*Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth – everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.*"

**Psalm 29** [displayed/responsive]

Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty,

**give unto the LORD glory and strength.**

Give unto the LORD the glory due unto God's name;

**worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.**

The voice of the LORD is upon the waters:

**the God of glory thunders: the LORD is upon many waters.**

The voice of the LORD is powerful;

**the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.**

The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;

**the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon.**

God makes them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn.

**The voice of the LORD divides the flames of fire.**

The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

**The voice of the LORD makes the hinds to calve, and discovers the forests:  
and in God's temple every one speaks of God's glory.**

The LORD sits upon the flood;

**the LORD sits enthroned for ever.**

O LORD, give strength to your people!

**O LORD, bless your people with peace!**

**Acts 8: 14-17** [NT 126]

Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them.

The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit (for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus).

Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

**Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22** [NT 60]

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, *"I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."*

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, *"You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."*

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

Message ***You Belong – Remember your Baptism and Give Thanks!***

This stole is a symbol of belonging. It was created by people at Dayspring Presbyterian in Edmonton. The church school was learning about the sacrament of communion. They were learning that the sacrament might be called *The Lords Supper* and is about

remembering the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. They were learning that the sacrament of communion might be called *Eucharist*, which means thanksgiving, and is about giving thanks for God's love and grace offered in Jesus. They were learning that it might be called *Holy Communion* and celebrate belonging to a community of believers.

Actions often speak louder than words so the Church School leaders decided to have the children create a symbol of belonging that could be used in worship and that would remind them of belonging. Hands are a symbol of our identity, a symbol of how we reach out to one another - embrace one another. We had the same idea when using hands to create the cross banner at one of our picnic services. Colour is tied to feelings and energy so bright colours were chosen. White is the colour used in the church to celebrate events in the life of Jesus, but I would imagine that the white ground was chosen to clearly show the paint, the hands, the community of Christ present in the Church School. They made this stole as reminder that in the church, as we worship and work, we belong to a community of believers.

At the time of ordination, it is traditional for representatives of the congregation to place a stole around the neck of the ordinand. And that is how I happen to have this stole - a representative of the congregation, came forward and placed it around my neck. It happened on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2003. Judy Smith lifted it over my head and the freedom of belonging swept through me anew. Belonging to an apostolic tradition of the priesthood that extends back and back and back through time. Belonging to the Christian community in a new way as servant and teaching elder. Belonging to Dayspring and to Knox and to the multitude of congregations in our denomination. Belonging to the children whose hands embraced me and through them to the many children I have had the privilege to know and love. Belonging, first, last and forever to God.

It was, for me, a memorable moment when this stole was placed upon my shoulders - one that is called up when I wear the stole and see the hands. This feeling of belonging is called up by today's readings as well. Isaiah says: the Lord created you, the Lord formed you, the Lord, redeemed you, called you by name, you are mine God's possession is described in loving terms: do not fear, I will be with you, you are precious in my sight, and honoured and I love you, I will gather you. The prophet Isaiah wants to be clear - we belong to God, we will never be alone, we will forever be cherished, we were created for God. Isaiah's certainty and conviction is powerful. His examples and the tone of his message are designed to help us comprehend that which is overwhelming to realize - we are the beloved of God.

Jean Calvin, father of the Reformed tradition of which we are a part, was a prolific writer - ever seeking to clarify his theology and the doctrines of the church. He is not considered

by most to be much of a poet as his talents leaned more to the painfully detailed explication of Christian belief, however, in the third of his four tomes on systematic theology, Calvin talks about the Christian Life with lyrical passion: *We are not our own; therefore neither our reason nor our will should predominate in our deliberations and actions. We are not our own; therefore let us not propose it as our end, to seek what may be expedient for us according to the flesh. We are not our own; therefore let us, as far as possible, forget ourselves and all things that are ours. On the contrary, we are God's; to God, therefore, let us live and die. We are God's; therefore let God's wisdom and will preside in all our actions. We are God's; towards God, therefore, as our only legitimate end, let every part of our lives be directed...* Calvin is clear about whose we are, to whom we belong, and how that should influence our thoughts, our actions, every part of our lives.

Another John (or Jean), John the Baptizer, stood before those filled with expectation and questions to tell them that someone powerful was coming who would be very clear about whose we are, to whom we belong, and how we will be considered. John baptizes with water to cleanse, to symbolize repentance, to signify ritual renewal. John knows that the one coming to baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire, baptizes to claim that which is his own.

Today we celebrate the Baptism of Jesus, the announcement through sign and word that Jesus is God's beloved Son and that we too are beloved children of God, claimed by God, chosen to live for God. This is largely what baptism is about. Through the sacrament of baptism we recognize that God claims us and calls each one of us by name as a gift that we can do nothing to earn, or deserve, or purchase. God has done all that is necessary to redeem us, we belong to God.

That belonging extends to the household of God. In baptism we also recognize that we are part of a family of faith, children of the covenant who are called to grow and mature in our belief throughout our lives. Belonging not just to an abstract idea of community but to a real community of faith in the church through which we are both nurtured and nurturer, teacher and learner, leader and follower.

Belonging to God means also that we are intimately and forever united with Christ in his death and resurrection. When Jesus submits to baptism in the Jordan River among the questioning, expectant crowd he enters into solidarity with sinners, with all of us, and demonstrates complete obedience to God. We belong to God through Christ as power over sin is broken and we become a new creation with Christ.

Jesus' baptism marks the beginning of Jesus' ministry, a ministry marked by costly love and service. His is a ministry we endeavour to emulate in our own discipleship as we seek to live out the belonging we admit in baptism. We are called to a new life, a new way of being in the world where ethical, social and political decisions are made in the light of our response to God's gift of Christ.

Because we belong to God, Isaiah tells us we are precious and safe and made to glorify God. Because we belong to God, Calvin implores us to live our lives with passion, directing our whole selves to God. Because we belong to God, Luke reminds us to turn our lives around and rely on Jesus to be our guide. Because we belong to God, we celebrate the gift of God's claim on us in our baptism.

Because we belong to God, we reach out to other children of God in the ways that we can. We contribute to "Soap for Hope", donate "Warm Toes", provide a meal at "Our Place", give generously to support the humanitarian work of Presbyterian World Service & Development, participate in "Community Dinners" or provide food for "Inclusive Christians: Around the Table", and we continually look for opportunities to share our gifts in a broken world.

Because we belong to God, we live as children of God - to create a stole in celebration of faithful community, to create space for worship and praise and prayer, to create an opportunity for love and service in our world. Amen

➤ *When we are living*

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✠ Offering and Prayer

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.

➤ *Praise God from whom all blessings flow*

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**God our Maker, we bring our gifts to you in thanksgiving for your gifts to us in Christ and in creation. Bless what we bring and who we are, so that our gifts will bless the world you love in Christ's name. Amen**

## † Pastoral Prayers and the Lord's Prayer

God of time and eternity – as the new year stretches before us, we thank you for the time you give us and for all those things that are still possible and precious in this gift. We thank you for each new day and its possibilities – for each night, its rest and reflection.

We thank you for words of forgiveness and the chance to make a new start – for word of invitation to explore new opportunities. Give us the courage to try something new and the conviction to finish things leftover from last year.

God of moments and memories – we remember before you people facing difficult times in the months ahead. We pray for those struggling with illness, and for those facing treatment or surgery with uncertain results...

We pray for those who are grieving the loss of dear ones and for all who remember what used to be but can no longer be...

God of hopefulness and helpfulness – we remember those who are seeking new opportunities this year – those training for new employment and those looking for work – those developing new businesses and seeking the right employees – and all who provide services to improve life in our communities amid the uncertainties around us...

Give us wisdom and perseverance in what we undertake as a congregation in the face of all the changes in our community. As we work together with the vision of your kingdom before us this year, fill us with love and generosity that can change the world because of your blessing. We pray we can make a difference in even the most challenging situations because we your children, followers of Jesus, who encourages 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, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen**

➤ *Amigos de Cristo/Friends of the Lord*

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## Blessing

Live each day knowing that you are a beloved child of God. And may the grace of the Living Lord, the love of God and the nurturing community of the Holy Spirit embrace us all.

➤ *Go now in peace*

*attached*