

Hybrid Worship for January 15th, 2023
Second Sunday after Epiphany

Territorial Acknowledgment and Announcements

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is situated upon traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron - Wyandot, the Haudenosaunee and later the Mississauga of the Credit First Nations. The territory is mutually covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibway and other allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.

Today, this remains the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in their community, and to share and respect Mother Earth.

Centering Music: “And on this Path” MV 8

And on this path, the gates of holiness are open wide,
and on this path, the gates of holiness are open wide,
and on this path, the gates of holiness are open wide!

Open wide! Open wide! Open wide!
The gates are open wide!

So enter in, the gates of holiness are open wide,
so enter in, the gates of holiness are open wide,
so enter in, the gates of holiness are open wide,

Open wide! Open wide! Open wide!
The gates are open wide!

Call to Worship and Opening Prayer

One: God’s Spirit calls to our spirits,

All: inviting us to worship.

One: God’s Spirit calls to our spirits,

All: inviting us by love.

One: God’s Spirit calls to our spirits,

**All: calling us by name,
calling us to grow in faith,
calling us to be made new.**

One: Let us pray together:

**All: Eternal God, we come to you with hungry hearts,
waiting to be filled:
with a sense of your presence;
with the touch of your spirit;**

**with new energy for service.
Come to us, we pray.
Be with us.
Touch us.
Empower us as your people,
that we might worship you,
and act in the world for Jesus' sake.
Amen.**

Call to Worship and Opening Prayer from "Celebrate God's Presence" The United Church of Canada

Opening Hymn: "God is Here" VU 389

God is here! As we your people
meet to offer praise and prayer,
may we find in fuller measure
what it is in Christ we share.
Here, as in the world around us,
all our varied skills and arts
wait the coming of the Spirit
into open minds and hearts.

Here are symbols to remind us
of our lifelong need of grace;
here are table, font, and pulpit;
here the cross has central place.
Here in honesty of preaching,
here in silence, as in speech,
here, in newness and renewal,
God the Spirit comes to each.

Here our children find a welcome
in the Shepherd's flock and fold;
here as bread and wine are taken,
Christ sustains us, as of old.
Here the servants of the Servant
seek in worship to explore
what it means in daily living
to believe and to adore.

God of all, of church and kingdom,
in an age of change and doubt
keep us faithful to the gospel;
help us work your purpose out.

Here, in this day's dedication,
all we have to give, receive;
we, who cannot live without you,
we adore you! We believe!

Prayer for Reflection and Revelation: “Prayer of Fastening” by Joyce Rupp

Fasten my entire heart to you, Love of all Loves,
that all I am and do finds its motivation in you.

Fasten my mind to you, Inner Peace,
that whatever stirs within leads to tranquility.

Fasten my days to you, Divine Presence,
that in each happening I remain united with you.

Fasten my nights to you, Holy Darkness,
that I find restoration in your embracing silence.

Fasten my joys to you, Delight of My Soul,
that these memories comfort me in times of trouble.

Fasten my sorrows to you, Compassionate One,
that I experience solace in your kindheartedness.

Fasten my desires to you, Eternal Flame,
that my yearnings reflect the fire in your great heart.

Fasten my concerns to you, Trustworthy Confidante,
that I withdraw from my fears and place my trust in you.

Fasten my responsibilities to you, Sustainer of Strength,
that my daily efforts evolve from a non-resistant spirit.

Fasten my relationships to you, Friend of My Heart,
that your profuse love nurtures and sustains them.

Fasten my anguished world to you, Holder of Hope,
that my dreams for justice and peace become a reality.

Fasten my prayer to you, Giver of Grace,
that I might give myself ever more fully to you.

Sung Response: "Take, O Take Me As I Am" MV 85

Take, O take me as I am;
summon out what I shall be;
set your seal upon my heart
and live in me.

Scripture Readings:

Psalms 40:1-11 *The Inclusive Bible*

Unyielding, I called to you YHWH,
now at last you have stooped to me
and answered my cry for help.
You have pulled me out of the Pit of Destruction,
out of its mud and quicksand;
you set my feet on a rock
and made my steps firm.
You put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to you.
Many will look on in wonder
and so will put their trust in you.
Happiness comes to those who put their trust in YHWH,
instead of in human egos
or people blind to the truth!
How many wonders you've worked for us,
YHWH, my God!
How many plans you've made for us;
you have no equal!
I want to recount them again and again,
but their number is too great.
You don't desire sacrifice or oblation,
instead you made my ears receptive to you;
you asked no burnt offering
or sacrifice for sins from me.
And so I declared,
"Here I am! I have come!
In the scroll of the book
it is written about me."
I desire to do your will, my God,
and your law is written in my heart.
I'll proclaim your justice
in the Great Assembly,
and I won't keep my mouth shut,
as you well know.

I have never kept your generosity to myself,
but announced your faithfulness and saving action;
I have made no secret of your love and faithfulness
in the Great Assembly.
For your part, YHWH,
don't withhold your love from me!
Let your kindness and faithfulness
constantly protect me!

John 1:29–42 *The Inclusive Bible*

The next day, catching sight of Jesus approaching, John exclaimed, "Look, there's God's sacrificial lamb, who takes away the world's sin! This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'The one who comes after me ranks ahead of me, for this One existed before I did.' I didn't recognize him, but it was so that he would be revealed to Israel that I came baptizing with water."

John also gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and she came to rest on him. I didn't recognize him, but the One who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'When you see the Spirit descend and rest on someone, that is the One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' Now I have seen for myself and have testified that this is the Only Begotten of God."

The next day, John was by the Jordan again with two of his disciples. Seeing Jesus walk by, John said, "Look! There's the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard what John said and followed Jesus.

When Jesus turned around and noticed them following, he asked them, "What are you looking for?"

They replied, "Rabbi -- which means 'Teacher' -- 'where are you staying?'"

"Come and see," Jesus answered.

So they went to see where he was staying, and they spent the rest of the day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.

One of the two who had followed Jesus after hearing John was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. The first thing Andrew did was to find Simon Peter and say, "We've found the Messiah!" -- which means "the Anointed One."

Andrew brought Simon to Jesus, who looked hard at him and said, "You are Simon ben-Jonah; I will call you

'Rock'" – that is "Peter."

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

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Choir: Be Still My Soul

Reflection: Building a community of Christ

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.

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.

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

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.

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

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.

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

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.

Introduction to the Offering

Gift of Music

Hymn of Dedication: "Behold, I make all things new" MV 115

Behold, (behold,) behold (behold,) I make all things new,
beginning with you and starting from today.
Behold, (behold,) behold (behold,) I make all things new,
my promise is true, for I am Christ the way.

Offering Prayer:

**All: Ever-present God,
with this offering, we present ourselves:
all that we have been,
all that we are,
and all that we shall become,
and our commitment to walk in your way
and heed your call.
Accept us and our offerings, we pray for Jesus' sake.
Amen.**

Prayers of the People

One: Today, God, we offer our thanks for you love and grace,
for your continuous call to each of us,
and for your abiding presence.
We thank you for cold January breezes
and slightly longer days,
for song birds that continue their music despite the winter weather.
We thank you for warm fuzzy sweaters and warm homes,
for steamy windows as we prepare our meals,
and the nourishment those meals provide.
We thank you for the people of this community,
and for our friends and families and the support they provide.

We know, God, that not everyone will experience
the warmth of friendship, companionship, and your presence
in these winter times.
And so we pray for those who suffer from illness, loneliness, and pain.

One: God, hear our prayer.

All: And in your love answer.

We offer our prayers for the victims of oppression, disaster or violence in this world, and for all those who put their own lives on hold, or at risk, to help to bring your justice and care and peace to others.

One: God, hear our prayer.

All: And in your love answer.

We offer our prayers for creation, and for the earth on which we live. Give us the wisdom and the energy to make good and just decisions in our care for this planet and all that lives and breathes upon it.

One: God, hear our prayer.

All: And in your love answer.

We pray for communities of faith here in Mississauga and around the world, those who share our Christian faith and those who follow different paths to your mystery. May they know safety as they worship, may we find ways to communicate honestly and fruitfully.

One: God, hear our prayer.

All: And in your love answer.

Loving God, we bring our most intimate cares and concerns to you, we name them in our hearts here today, and trust that you hear and know the persons and situations that we bring.

One: God, hear our prayer.

All: And in your love answer.

One: Thankful that we can turn to you as to a mother who watches over us, we gather all these prayers as we sing:

The Lord's Prayer (sung) VU 959

Our Father heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those
who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil

for the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and forever.

Closing Hymn: “Christ Has No Body Now But Yours” MV 171

Christ has no body now but yours, no hands but yours.

Here on this earth, yours is the work,
to serve with the joy of compassion.

No hands but yours to heal the wounded world,
No hands but yours to soothe all its suffering, no touch but yours
to bind the broken hope of the people of God.

Christ has no body now but yours, no hands but yours.

Here on this earth, yours is the work,
to serve with the joy of compassion.

No eyes but yours to see as Christ would see,
to find the lost, to gaze with compassion; no eyes but yours to
glimpse the holy joy of the city of God.

Christ has no body now but yours, no hands but yours.

Here on this earth, yours is the work,
to serve with the joy of compassion.

No feet but yours to journey with the poor,
to walk this world with mercy and justice. Yours are the steps to
build a lasting peace for the children of God.

Christ has no body now but yours, no hands but yours.

Here on this earth, yours is the work,
to serve with the joy of compassion.

Through ev’ry gift, give back to those in need:
as Christ has blessed, so now be his blessing, with ev’ry gift a
benediction, be to the people of God.

Christ has no body now but yours, no hands but yours.

Here on this earth, yours is the work,
to serve with the joy of compassion.

Commissioning /Blessing

Sung Amen VU969

Rev. Joanne's Reflection

I begin with a question for us all to ponder today – how did you get to church? If we think only of today, we might respond with “I drove,” or “someone drove me,” or “I ZOOMED.” That’s not really the question I am asking, though. I’m asking us to think about how we came to be part of a community of faith that follows Jesus Christ.

Some of us probably began our church involvement as infants and children, and were literally carried through the church doors, and kept coming throughout our lives. That was certainly my experience being raised in a family that valued faith and valued being part of the church community. There were still times that I had to consider my choice to keep coming, keep being part of church as I moved through university years and into different communities around Ontario.

Not all of us here have been church-goers our whole lives, and I have heard stories from some of you that tell of being invited to come to church – by a friend or a neighbour or a co-worker or even a partner. That was certainly how Applewood United was formed; by folks inviting and welcoming others to be part of a community of faith that truly mattered to them. I have also heard from people who simply wandered in, looking for a place to find meaning and acceptance and to explore their faith.

Our scripture readings today can really point us to some clues about building a church community, even though at first glance they may not seem to have much to do with that topic – a topic that is as important for us today as it was when this church building was completed in 1956. We are still ‘building’ the church, still working to create and sustain a community of Christ that follows, learns, listens and worships.

In both our psalm and in our gospel reading from John, I see three distinct and important directions for building community, for drawing people into the life we share as followers of Jesus in this time and place: declaration, invitation, and welcome. At one time the church used words like witness or evangelism to describe this work, but those terms carry a lot of baggage, of times when beliefs were imposed and invitation was warped into oppression. Declaration, invitation and welcome imply that while we work to build, the ones to whom we offer these have the right to refuse.

The psalmist, in their joyful assertion of all that God has done, shows us our first task. Proclaiming God’s justice in the whole community, declaring God’s love and faithfulness to everyone – not staying silent about what God means to us – this is the work of building community. This declaration is more than announcing what our community is doing, but actually taking the time to talk about why we do what we do. Any organization can do good work, or bring people together to share social time, and there are many examples of that in our communities, but our actions are rooted in faith, nourished and inspired by our relationship with God and our call to follow Jesus. When we declare that truth, when we share not just our activities but the faith behind them, we build and strengthen our community.

John the baptizer gives an example of this kind of declaration as he recounts Jesus’ baptism in the gospel reading from John. Here is the One God sent, he tells everyone who will listen, here is the Lamb, here is God’s own. He points to Jesus, just as our own declarations can point to Jesus as we share our lives and stories. We can name who Jesus is for us, as John and later Andrew did in this reading. Rabbi, teacher, Messiah, God’s own – God’s very presence in the midst of the people – whatever words and descriptions are important to us.

Invitation is the next task to which we are pointed to build the church, and that duty comes from the words of Jesus. “Come and see,” he tells the disciples of John who have decided to follow him. We can offer the same invitation to others – and sometimes we need to hear that invitation over and over again ourselves even when we are part of a faith community. Come and see what God is up to at Applewood United Church. Come and see what God is doing in the lives of the people here, so that God’s love can spread. Come and see how God’s presence is known here, come and see hope, and justice-seeking, and relationship-building.

Andrew offers a personal invitation when he brings his brother Simon Peter to meet Jesus. Andrew, who had been a follower of John, has now come to know who Jesus is for him, and excitedly names him as The Anointed One, the Messiah. We know that those personal invitations to worship, to community, to the potential encounter with God-in-Christ, are powerful and meaningful. We know that they are crucially important to building community, and that when they are offered with genuine openness and without coercion, they can lead to transformed lives, just as Simon Peter is transformed and named the “Rock” by Jesus.

It is in Jesus’ acceptance and renaming of Simon Peter that we see our final task – the welcome. It is a welcome beyond merely including, but goes beyond to accepting people for both who they are and their potential to be transformed. When we offer that invitation and that welcome, we echo Jesus’ own inclusivity. We can remember that to welcome is to name someone with hope, and see that God’s love has the potential to be lived out through them, just as we hope that it can be lived out through our own lives. we build church community and God’s beloved community when we welcome as Jesus did.

Jesus only had one question for the followers of John who began to follow him, “What are you looking for?” He did not judge the response given, when he is named teacher by Andrew and the other, he instead offered that open invitation. It is a question that we can ponder ourselves as well as offer to those we would invite and welcome. What are we looking for? The answer might change throughout our lives as individuals and as church, and the process of answering is one of the ways we continue to build a strong and vibrant church.

Declare, invite, welcome and continue to ask ourselves what we are looking for as we journey together and continue to build our church. Name who God is for us, ask others if they would like to explore with us, welcome their questions and their answers as we welcome their presence. May God be in our declarations, Christ be the inspiration for our invitations, and the Spirit present in our welcoming.
Amen