

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, January 1st, 2023
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Seasons of Life
New Year's Day
Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

God makes the sun rise and set.

He is faithful from generation to generation.

God makes summer and winter come and go.

He is faithful from generation to generation.

God helps plants grow and flowers bloom.

He is faithful from generation to generation.

God gives us food to eat, places to live, and people to love us.

He is faithful from generation to generation.

God is always with us.

He is faithful from generation to generation.

God keeps his promises to us.

He is faithful from generation to generation.

Let us praise our faithful God.

Music Ministry: "In The Bleak Midwinter" by Trish Warren

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Almighty and ever present God,
you uphold heaven and earth and all creatures.
All things come from your generous hand:
You send the nourishing rain, the refreshing wind,
the warming sun, the blustering snow.

You make buds appear, flowers bloom,
 fruit grow, and harvests mature.
 Through each day of our lives,
 whether in sickness or health,
 prosperity or poverty, joy or sorrow,
 you are in control.
 Help us to be patient when things go against us,
 thankful when things go well,
 and always confident that nothing
 could ever separate us from your love.
 For your unending faithfulness, we thank and praise you.
 To you be glory, now and forever. Amen.

Opening Hymn #160: “Unto Us a Child is Born”

Unto us a child is born!
 Sovereign of creation,
 came once to a world forlorn,
 the Lord of every nation,
 the Lord of every nation.

Cradled in a cattle stall,
 held by love maternal,
 see the Sovereign of us all,
 our Lord of lords eternal,
 our Lord of lords eternal.

'Christ the Source and Christ the End!'
 Let the organ thunder
 while our happy voices rend
 the joyful air asunder,
 the joyful air asunder!

Call to Confession

Prepare the way of the Lord!
 Let us make our confession to God.

Prayer of Confession

**As we draw to the close of this past year
 and claim the year ahead, our Father,
 we need to confess to you those pieces of the past
 that persist in pulling us backward.
 Through admitting our failures and sharing our sin,
 we would like to put away those things
 that nibble and nag, de-energize and depress.**

**With boldness, then, and a certain measure of embarrassment,
 we admit to squandering time and talent,
 good intentions and better ideas,
 opportunities for growth and occasions for grace.
 We admit that we have most often taken care of ourselves
 while others have stood in line.
 We have defined our interests carefully and our goals precisely,
 using energy and expertise gainfully
 to the detriment of family, friends, community, and church.
 We agonize with memories that sit heavily
 and images that cause us to blush
 and ask that you would grant us your forgiveness
 as we confess our individual regrets and remorse in silence. . . .
 Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you,
 that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.
 If we say that we have fellowship with him
 while we are walking in darkness,
 we lie and do not do what is true;
 but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light,
 we have fellowship with one another,
 and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin

The Lord's 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors.
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
 For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,
 Forever and ever. Amen.**

Music Ministry: by Choir

Responsive Reading

Question 106. What is the third commandment?

“You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name” (Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11).

Question 107. What do we learn from this commandment?

We learn that we are called to use God's name with reverence, honour and awe. We abuse the name of God when we use it needlessly as in an expletive or curse, thoughtlessly as in a cliché, or selfishly to further our own desires.

Lev 19:12, Jer 5:1-2

Question 108. What is the fourth commandment?

Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days shall you labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work – you, your son or your daughter, your male or your female slave, your livestock, or the alien residents in your towns” (Exodus 20:8-10; Deuteronomy 5:12-15).

Question 109. What do we learn from this commandment?

We learn that life, as God intends it, consists in a proper rhythm of work, rest from work and worship. To neglect one of these is to get life out of balance. God established the “seventh day” that we may cease from our daily work in order to be refreshed and renewed. We keep it holy by not working, by gathering for worship, engaging in common prayer, studying scripture and witnessing to our faith by word and deed.

Gen 2:3, Ex 23:12

Children's Hymn #166: “Once in Royal David's City”

Once in royal David's city
stood a lowly cattle shed,
where a mother laid her baby
in a manger for his bed:
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little child.

Christ came down to earth from heaven,
who is God and Lord of all,
sheltered by a humble stable,
cradled in a cattle stall:
with the poor, oppressed and lowly,
lived on earth our Saviour holy,

Not in that poor lowly stable,
with the oxen standing by,
we shall see him, but in heaven,
set at God's right hand on high;
there God's children gather round,
bright like stars, with glory crowned.

Children's Lesson

Prayer for illumination
(Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

1 For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: 2 a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; 3 a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; 4 a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; 5 a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; 6 a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; 7 a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; 8 a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace. 9 What gain has the worker from his toil? 10 I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. 11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

Sermon

There once was a young man who when he got his first job showed up late for work his first three days in a row. When he showed up late on the fourth day his manager pulled him into the office for a conversation. He had the young man sit down and then looked at him and asked, 'Don't you know what time we start to work around here?'. The young man looked back at his manager with a perplexed look and replied, 'No sir, everyone is already working when I get here'.

Time is a very interesting concept. While we all might be able to tell time, being on time is a difficult task for many. Every person has a different definition of what it means to be on time. Personally, I consider myself late if I am not at least 5 minutes early, however, I also know people that consider themselves on time if they show up within half an hour of when they said they would be there.

Which begs the question, what is time? In the modern digitalized world, we have a pretty good grasp on time. It surrounds us in all of the technology that keeps track of time for us, technology that adds things into our schedule, sets alarms, and has timers, and stopwatches. Years ago, when we would change to or from Daylight savings time, people would show up early or late for church depending on which way the clock went, but now our phones make the change for us automatically so being late because of the time change is no longer an excuse.

However, time in the modern sense is very different from the way it was understood just a few hundred years ago. Throughout history there have been many interesting attempts to change time and how it is understood.

Did you know that in 1792 that the French tried to have a 10-day work week? Even stranger they tried to have 10 hours in a day, 100 minutes in an hour and 100 seconds in a minute! Russia not to be outdone by the French decided in 1929 to create a 5-day week in which each day was named after a color, everyone was given a random day off. In 1931 they adjusted the system and went with a 6-day work week with a common day off of rest for most people. It was not until 1940 that they adopted the 7-day work week of the 'Western European Calendar'

You might be thinking that this oddball time is something that was unique to the Russians and the French. But even here in North America time was not standardized until November of 1883.

Before that every community of people was responsible for determining what time it was. This is why Church bells use to ring so many times a day. They rang to indicate when work started and ended, when prayer times were, when supper was and of course to tell people when to come to service. In the US it was the train conductors who finally managed to get the nation to adopt a singular concept of time. In Sept of 1883 a train in New York ran on New York time, Chicago ran on Chicago time, but the stations in between ran on Columbus time. In 1884 Greenwich Meridian was suggested to be the prime meridian and the place from which all time around the world would be standardized. Our modern concept of time is in fact very different from how time was understood not so long ago, in Canada just over 100 years ago the idea of daylight savings time did not exist, it was not adopted anywhere in Canada until Port Arthur, Ontario enacted it in 1908.

Yet God's concept of time has always been eternal. In fact, it was God himself who created time. Before God began the creation of the world there was nothingness. Not a lack of anything, just a whole lot of nothing. And it was out of this nothingness that God created time.

Genesis 1:5

⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

God is the only one capable of truly understanding time, because he was the one who created it. Mark Twain once said, 'Life would be infinitely happier if we could be born at the age of eighty and gradually approach eighteen.' Yet this is not how time works. Time was not created by man, nor is it controlled by man. Our time is fully in hands of God.

The writer of Ecclesiastes, who many believe was King Solomon, is often called the preacher in this book. He is the one who has decided to share his understanding of how the world works. He begins by telling us that there is a time for everything in this world and then illustrates it by going through fourteen opposing points that helps explain to us, how life is composed of a variety of contrasting seasons. In its simplest form, life consists of seasons of good things and bad things which will always be happening. The preacher is not saying that they will happen in any particular order, he does not even say we will be able to tell the good or bad apart. Some things that in the moment we may consider good, may end up being bad as time passes, or vice versa. The preacher simply states that these things will occur within our lives and that we should live our life expecting to be in one of or even in multiple of these seasons each and every day that we walk on this earth.

He wants each of us to know that irrelevant of the season of life that we are in, we are acting out God's plan for time and our life. He explains this by saying that there may be a season in which we are weeping, however all of life in not weeping, there will also be seasons of laughter. He tells us that there will be times in our life when things may need to be broken down, so that they may be rebuilt. There are many people who find this very true with their faith and their understanding of their relationship with God, it is broken, stretched, challenged, and then is rebuilt again better and stronger than before. He tells us there will be times when there will be conflict in our lives, or wars within the world around us, but that there will also be times of comfort and peace. This is the conundrum of this thing we call life, as times flows through it, we have little control over what is happening. We cannot stop aging, we cannot stop the world around us, we need to learn to keep on living with what ever it is that the world presents us each day.

All humans go through these seasons of time. At times we may be in a good season and at others in a bad season, together these variations in seasons make up this segment of time that we call our life. Time can be known as a single point in any one of these seasons of life. I have always wondered what makes someone magically able to make a correct adult life choice, suddenly overnight, when they reach the legal age of 18. I know quite a few people under the age of 18 who would make far better life choices than some people who are over the age of 18 and probably should not be allowed to make adult choices in their life.

It is not that instant of time that radically shapes and alter our lives, it is the seasons of life we pass through. We cannot choose to live our lives only in the good times, because the bad times are just as real. We will always be living in these contrasting seasons in our life. Some of these contrasting seasons you may enjoy, and others I am sure you will hate. Some will be easy and seem to pass quickly, others will be painful or lonely and seem to last forever. The good times we have in life often seem to fly by, and the rough times seem to drag on and last forever, this is a universal truth. When we are in a time or place in which we do not want to be in it is as if time decides to slow down.

As much as we might wish for control of our lives, we do not get to go through life and pick and choose our times and our seasons, we simply have to learn to live them as they come to us. If we got to pick our time and season this church would be filled with young and energetic people and probably completely devoid of the elderly or weak. No one wants to get older, but the reality of living is that we all do.

This is where the preacher wants us to be aware that there is a beauty in all the times and seasons of our life because 'God makes everything beautiful in its time.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

That word that is translated as beautiful can also be translated as 'fitting'. We cannot control our time or our season, but God can and does. The proper season at the right time is what brings about God's purpose for our lives and it is all part of God's beautiful plan for us, that plan of salvation and righteousness. God's plan for his each of his people is a beautiful plan meant to bring them to salvation. The most beautiful part is that God has done this for every one of us. He made each of us fit into His plan for our lives. We are here today, sitting in this time and place, in very different seasons of our life, starting off another year, all acting out our parts in God's plan for our lives. God makes all things; he controls all the seasons and times in every life, and he makes them all beautiful because they are all a part of his plan for salvation.

This is truly an amazing aspect of God's plan. In every group of people there will be people in different seasons of their life. There will be those who are celebrating new life, new beginnings, and new relationships, as well as people who are worried about the end of life, end of careers or the end of relationships. There will be people who are living in excess, those who are content and those who are struggling to make ends meet.

In our lives we are constantly moving through our own seasons while also impacting the season of all those people around us. When a baby is born it creates a new season for life, husband, and wife, now become mother and father. Grandparents are created, aunts and uncles, cousins, when a baby is born the seasons of life for all the people around that person change. This is what a family is, a reflection of the seasons of life that a person goes through, baby, to child, to teen, to adult, to spouse, to parent to grandparent. As we pass through these seasons of life, we reflect on the relationships we have within our family, sharing in the good and the bad, living the plan that God has for us. Over time the older generations pass on and the younger generations take over, but the cycle of the seasons never ends. Time stands still for no man, we are born, and we die, we cannot even determine the amount of time between these two events. This is why Jesus tells us to always be ready, time is in God's hands not our own.

Congregations and churches also pass-through time and seasons. Some churches are in seasons of decline while others are in seasons of growth. Right now, globally there are many churches closing their doors for the last time, while church planters are beginning new ministries in other places. This is happening in churches and in other organizations and companies all over the world. Nothing lasts forever, there is always a change of seasons. Empire and governments will rise to power and fall from power, people become famous and fade away, everyone that is born will eventually die. The good news is that every day that we have God's blessing of life it should give us fresh hope and energy, we should be joyous regardless of the season, because we have been given the opportunity to continue living and hopefully to the coming of a new season. Endings and beginnings, times for crying and laughing, grieving, and celebrating, all these contrasting seasons that over a lifetime are God's plan being enacted in our lives, bring us to salvation and His righteousness and recognizing his plan in our lives should teach us the importance of God and praising and worshiping Him in our life regardless of the season we are living in each day.

We cannot avoid seasons, even if we want to, even if we try, the truth is we will all live out seasons of good and bad, triumph and trouble. Nobody is exempt, this should help you see the lie that is perpetuated by social media like Facebook, TikTok and Instagram, no one is happy 365 days a year, yet if we visit someone Facebook or Instagram, we are led to believe that the rich and famous never have a bad day. The preacher lists off fourteen examples of these seasons that cover all the aspects of life. We may not like or even want to experience some of the seasons that are listed, we will almost always prefer one over the other, but we will experience them all over our lifetime. We love the births and the new beginnings, we all want these, we do not care for the deaths and endings as much. We love the healing, not the killing the same way we love peace and dislike war.

Ecclesiastes 3: 2-8

2 a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; 3 a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; 4 a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; 5 a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; 6 a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; 7 a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; 8 a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.

Every aspect of our life, from birth to death and all of the events in between are covered in this short bit of scripture that the preacher has presented to us in Ecclesiastes. We do not get to chose from the list. It is like playing a game of cards. We all use the same deck even if we are playing different games. Some of the cards are better than others depending on the game you are playing. We are all dealt cards and when we look at

them, we discover the hand is not the ideal hand that we were hoping for, its just not the card we wanted, but they are the cards we have been dealt and they are the cards that we are playing the game with. This list of seasons is like those cards, there are many that we do not want in our lives and others that we want in every season of our life, but we do not get to chose, we simply live out the seasons we are in throughout our lifetime.

The last few years has taught us this, no one would have chosen a global pandemic, restrictions on churches, businesses, and families, yet they have happened. We may not have chosen to live through this season, but it has made us stronger, it has made us more resilient and ready to take on future challenges in our lives. After covid many of the things which we used to find exhausting, confusing and infuriating have begun to seem like minor challenges to overcome, and we take them on with a new outlook and new strength. We have learned that no matter how dark things may seem, the light of day will always come again. That the wind will always blow, and the waters will flow, time will continue – and that God’s people will be there to stand with God and with one another in fellowship through all of the seasons.

In the book of Romans, we are presented with the marks of a true Christian.

Romans 12:9-15

⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

We are called to live in fellowship with one another. To both rejoice and mourn is part of the human experience in this fallen world. As people of God, we are called to be rejoicing and mourning with one another. To be building each other up in our faith, to support one another and then to reach out to the broken world around us and let them see and hear about God through us. We are called to encouraged one another in the good and call out one another on the bad things we do in our lives. Regardless of the seasons we are in, for better or for worse, whether we are in a season of dancing and embracing or a season of loss and disappointment we are called to stand together as people of God in fellowship.

Know this people of God, regardless of the season in which you are living right now in this very moment you are a member of a church family that love you and cares about you. Together we will carry the burdens, lift the yokes, shoulder the challenges, and comfort the sorrows. Together we will cheer one another on, celebrate the victories,

raise our arms in jubilation and praise and worship our God. Know this, that no matter how exhilarating, confusing, exciting or infuriating life can be from one day to the next, the sun will always rise, and the moon will always follow, the winds will always blow and the water will always continue to flow, flowers will blossom, bloom and die – and God’s people will stand together in fellowship and worship of Him through all of the times and seasons of life.

Let us pray,

Shine Your Bright Light into Our Hearts

Lord God,
 you are the light of all the Gentiles,
 and on this day
 you revealed your only Son
 to the Gentiles
 by the leading of a star.
 Grant that your people
 may rejoice in your unending peace
 and shine your bright light
 into our hearts,
 just as you blessed the Wise Men
 and their children;
 through your Son,
 Jesus Christ our Lord,
 who lives and reigns
 with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one God, now and forever.
 Amen.

Source: Wilhelm Loehe, Agende für christliche Gemeinden des lutherischen Bekenntnisses, 1844

Music Ministry: “How Low Was Our Redeemer Brought” by Trish Warren

Communion

Invitation to the Table

Brothers and sisters in Christ,
 the gospel tells us that God, by the leading of a star,
 manifested the Savior to the peoples of the earth,
 and, by the power that enabled Christ
 to change water into wine, made known his glory to the disciples.
 Come then to the joyful feast of the Lord and be transformed.

The Prayer of Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you;
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts;
We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God;
It is right to give God thanks and praise.

With joy we praise you, gracious God,
 for you have created heaven and earth,
 made us in your image, and kept covenant with us—
 even when we fell into sin.
 We give you thanks for Jesus Christ, our Lord,
 who came as the light of the world
 to show us your way of truth in parables and miracles.
 Therefore we join our voices
 with all the saints and angels and the whole creation
 to proclaim the glory of your name.

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

God of wisdom, with gratitude and love
 we remember your mighty acts.
 You created a world that was good.
 You gave us this earth to enjoy.
 You trusted us to share with you in caring for it.
 And when we sinned, you still did not abandon us
 but made covenant with our ancestors.
 You called your people to yourself,
 led them from slavery to freedom,
 gave them the law to obey, prophetic teaching to follow,
 and songs of hope to sing.
 Then, God of unending grace,
 you sent your Son, Christ Jesus, born of a woman,
 to be the glory of your people Israel, a light to shine in the darkness.
 To this light came travelers from the east,
 those already wise seeking higher wisdom.
 Finding greater wisdom in a young child than they had ever known,
 they offered their precious gifts.

This child of Mary and Joseph was indeed the Son of God,
 the one who revealed your glory, transforming sin to goodness,
 disease to health, despair to hope, sorrow to joy, and death to life.
 Yet he too knew sorrow and death,
 bearing upon himself the sin of the world at Calvary:
 betrayed, deserted, crucified.

**Christ has died;
 Christ is risen;
 Christ will come again.**

Holy Spirit, come now and settle on us
 and on these gifts of bread and wine.
 May they become for us Christ's body and life blood,
 healing, forgiving and making us whole.
 So may we become Christ's body, the Church,
 loving and caring throughout the whole world
 until that day when all creation feasts with you
 in the fullness of your mercy and peace
 that we savor today in the name of our Saviour
 Jesus Christ.

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 again 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.**

The Story of the Last Supper

On the night in which he was betrayed,
 Jesus took bread and blessed it, gave thanks and broke it,
 shared it with his companions, and said,
 "This is my body, which is for you.
 Take, eat, do this in remembrance of me."
 In the same manner, he took the cup, blessed it, and said,
 "Drink from this, all of you.
 This cup is the new covenant in my blood;
 do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."
 God of wisdom and light, send your Holy Spirit upon us
 and upon this bread and wine.
 As we come together to eat at your table,
 we offer ourselves to you
 in praise and thanksgiving for your mighty acts.

Take and eat.
 This is the body of Christ, which is [given for you.
 Do this, remembering him.

This cup is the new covenant
 sealed by Christ's blood,
 which was shed that the sins of many
 might be forgiven.
 Drink from it, all of you.

Prayer after Communion

O God,
 you have so greatly loved us,
 long sought us,
 and mercifully redeemed us.
 Give us grace,
 that in everything we may yield
 ourselves, our wills, and our works,
 a continual thank-offering to you,
 through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3). We

also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer:

E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. standrewspert offering@gmail.com If you have an Offering Envelope #, please include it in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (e.g., Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.

Offertory Prayer
(Congregant Prepared)

Closing Hymn #168: "See Amid the Winter's Snow"

See amid the winter's snow,
born for us on earth below;
see, the Lamb of God appears,
promised from eternal years.

Refrain:

Hail, O everblessed morn!
Hail, redemption's happy dawn!
Sing through all Jerusalem,
Christ is born in Bethlehem.

Lo, with in a manger lies
he who built the starry skies,
and who, throned in height sublime,
sits amid the cherubim. (Refrain)

Sacred infant, all divine,
of God's tender love the sign,
for you came from highest bliss,
down to such a world as this! (Refrain)

Pastoral Prayer

O Jesus, light of the world,
come into the dark places of this earth.
You bring a light from God that only you can shed.
Light eternal, your light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness does not overcome it.
We bring to you the darkness of our world
in war, starvation, cruelty, and exploitation.

We bring to you the darkness of our earth,
damaged and defaced by pollution.
We bring to you the darkness of our nation,
beset with conflict of race and class, religion and politics.
We bring to you the darkness of our relationships,
people not looking, not speaking, not listening, not forgiving.
We bring to you the darkness of our own souls,
hidden closets we have not visited or cleaned out for years.
O Jesus, light of the world, be a morning star above for us,
a radiance within, the shining all around that lets us live in love.
Only then shall we be reflectors of your brightness
and give glory to God in heaven. Amen

Benediction

May the light of the glorious gospel of Christ
shine in our hearts, transform our lives,
and brighten the world.
And the blessing of God almighty,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
rest upon you always. Amen.