

Hybrid Worship for January 8th, 2023
Baptism of Jesus with Communion

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: “Come and Fill Our Hearts” MV 16

Come and fill our hearts with your peace,

you alone, O God, are holy.

Come and fill our hearts with your peace, alleluia!

Call to Worship and Opening Prayer

One: Together with all who follow Jesus,

All: we journey in mind and heart to the Jordan River.

One: Together with all who follow Jesus,

All: we celebrate the Spirit who descends like a dove.

One: As individuals and community who follow Jesus,

All: we recall our own Belovedness.

One: As the people of God in this place and time,
on computer screens or in pews,

**All: we are ready to worship the God of love,
who sent us the One we follow.**

One: Let's pray together:

**All: God of water, of Spirit, of love,
drench us with your grace once more.**

**Saturate us with your presence and your Spirit,
until we can do nothing but flood the world with
your compassion, and a passion for justice in your name.**

**We pray in the name of your own beloved and our
healer, teacher, liberator and redeemer, Jesus the Christ.**

Amen

Opening Hymn: “I Am the Light of the World” VU 87

'I am the light of the world!

You people come and follow me!'

If you follow and love you'll learn the mystery
of what you were meant to do and be.

When the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,
when the kings and the shepherds have found
their way home,
the work of Christmas is begun:

'I am the light of the world!
You people come and follow me!'
If you follow and love you'll learn the mystery
of what you were meant to do and be.

To find the lost and lonely one,
to heal the broken soul with love,
to feed the hungry children with warmth
and good food,
to feel the earth below, the sky above!

'I am the light of the world!
You people come and follow me!'
If you follow and love you'll learn the mystery
of what you were meant to do and be.

To free the prisoner from all chains,
to make the powerful care,
to rebuild the nations with strength of good will,
to see God's children everywhere!

'I am the light of the world!
You people come and follow me!'
If you follow and love you'll learn the mystery
of what you were meant to do and be.

To bring hope to every task you do,
to dance at a baby's new birth,
to make music in an old person's heart,
and sing to the colours of the earth!

'I am the light of the world!
You people come and follow me!'

If you follow and love you'll learn the mystery
of what you were meant to do and be.

Prayer for Reflection and Revelation: A Ceremony of Asperges/ Renewal of Baptism

One: God calls us to the water to find a new way:
a new grace,
a new hope,
a new faith,
a new life.

All: God calls, we come.

One: Come to the waters and let go of the worn out:
worn our habits,
worn out pains,
worn out angers,
worn out burdens.

All: God calls, we come.

One: God blesses the water and it
heals us,
cleans us,
renews us,
refreshes us.

All: God blesses; we praise.

One: Come to the water and receive
blessing,
freedom,
mercy,
love.

All: God blesses; we praise.

One: Gracious God, your Spirit moved over the waters of chaos to bring forth
cosmos. Your Spirit moves in the waters of the womb to bring forth life.
Your Spirit rains and pours and floods in rivers and oceans and veins;
cleansing, purifying, anointing all creation for your service. Bless this
water with your presence. Amen

One: God has created you and named you Beloved. Live for God.

Response: Amen

Renewal of Baptism from "Prayers for all Seasons, Year A" used with permission.

Sung Response: "Water Flowing from the Mountains" MV87

Water flowing from the mountains.
Water flowing o'er the earth.

Water comes to us, so precious.
Living waters give us birth.

Drink deep this source of life.
Drink deep and know.
For living waters sings, and living water brings
the love that makes our spirits grow.

Water rushing down the rivers.
Water rushing to the sea.
Water comes to us, so precious.
Living water makes us free.

Drink deep this source of life.
Drink deep and know.
For living waters sings, and living water brings
the love that makes our spirits grow.

Water springing from the dry place.
Water springing in the sun.
Water comes to us, so precious.
Living water for each one.

Drink deep this source of life.
Drink deep and know.
For living waters sings, and living water brings
the love that makes our spirits grow.

Scripture Readings:

Isaiah 42:1–9

The Servant, a Light to the Nations
Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the nations.
He will not cry or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;
a bruised reed he will not break,
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice.
He will not grow faint or be crushed
until he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

Thus says God, the Lord,
who created the heavens and stretched them out,
who spread out the earth and what comes from it,
who gives breath to the people upon it
and spirit to those who walk in it:
I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness,
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;
I have given you as a covenant to the people,
a light to the nations,
to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.
I am the Lord, that is my name;
my glory I give to no other,
nor my praise to idols.
See, the former things have come to pass,
and new things I now declare;
before they spring forth,
I tell you of them.

Matthew 3:13–17

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?’ But Jesus answered him, ‘Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness.’ Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.’

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

All: Thanks be to God.

Choir: "River" MV3

Reflection: Drenched with the Spirit

Hymn: “Spirit of Life” VU 381

Spirit of Life, come unto me.

Sing in my heart all the stirrings of compassion.

Blow in the wind, rise in the sea;

move in the hand, giving life the shape of justice.

Roots hold me close; wings set me free;

Spirit of Life, come to me, come to me.

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: Receive all that we bring, O God,
gifts from grateful hands and hearts,
gifts that we pray will be a blessing to the world.
We pray in the name of your perfect gift, Jesus.
Amen**

Sacrament of Communion

One: God be with you.

All: And also with you.

One: Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them up to God.

One: Let us give thanks to God.

All: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

One: In a wild whisper
you spoke to chaos,
God of the waters of life,
and your Spirit raced forth,
playing tag with the Word,
mountains shook with thunder,
whales whispered in the oceans,
hawks floated lazily in the skies,
and kittens chased butterflies in fields.

Two: You created us from the dusty earth,
placing us in your garden on wonders
so we might delight in you, and in each other.
But we wandered away from you,
as sin and death took us by the hand,

teaching us to do all that is wrong.
Prophets came in every age
to testify about your hopes,
but we did not want to be
set free from our captivity.
So Jesus was sent, your future
coming over the horizon to us
to be baptized as your Beloved.
With those who bend but do not break,
with those who long to do what is right,
we lift our thanksgiving songs to you:

All (sung): MV 203

**O holy, holy, holy God, O God of time and space,
All earth and sea and sky above
bear witness to your grace.
Hosanna in the highest heav'n, creation sings your praise.
And blessed is the one who comes
and bears your name always.**

One: We glorify your name, Holy God,
and bless Jesus, your Child, our Savior.
Lord of all,
he came, not with shock and awe,
but with gentleness and patience.
Light of the world,
he came to fan the spark of justice
until it ignites throughout the world.

Two: Bearer of our sins,
he died on the cross,
snared in death's embrace
until the tomb opened up
and the Spirit came down,
lifting him up, as you proclaimed,
'here is my Son, the Resurrected One.'

As we remember our baptism
into the life and death of Jesus,
we speak of our faith as a mystery:

All: Christ came, to show us God's love;

**Christ was baptized, inviting us into the waters of life;
Christ died, to fulfill all righteousness;
Christ was raised, to set us free from death;
Christ will come to take us by the hand
and never let go.**

One: You spread the Table before us,
the Spirit anointing the bread and the cup
and those gathered in this place
of water and of the Word.
We take the broken bread,
it's healing grace strengthening us
to open eyes blinded by hate,
to free all imprisoned by fear,
to feed those who hunger for justice.

Two: We share the Cup of the New Covenant,
it's tender love nourishing us
to offer balm to the hurting,
to bring light to those who lose their way,
to not give up on the oppressed
until justice is served.

One: Then, when all righteousness is fulfilled
and we are gathered with our siblings
from all times and from every place,
we will join our voices to give you the glory,
God in Community, Holy in One.

Two: At this time, we also remember all those
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 live with fear, oppression, or hunger . . .
all whom the world counts as last and least
We pray for your church and its varied ministries . . .
for the earth, and the fragile web of life we share . . .
for our families and friends

The Lord's Prayer (sung) VU 960

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come,
they 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 them that trespass against us.
And lead us not in to temptation,
but deliver us from evil:
for thine is the kingdom and the power and glory,
forever and ever. Amen.

Remembering, Breaking the Bread and Filling the Cup

(If you are worshipping in the sanctuary, you may come forward to receive the elements. If you prefer to stay seated, they will be brought to you. If you are participating on ZOOM, this would be the time to take bread and juice, and if with another you could serve each other with the words "Jesus Christ the bread of life" and "Jesus Christ the true vine.")

Prayer after communion

One: Baptized, let us go to live in faith.

**All: We will bring healing to the broken
and offer God's joy to those who grieve.**

Two: Baptized, let us go to serve.

**All: At the side of Jesus, we will serve the hungry,
we will give shelter to the homeless.**

One: Baptized, let us go to be a voice.

**All: We will echo the Spirit of calling for peace,
we will never stop speaking against injustice.**

Two: Baptized, let us go to do what is right.

**All: Finding you, God in Community, Holy in One,
waiting for us to join you beside all your Beloved children.**

Our communion liturgy ©Thom M. Shuman and published at <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.ca/>.

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Closing Hymn: "I Was There to Hear Your Borne Cry" VU 644

I was there to hear your borne cry,
I'll be there when you are old.
I rejoiced the day you were baptized,
to see your life unfold.

I was there when you were but a child,
with a faith to suit you well;
in a blaze of light you wandered off

to find where demons dwell.

When you heard the wonder of the word,
I was there to cheer you on;
you were raised to praise the living Lord,
to whom you now belong.

If you find someone to share your time
and you join your hearts as one,
I'll be there to make your verses rhyme
from dusk till rising sun.

In the middle ages of your life,
not too old, no longer young.
I'll be there to guide you through the night,
complete what I've begun.

When the evening gently closes in
and you shut your weary eyes,
I'll be there as I have always been
with just one more surprise.

I was there to hear your bawling cry,
I'll be there when you are old.
I rejoiced the day you were baptized,
to see your life unfold.

Commissioning /Blessing

Sung Amen VU967

Rev. Joanne's Reflection

It was just a short week ago that we gathered and remembered the wise ones who visited Jesus when he was a tiny child, perhaps even still a baby. Some of us may still have Christmas decorations or cards adorning our homes that represent Jesus as that innocent babe with only a feeding trough for a resting place. So quickly, as we read from Matthew's gospel this year, we have jumped some thirty years into the future, to the time when Jesus' ministry is about to begin.

Perhaps remembering Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River at a time when we are still thinking of him as an infant makes that leap in time easier for those of us whose experience of baptism is mostly includes infants and children. Often, we regard baptism as a sacrament of initiation into the church, and a representation of the forgiveness of our sins. For those of us who are members of this United Church of

Canada, baptism is the only route to full membership, and something we all have as a common experience at whatever age it may have occurred.

Jesus' baptism by John is something quite different. Jesus, we understand in our beliefs, did not need to be forgiven of sins, did not need to repent. The event is described in various ways in all four of the gospels, and actually, his baptism was regarded as an embarrassment by the early church – why would God's Own need to submit to this practice? Why would he allow himself to be baptized by one who was supposedly 'beneath' him in some way? We hear John's objections in this passage – and it is just this objection, and the church's discomfort, which leads scholars to believe that Jesus' baptism was an actual historical event. It is so unusual, so startling, that there would be more reasons to hide it than celebrate it.

It is startling because the One we have come to know as God's beloved, filled with the Spirit and proclaimed as God's son, does a very human thing. He walked into the river, perhaps held by John who whispered his concerns in Jesus' ear as they stood together – their robes soaking up the water, the current pulling at their legs. He reassures John that it is alright to go ahead, that this is the right time and place for Jesus to affirm his ongoing relationship with God. He is immersed – now completely drenched, clothing heavy, hair dripping – just as we would be after a dunking. We all know what it feels like to be wet, whether from rain, or showering, or swimming, or even baptism.

In his baptism, Jesus wades not only into the Jordan River, but also into the midst of the people – all people who seek to find relationship with God, all people who seek to be forgiven or need forgiveness, all people who are wounded and seeking healing, all those who are curious, or searching, or fragile. In those waters we find common ground with the Divine in Jesus, with his humanity.

Of course the story does not end with Jesus leaving the water dripping with God's grace and forgiveness, but with the declaration of his identity and with the appearance of the Spirit – hovering over Jesus just as the Spirit hovered over the waters of creation in our Genesis stories. It signals that a new thing has begun, just as Jesus ministry to the people is about to begin. He leaves the Jordan not only wet, but drenched with the Spirit.

That same Spirit can soak into our lives when we allow it, when we open ourselves to change and transformation, when we have faith that God is indeed present in what we do. In our church sacraments, baptism and communion, we call on God's Spirit to be present, to transform water and bread and juice into something bigger than we can imagine, something that has been touched by the Divine. We ask and believe that these essential and ordinary elements be changed, and in turn they can change us.

I don't think that Jesus knew what he would experience in his baptism. I believe he was called to the water, called to John's baptism, and was open to what God would do in that moment. We can be open, too, to what God may do in our lives when we wade into the rivers of life and take a chance on the moment. Perhaps we can immerse ourselves in our sacrament of communion or in community, dive into opportunities to help each other, or help a stranger, and see what new thing God may reveal to us.

Be ready to be drenched – to feel both the discomfort of the weight of what God calls us to do, but the refreshment that can come when the Spirit lifts us. Be ready to be immersed in God's love, so that we can be transformed and transforming people. Amen