

Sunday December 1st, 2024
Advent 1
Now is the time to wake up... to Hope

Gathering Music: Geordie Roberts

Opening Singing: VU #64 vs 1,3,4 O Little Town of Bethlehem

Welcome: Will Sparks

Good morning Highlands United Church, and welcome to the first Sunday in the season of Advent. And a special welcome to you if you are a newcomer here either in person in North Vancouver, or online from wherever you are.

This has been a busy weekend here as we have held our annual Advent Festival with nativities to see and play with, food and drink and thrift and gift and childrens market and crafts to buy and make. And outside there is now a life-sized Advent Calendar for the community to mark the days on our collective journey to the manger, to the celebration of the birth of Jesus. I love the way this season puts us on a collective journey. And Highlands tries to be intentional and explicit about all parts of the collective, so that no matter who you are, how familiar or unfamiliar the Christian faith is to you, no matter how old or young you are, who you love, how you identify, whether you come with more questions than answers, every one is a child of God and therefore welcome to participate along the way.

Today we will share in a communion meal, which will happen later in the service. But for those online, this would be a good time to look around and find some kind of break or cracker, and some kind of wine, juice, or substitute

so that when the time comes you too can share in the communal meal.

Worship is a part of life. As we come to this place, we do bring our lives and the life of the world with us and within us. And there may be people or situations that you carry, worries for people, concerns, celebrations that you would like to have held in prayer. We have a prayer team that does that every week and you are welcome to place names or situations on the list at the back of the sanctuary, or in the chat box. I would encourage you to check and make sure that's ok with the person, and just know that the prayer team will hold them in love and light throughout the week and then next Sunday their names will appear in our community prayer list.

Prayer Bowl: Julie Lees

Territorial Acknowledgement: Julie

We light the Candle of Hope: Members of the Refugee Committee

1. Jeremiah writes, “the days are surely coming, says the Lord when I will fulfill the promises I made to my people.”
2. A day filled with promise, is a day filled with hopeful possibilities. As a refugee sponsoring community, we live in hope that a person or family who has struggled for a safe place to live in this world will find that safe home here. We hope and we work for that.
3. Hope is not just an idea or a feeling- it is active, alive, awake.
4. Today we light the candle of hope, (*The candle is lit*) For now is the time for hope to wake up in us.

Advent Hymn: Hope is a Star VU # 7 vs. 1

Genesis Too: People Get Ready

(the children are invited to go to Sunday School)

Threshold Moment: Will

People Get Ready for the train's a comin'. The season of Advent, this season leading up to Christmas is that time to get ready, in our homes, in our communities and families, with events, and gatherings. And it can feel like a train coming at us in a less than controlled sort of way- a runaway train.

The world can feel like that too these day. With the rise of nationalism, some of which using religious faith as a weapon, with wars and tangles of conflict that seem to have trapped whole regions in desperate suffering, our global inability to change our habits for the better, it can feel like the realities of hope, peace, joy, love have been lost or buried.

Our tradition and our scriptures are familiar with this feeling. We have been here before, and at times like this, prophets and sages tell us, these realities are not gone. Hope is not gone, peace is not gone, joy is not gone, love is not gone. It is just asleep, under the surface. The people have just gone to sleep and lost touch with these sacred realities that God has placed within us and within the world. And when there is struggle, suffering, despair, that is the very time to wake up to these deeper realities. Advent is a time of awakening. Now is the time to wake up.

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 33:14-16, Luke 21: 25-36 read by Al Lill

One: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

All: Thanks be to God.

Bells: Ukrainian Bell Carol

Reflection: Will Sparks

(the choir will now move to the chancel)

Spirit Singers: Great Light

Communion

Invitation to the Table

Will: Instructions around communion

Julie: As we come to this table, we are reminded that this is the table of Jesus Christ, a banquet prepared for everyone. All who seek to be nourished and sustained in the journey of life and faith, all who seek wholeness and compassionate paths to peace and justice, are welcome here. All who come broken, have a healing and forgiving place at this table.

Will: God be with you.

And also with you.

Julie: Lift up your hearts.

We lift our hearts in prayer.

Will: Let us give thanks to God.

It is good to give God thanks and praise.

Julie: Blessed are you, Beacon of hope, Breath of peace, Giver of all life, Source of love that knows no end. Your song of wisdom rang out before the world began; throughout the ages, your song of liberation has planted within us your hope for a world where:

those considered last and least are first and most;
violence is overcome by the power of your ancient
love and all work together for peace.

Will: You place longings within us, and send prophets to awaken us to their fulfillment.

Julie: We thank you for those who, like Mary, have the strength and courage to give birth to your love in the world; for those who, like the shepherds, dare to seek out the Child of Bethlehem; for those who, like the wise ones, actively challenge violent and oppressive powers.

Will: We praise you that your everlasting light is shown to us in womb and tomb, in cradle and cross, in tenderness and compassion. And so we join in the Advent prayer of all your people,

“O come, O come, Emmanuel.”

Julie: And, as we wait and watch for your coming among us, we proclaim your goodness singing:

**Santo Santo Santo,
Mi corazon te adora
Mi corazon de sabe decir
Santo eres Dios.**

**Holy Holy Holy
My heart, my heart adores you
My heart is glad to say the words
You are holy God.**

Will: And now we we also remember all with whom you would have us share your feast.

We pray for all who are in sorrow or in pain...
all who are ill or alone...
all who are close to our hearts...
all who live with fear, oppression, or hunger...
all whose lives have been marred by violence,
racism, or poverty...

for all whom the world counts as last and least.
And we hold together in prayer all those on our
prayer lists and in our hearts and minds today.

Prayer Slides here

Julie: God of hope, make this bread the means of our
awakening, this wine the medium of our transformation, this
table the foundation of our renewal, and this community the
place of our rebirth. Amen.

Will: And now, we remember Jesus, who on the night before he
died, took a loaf of bread, gave you thanks, broke it, and said,
“Take and eat; whenever you do this, remember me.”

(The Bread is broken)

Julie: Likewise, after supper, he took the cup, saying, “This is
the new covenant; remember me.”

(The wine is poured)

Will: Gracious God, Beacon of hope, Breath of peace, Source
of love, we pray for your Spirit to nourish us here at this table.

Make us, while many, one.

Make us, though broken, whole.

Make us, despite death, alive.

In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Sharing the Bread and Cup

Communion is served

Communion Songs:

Eat this bread, Drink this cup

Come to me and never be hungry.

Eat this bread, Drink this cup

Trust in me and you will not thirst.

**Bread for the journey. Food for the Way.
Cup of God's blessing, tomorrow, today.**

Prayer After Communion

Will: We thank you, God, for breaking into our world and pouring into our lives. We thank you for nourishment and hope. Send us out awake and alive to all that is possible through this advent season. Amen.

Announcements and Offering Prayer– Julie Lees

Hymn: VU #2 Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

Blessing and Sending Out – Will and Julie

Blessing Song: VU #6 vs 1 A Candle is Burning

Outro: Will Sparks