

**ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH
COMMUNITY OF FAITH**

*A spiritual hub for
creativity, discovery and growth*



Sun-

day,

***January 10, 2021
Epiphany - Baptism of Jesus***

Minister
Rev Arlyce Schiebout

Director of Music
Brad Mills

25 Gore Street West, Perth, Ontario K7H 2L9
Tel: (613) 267-2973 Fax: (613) 267-3601

Welcome and Life of the Community

We are part of community worship today, each in our safe bubble, and here in the sanctuary of St Paul's, Perth, ON.

St Paul's offers worship in various formats during this pandemic time:

- via emailed bulletin with MP3 music files
- On St. Paul's YouTube channel: <https://youtube.com/channel/UCvrGI2MTWvRgdq7bocctNfA>
- in paper copy, printed and available for pick up at the church office door
- by mail upon request – please call the office 613-267-2973

If you know someone who has been unable to access these worship options, please contact the office so we can find a way to stay connected to all members of our faith community.

Please note video worship is a work in progress and we hope to continue to improve live streaming and video options on St. Paul's YouTube channel.

Please read "*What's Happening*" for additional group announcements, dates to remember, team meetings, and upcoming events.

🌟🌟🌟 STAR GIFT WORDS - please use the ones you received at the beginning of 2020. New ones will be available just as soon as safe distribution is possible.

Bible use during worship - renewing our engagement of "our story" as Northrop Frye reminds us.

Upcoming Worship notes

January 10 - Epiphany, Baptism of Jesus Sunday

January 17 - Epiphany 2

January 24 - Epiphany 3

In person worship is suspended until further notice due to COVID - 19 protocols.

STAY HOME — SAVE LIVES

Acknowledgement of Land and Affirm United/s'affirmer ensemble

The land on which we live and worship is the land of the Algonquin Anishnaabe Native People. We give thanks for their stewardship of land, and we seek to learn and live in reconciliation and hope.

We give thanks for elders who guide and show us the way.

St Paul's is a member of Affirm United/S'Affirmer Ensemble, and continues to educate the faith community to live out the learnings of the blessing of God's creation of the diversity of humanity.

We Gather

Greeting: God is good, **all the time.** **All the time,** God is good.

The Prelude

Lighting the Christ Candle

Lighting the Christ candle reminds us that Christ is in our midst, and we carry the light of Christ wherever we go.

Hymn: "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice" VU 35

1 Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
give ye heed to what we say:
Jesus Christ was born today.
Ox and ass before him bow,
and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today!
Christ is born today!

2 Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
now ye hear of endless bliss:
Jesus Christ was born for this!
He has opened heaven's door,
and we are blest forevermore.
Christ was born for this!
Christ was born for this!

Call to Worship

Psalm 62:5-12

5 For God alone my soul waits in silence,
for my hope is from him.

6 He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.

7 On God rests my deliverance and my honor;
my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.

8 Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him;
God is a refuge for us.

Those of low estate are but a breath,

those of high estate are a delusion;
in the balances they go up;
they are together lighter than a breath.

10 Put no confidence in extortion,
and set no vain hopes on robbery;
if riches increase, do not set your heart on them.

11 Once God has spoken;
twice have I heard this:
that power belongs to God,

12 and steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord.
For you repay to all
according to their work.

Hymn: “A mighty fortress is our God” VU 262

1 A mighty fortress is our God,
a bulwark never failing;
our helper sure amid the flood
of mortal ills prevailing:
for still our ancient foe
doth seek to work us woe;
power and malice great,
and armed with cruel hate,
on earth he has no equal.

2 Did we in our strength confide,
our striving would be losing,
were not the right man on our side,
the man of God's own choosing:
dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is he;
Lord Sabaoth his name,
from age to age the same,
and he must win the battle.

Prayer of Confession

Jonah 1:1 Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying, 2 “Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.”

Jonah 3:1-5 The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying, 2 “Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.” 3 So Jonah

set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days' walk across. 4 Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

Assurance of Forgiveness

Jonah 3:5 & 10 And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

10 When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

When our sins of action and heart are brought before us by the God of righteousness, justice, mercy, and when we turn and we repent, and change, then God's steadfast love offers us forgiveness and new life to be in right relationship with God, with each other and all our relations. Thanks be to God! Amen.

We Listen to what the Spirit is Saying to Us

Scripture:

I Corinthians 7:29-31

29 I mean, brothers and sisters,^[g] the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, 30 and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, 31 and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

Mark 1:14-20

The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry

14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news^[a] of God,^[b] 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

16 As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." 18 And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19 As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20 Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

Reader: We Listen to what the Spirit is saying to Us
Thanks be to God.

Meditation “ ”

In my little closing on emails, I often use the words, stay safe and well. Or I read the highway sign that reminds the driver of the COVID 19 protocols followed by the words, STAY HOME Save Lives even as I undertake travel for what I deem essential for my life and vocation.

The last weeks we have come to see the public's reaction to people in leadership who have taken holidays out of province or out of country. Walk the talk. Is there any confusion about the advice of staying home in one's personal bubble without extra relatives or visitors? Is there any confusion about how a virus spreads?

Is there any confusion about intent of words to incite a mob to violence? Is there any surprise? Is there any misunderstanding that needs to be unpacked?

Words make a difference, and actions make a difference.

Today's words from Apostle Paul though come from misunderstanding the freedoms of the new Christians in Corinth.

1 Corinthians 1:10, "Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you should be in agreement and that there should be no divisions among you, but you would be united in the same mind and the same purpose. Paul's goes on to name the quarrels that people had because they followed one person or another, or even Christ, and asks "Has Christ been divided?"

It is easy to misunderstand some passages from Paul's letters. This difficulty is not a new one (see 2 Peter 3:16). The First Letter to the Corinthians is in large part Paul's reaction to misunderstandings. There are many of them: misunderstanding the freedom of a Christian, misunderstanding marriage and celibacy, misunderstanding the resurrection, and so on.

The Corinthians had basically reduced Paul's teaching to a series of slogans. In the letter he writes to them, Paul wants to clarify things as well as he can. Clarifying for him does not mean imposing new and stricter rules or limiting people's freedom because it was misused in the past.

It means above all helping the Christians of Corinth to understand the world and their life with "the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16).

When Paul states, “the world in its present form is passing away,” he does not intend to disqualify what is human, as if he were saying, “No aspect of your life as human beings has true value. Only what is invisible matters.” And while it is true that Paul thought that time was ripe for the seconding, he was not seeing the destruction of the world.

We cannot understand Paul’s originality if we read him in that way. Paul is not encouraging us to abandon the earth and human responsibilities. He does not speak like a world-weary philosopher, full of contempt for the world, for marriage for becoming a vegan, but rather as he reminds us of our Christian responsibility in 8:9: “take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. when you thus sin against members of your family and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.”

We should note that the verb in today’s text is the present tense: “...is passing away”. Paul does not write that “the world in its present form will pass away.” Already today, in the reality that is ours, a new life is breaking in, a new creation. A new day.

Our mentalities, our choices, our concerns, our behavior are invited to correspond to this. We have to become part of this new world! We have to have the mind of Christ.

It is as if Paul were saying to us, “The forms that help you make sense of the world are no longer valid, not because the world no longer has any value, but because it has received additional value in the Risen Christ.”

That is Paul’s message. The lens for seeing the world is through the lens of God’s love made known to the world in Jesus, the risen christ.

The psalmist writes about the world, one does not become rich by extortion or by robbery. The poor are but a breath and those of high estate are but a delusion and both are lighter than a breath. Put no confidence in extortion and set no vain hopes on robbery, if riches increase, do not set your heart on them. Once God has spoken; twice I have heard this, that power belongs to God. And steadfast love belongs to God, for he will repay all according to their work.

Whoever lives with this hope will see their worries and cares change. Their attention and their energies will be motivated by what does not disappear. It is significant that, when it quotes Paul about the world in its present form passing away, the Second Vatican Council (65) recalls, in the same paragraph, “love and its works will remain”.

That love is further defined in the well loved, 1 Corinthians 13, when prophecy has come to an end, tongues ceased, knowledge ended, when the complete comes, the

partial will come to an end. faith, hope and love abide, these three, and the greatest of these is love.

What are our personal criteria and criteria of St Paul's United Church to determine our priorities and to discern what passes away and what remains?

How will love and works be known at St Paul's?

In the light of this reflection, how do we understand the text of Romans 12:2 "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect"?

What transformations might Paul be inviting us to undertake as we enter this 2021?

Hymn: "A Light is Gleaming" VU 82

A light is gleaming, spreading its arms throughout the night, living in the light.
Come share its gladness, God's radiant love is burning bright, living in the light.

When light comes pouring into the darkest place,

It hurts our eyes to see the glow.

Sometimes a word of hope reminds us of our fears,

Our memories and tears. Refrain

When night is round us and every shadow grows,

A star is there to light our way.

It tells a story of Jesus who came near to say:

"God's light will ever stay." Refrain

And Jesus showed us a brighter path to walk.

He showed us things we hadn't seen.

Now we, like Jesus, can help creation shine,

And this will be a sign: Refrain

So let us live in the brightness God has giv'n,

And let us rise to see the dawn.

We trust that God is here asparkle and ablaze,

Warming all our days." Refrain

We Respond to God's Love and Blessings

We offer Ourselves, Tithes, Offerings, Gifts of PAR and Tokens of Thanksgiving

*Prayer of Dedication

For gifts of life and relationships, of all the ministries of St Paul's and the Mission and Service Fund, we are truly thankful. We return a portion of all that we are for your blessing and to be multiplied so that all our relations may have abundant life. Amen.

Anthem/ Special Music "The Little Road to Bethlehem" - Vera Campbell

As I walked down the road at set of sun
The lambs were coming homeward one by one
I heard a sheepbell softly calling them
Along the little road to Bethlehem.

Beside an open door as I drew nigh
I heard sweet Mary sing a lullaby
She sang about the lambs at close of day
And rocked her tiny King among the hay.

Across the air the silver sheepbell rang
"The lambs are coming home, " sweet Mary sang
"Your star of gold, your star of
Gold is shining in the sky.
So sleep, my little King, go lullaby."

As I walked down the road at set of sun
The lambs were coming homeward one by one
I heard a sheepbell softly calling them
Along the little road to Bethlehem.

Lyrics: Margaret Rose, Music: Michael Head, Boosey and Company 1946/1973

Prayers of the People

Our gracious, eternal God, we bow this day thankful for your providential care for us.
Through all of the circuitous events of our lives we see the workings of your hand.

You have given us a sense that you have led us in those times when we have been
faced with decisions.

You have given us hard days to strengthen us.

You have given us uplifting days of joy to cheer us.

You have given us difficulties to test and to challenge us.

You have given us triumphs and victories to celebrate and to enhance our sense of worth and achievement.

You have given us a sense of community to cope with isolation and loneliness.

As we lean into this new year we ask your blessing. As Jesus became open to baptism so we ask you to lead us to new truth and new decisions. May we take the lessons from the past and lean forward with great expectations for tomorrow. Prevent us from being negative and pessimistic about life.

May we not repeat the mistakes of the past or languor in them.

May we not become cynical because our world is not a better place.

May we not despair over conflict but face it with courage and grace.

Above all may we use whatever uncertainty comes our way to build a stronger faith and trust in you. And may we trust our brothers and sisters on our journey.

Be a strong presence to those with special needs and for all around our beautiful earth who suffer. Amen

THE GATE OF THE YEAR - Minnie Louise Haskins

'God Knows'

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:

"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."

And he replied:

"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.

That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."

So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.

And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.

So heart be still:

What need our little life
Our human life to know,
If God hath comprehension?
In all the dizzy strife
Of things both high and low,
God hideth His intention.
God knows. His will
Is best. The stretch of years
Which wind ahead, so dim
To our imperfect vision,
Are clear to God. Our fears
Are premature; In Him,
All time hath full provision.
Then rest: until
God moves to lift the veil
From our impatient eyes,
When, as the sweeter features
Of Life's stern face we hail,
Fair beyond all surmise
God's thought around His creatures
Our mind shall fill.[3]

Silent prayer~~~~~

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 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,
for ever and ever. Amen.

We Depart to Serve with Joy

*"Thanks for the worship, folks"



*Hymn: "Jesus, You have come to the Lakeshore" VU 563

"Jesus, you have come to the lakeshore looking neither for wealthy nor wise ones;
You only asked me to follow humbly. Refrain

You know so well my possessions; my boat carries no gold and no weapons;
You will find there my nets and labour. Refrain

You need my hands, full of caring through my labours to give others rest,
And constant love that keeps on loving. Refrain

You, who have fished other oceans, ever longed for by souls who are waiting,
My loving friend, as thus you call me: Refrain

Refrain: O Jesus, with your eyes you have searched me,
And while smiling, have spoken my name;
Now my boat's left on the shoreline behind me;
By your side I will seek other seas."

Commissioning

Be in this world with a daring love, staying home, saving lives, giving thanks for the
One who stands at the door of this new year offering hope for that which is to come.

Benediction

"God bless you and keep you, God's face shine upon you and be gracious unto you,
God look upon you with kindness and give you peace, now and always." Amen

The Postlude

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COVID-19 UPDATE: December 26, 2020

Under new lockdown restrictions St. Paul's building will be closed to the public beginning December 26 for a period of 28 days, as per Ontario Government regulations. The following protocols will apply during the lockdown period.

- There will be no in-person worship services during this time

- The building will be closed to the public during period of the lockdown
- Virtual worship will however, continue to be offered, but only essential worship participants will be permitted access to the building, to a maximum of 10 participants
- For everyone's safety, staff work schedules will be a mix of office and working at home. The office administrator will work Wednesdays and Fridays at St. Paul's
- Only essential staff will be permitted to access the building and only on an as needed basis and personal contact will be minimized
- The building will be checked for security and maintenance purposes routinely by the custodian and designated members of the Property Team
- Mail will be picked up on a regular basis
- Envelopes, letters, church related forms, etc. are to be dropped in the outside mailbox; please do not enter the building to deliver or pick up anything from the office
- All meetings and gatherings at the church building are suspended during the lockdown
- Members of council, team chairs, volunteers and key holders are not permitted to access the building without explicit permission from the office and only on a scheduled date and time
- If you have any COVID-19 symptoms (see below), have attended a gathering in the past 2 weeks with people outside of your immediate household (even if physical distancing was observed), or have travelled outside of the Province or country DO NOT attend the church building for any reason



Fever



Cough



Difficulty breathing



Sore throat, trouble swallowing



Runny nose



Loss of taste or smell



Not feeling well



Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea



Have you been in close contact with someone who is sick or has confirmed COVID-19 in the past 14 days?