

**Hybrid Worship for January 22, 2023
Third 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: "Open Our Hearts" MV 21

Open our hearts, open our minds.
Open our lives to you O loving God.
Open our hearts, open our minds.
Open our lives to you O loving God.

Call to Worship and Opening Prayer

One: By the lakeshore, in our homes,
at the crossroads, in the cities,

All: God continues to call to us.

One: In our moments of doubt,
in our moments of clarity,

All: God seeks us and beckons to us.

One: With light and The Light,
with the power to illuminate our lives,

**All: God calls us to work, to worship,
to community and to discipleship.**

One: Let us prayer together:

**All: God, you touch our lives
with light and with hope.**

**We have come to worship this day
carrying our own sparks of your love,
but also carrying uncertainties and worries.**

**Help us to be ready to share your light,
letting it illuminate our own darkness.**

**Help us to answer your call to us,
as we seek to follow you into all possibilities.**

**We pray in the name of the One who Called,
Jesus the Christ. Amen.**

Opening Hymn: “Siyahamba/We Are Marching” VU 646

We are marching in the light of God,
we are marching in the light of God.
We are marching in the light of God,
we are marching in the light of God.
(the light of God.)
We are marching, (marching, we are marching,
oo-oo, (marching,)
we are marching in the light of God.
(the light of God.)
We are marching, (marching, we are marching,
oo-oo, (marching,)
we are marching in the light of God.

Siyahamb' ekukhanyen' kwenkhos',
siyahamb' ekukhanyen' kwenkhos'.
Siyahamb' ekukhanyen' kwenkhos',
siyahamb' ekukhanyen' kwenkhos',
(khanyen' kwenkhos'.)
Siyahamba, (hamba siyahamba,)
oo-oo, (hamba,)
siyahamb', ekukhanyen' kwenkhos'.
(khanyen' kwenkhos'.)
Siyahamba, (hamba siyahamba,)
oo-oo, (hamba,)
siyahamb', ekukhanyen' kwenkhos'.

Prayer for Reflection and Revelation: “Into the Deep” by Bruce Sanguin
If you would like to read Rev. Sanguin’s prayer yourself, please contact Rev. Joanne

Sung Response: “Yahweh Be Praised” MV 51

Yahweh be praised in the heavens.
Yahweh be praised in the streets.
Yahweh be praised with our singing
when in worship we meet.
Yahweh be praised. Yahweh be praised.
Yahweh be praised. Yahweh be praised.
Yahweh be praised. Yahweh be praised.
Yahweh be praised. Yahweh be praised.

Scripture Readings:

Isaiah 9:1-4 *The Inclusive Bible*

But there will be no more gloom
for the land that was in anguish!
In the past God humbled
the land of Zebulun, the land of Naphtali,
but in the future God will bring glory
to this Road to the Sea,
this Land beyond the Jordan,
this Galilee of the Nations.
The people walking in darkness
are seeing a brilliant light –
upon those who dwell in a land of deep shadows
light is shining!
God, you have made the nation greater –
you have brought them abundant joy!
They celebrate in your presence
as with harvest celebrations,
or as warriors celebrate when dividing spoils.
For the yoke that burdened them,
the weight on their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressors –
you have shattered it,
as you did at the defeat of Midian.

Matthew 4:12–23 *The Inclusive Bible*

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he went
back to Galilee. He left Nazareth and settled in Capernaum,
a lakeside town near the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali.
In this way the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled:

“Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali,
the way to the sea on the far side of the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles;
the people who live in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death
a light has dawned.”

From that time on Jesus began proclaiming the message,
“Change your hearts and minds, for the kingdom* of heaven is at hand!”

As Jesus was walking along the Sea of Galilee, he watched
two brothers – Simon, who was called Peter, and Andrew –
casting a net into the sea. They fished by trade. Jesus said

to them, “Come and follow me, and I will make you fishers of humankind.” They immediately abandoned their nets and began to follow Jesus.

Jesus walked along further and caught sight of a second pair of brothers – James and John, ben-Zebedee. They too were in their boat, mending their nets with their father.

Jesus called them, and immediately they abandoned both boat and father to follow him.

Jesus travelled throughout Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom of heaven and healing all kinds of diseases and sickness among the people.

**In this bible translation, the patriarchal ‘kingdom’ is replaced with the more egalitarian term ‘kindom’ reflecting the importance of right relationship with God and one another.*

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

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Choir: “Light Shine”

Reflection: Seeing the Light

Hymn: “I the Lord of Sea and Sky/Here I am Lord” VU 509

I, the Lord of sea and sky,

I have heard my people cry.

All who dwell in deepest sin my hand will save.

I who made the stars of night,

I will make their darkness bright.

Who will bear my light to them?

Whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?

I have heard you calling in the night.

I will go, Lord, if you lead me.

I will hold your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of snow and rain,

I have borne my people's pain,

I have wept for love of them; they turn away.

I will break their hearts of stone,

give them hearts for love alone.

I will speak my word to them.
Whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame,
I will set a feast for them; my hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide
till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.

Introduction to the Offering

Gift of Music

Hymn of Dedication: "What Can I Do?" MV 191

What can I do? What can I bring?
What can I say? What can I sing?
I'll sing with joy. I'll say a prayer.
I'll bring my love. I'll do my share

Offering Prayer:

**All: Generous God,
accept all that we offer today as symbols
of our commitment to transforming the world,
ourselves, and our community.
Bless these gifts, and all our gifts
of time and energy, skill and experience,
hope and perseverance. Amen**

Prayers of the People

Sung Response: "And When You Call for Me" MV 96

And when you call for me,
I have already answered.
And when you call for me,
I am already there.

One: Creator God, Source of Light and love,
today we bring our thanks for all the ways you bring illumination
to our lives:
We thank you for the light found in scripture,
for the stories and teachings that can bring clarity to our paths.
We thank you for the brightness found in relationships – with you,
with those we love, and with the stranger, that can be a beam of hope and comfort.
We thank you for the light in your creation –
for the pink skies of dawn and the fiery light of sunset,
for gentle moon shine and the glow of fireflies,
for the glimmers of light in the eyes of a new born baby,
and the sparkling light of humour in the eyes of our friends.
We thank you for the way the light of a sunny day can energize us,
and for the way that starlight can bring us a sense of awe and mystery.

One: Hear our prayer, God.

**Sung response: And when you call for me,
I have already answered.
And when you call for me,
I am already there.**

One: Today God, we remember those who still live within the gloom
of fear, oppression, violence and injustice.
Show us how to shine with the light that they truly need.
We pray for those who are walking in the shadows of illness,
grief, uncertainty and sadness. Today especially we remember Debbie Carroll,
whose death is keenly felt by members of our Applewood family.

One: Hear our prayer, God.

**Sung response: And when you call for me,
I have already answered.
And when you call for me,
I am already there.**

One: We pray, Loving God, for those people for whom the absence of light and care
drains energy in minds and hearts and spirits.
We remember especially those caring for their loved ones in the cloudiness of difficult times,
those who are worried and waiting and looking for a way forward.
We pray for those who seek to bring your light of justice, care and compassion to those in need,
and we remember especially peace makers,
those ones who struggle for liberation and justice.
We pray for people who risk their lives for others,

for those who work for human rights,
and for those who speak truth on behalf of the oppressed,
Like them, help us to shine with your light into all places where that light is needed.

One: Hear our prayer, God.

Sung response: **And when you call for me,
I have already answered.
And when you call for me,
I am already there.**

One: God of light, God our light,
into your knowing we commend all for whom we pray –
including ourselves - trusting in your mercy, now and forever.

The Lord's Prayer (sung) VU 959

Closing Hymn: "Go Make A Difference" MV 209

Go make a diff'rence.
We can make a diff'rence.
Go make a diff'rence in the world.
Go make a diff'rence.
We can make a diff'rence.
Go make a diff'rence in the world.

We are the salt of the earth,
called to let the people see
the love of God in you and me.
We are the light of the world,
not to be hidden but be seen.
Go make a diff'rence in the world.

Go make a diff'rence.
We can make a diff'rence.
Go make a diff'rence in the world.
Go make a diff'rence.
We can make a diff'rence.
Go make a diff'rence in the world.

We are the hands of Christ
reaching out to those in need,
the face of God for all to see.
We are the spirit of hope;
we are the voice of peace.
Go make a diff'rence in the world.

Go make a diff' rence.
We can make a diff' rence.
Go make a diff' rence in the world.
Go make a diff' rence.
We can make a diff' rence.
Go make a diff' rence in the world.

So let your love shine on,
let it shine for all to see.
Go make a diff' rence in the world.
And the spirit of Christ
will be with us as we go.
Go make a diff' rence in the world.

Go make a diff' rence.
We can make a diff' rence.
Go make a diff' rence in the world.
Go make a diff' rence.
We can make a diff' rence.
Go make a diff' rence in the world.

Commissioning /Blessing

Sung Amen VU 431

Rev. Joanne's Reflection

"There is a light at the end of the tunnel," I have heard folk say when they are travelling through busy or stressful times. I often use the expression "seeing the light of day" to describe some relief ahead when my own work is busy and there are many tasks to accomplish. It is common to use the notion of "light" or moving into the light as an end to troublesome times.

Isaiah uses this same idea when he declares that "the people who live in darkness have seen a great light." The people he refers to are the inhabitants of the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali – two of the tribes of Israel – who are now under the rule of the Assyrians after being conquered. They have been severed from the communities and the people of their traditions. A light is shining, proclaims the prophet, a light that might bring God's people together once more, a "light at the end of the tunnel" of separation and oppression.

"Seeing the light" is an expression we often associate with religious conversion or experience, which perhaps then encourages a change in behaviour once understanding has changed. We do use it in a multitude of contexts these days – one can "see the light" and become more environmentally aware, or "see the light" and reach a deeper understanding of the need for reconciliation with our Indigenous siblings. For the writer of Matthew's gospel, "seeing the light" is to see Jesus as the light of God in the world, and beyond that, the very presence of God in our midst.

For this gospel writer, it is significant that Jesus settles in the area of Capernaum, close to those traditional territories Zebulun and Naphtali, which is still the "land of the Gentiles" because it is now

occupied by Rome. Not only does this setting point to the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, but it gives us a real location in which to imagine Jesus beginning his ministry - in a lakeside town that would have contained a busy market, fisherfolk and their families, and a synagogue. The light that Jesus represented, the light he would bring to the people, could be kindled and brightened in such a place. Capernaum is the location for miracles, teachings and for followers to "see the light" in all four of our gospels. It is where Jesus first declares that God is present with them, and that minds and hearts can be changed and transformed as people experience the light of that presence.

So perhaps it is not surprising that this passage also contains the call of Peter, Andrew, James and John. It is a story that illustrates for us what can happen when God's light shines on us, and moves us to action. We cannot know what those men actually experienced in the moment they decided to answer Jesus' call. No doubt that these two sets of brothers were part of the Roman Empire - they would likely have had to pay some sort of fee or have a contract in order to fish, and also probably provide some of their catch to the occupiers. Was leaving their nets a part of protest against that regime? Were they aware that their actions would have been a small disruption to the powers that ruled part of their lives, and that following Jesus would lead to another way - a God-centered way of living?

I believe that Peter and Andrew and James and John recognized something when they heard Jesus' voice that day. I believe, like creatures such as whales, or sea lions that recognize the call of their mothers from the moment they are born, that those men recognized God's voice in the voice of Jesus. They could "see the light" of God's presence because somehow it was familiar to them, at some very basic and fundamental level. That is what drew them from their work, from their families and obligations, that familiarity, that sense of following God's voice into the new and into the unknown, with the confidence that God was with them in the person of Jesus, and God was about to do a new thing.

Theologian David Toole writes that the experience of these first disciples allowed Jesus' divinity to be revealed in his humanity. "No bright stars. No earthquakes. Just a voice that strikes our ear amid the ordinariness of our lives and announces that God is among us."

Like Peter and Andrew, James and John, I was at my work when I experienced the call to ordered ministry - standing beside a photocopier, in fact. I think that is often when we are called in a new direction - in the midst of our busy lives, or certainly when we least expect it. Perhaps it is when we are immersed in tasks that God's voice can be recognized, possibly because we are simply open at that moment to hearing with our hearts and spirits.

There are, of course, many voices clamouring for our attention, and perhaps many different kinds of lights that distract us. Discerning God's voice and "seeing the light" can be a challenging task for us. I am reminded of my time as a student chaplain in the Vanier Centre for Women, where one of the inmates asked to speak with me because she was hearing a voice that she thought might be God's. Although I know I have shared this story before, I think it is an important reminder to us that there are times when we truly do need to think carefully about what we are hearing and what we give our time and attention to, and what we think we are actually following. Through our conversation, this woman and I determined that the voice of God would be one of love, calling us to action that would bring change through sharing hope, compassion, love and justice.

Dropping our familiar nets of security and comfort and routine to follow the voice of God into the new and into the transformative is perhaps something you have already experienced. Changes in work, or priorities, or focus can come to us at many points in our lives. As this community of faith, as Applewood United Church, I believe it is time for us to listen once again for God's voice with intention, and be ready to drop some of our nets so that we can truly engage in what new 'thing' God has waiting for us. As we

follow that voice – follow the way of healing, and hope, and compassion and truth that Jesus has shown for us, we may truly “see the light” to God’s path for this community.

Jesus is the One we follow, the very Presence of God who walked and talked and taught, who called, and calls to us still. May we be open to recognizing that voice, and to answering with all that we have.
Amen