

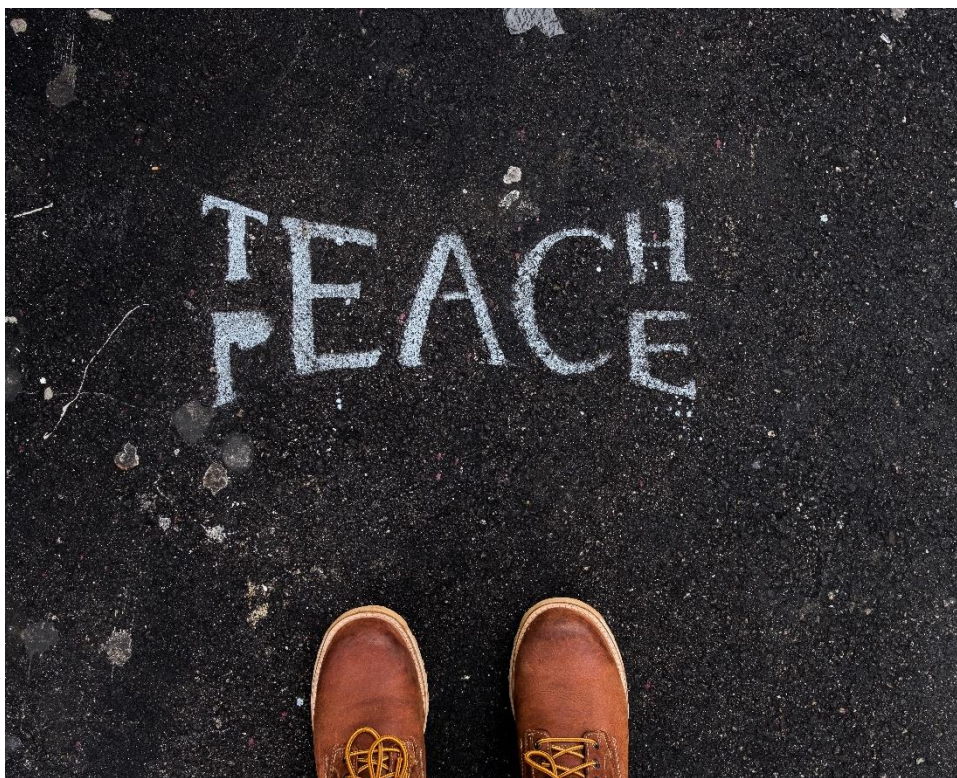


An Affirming Congregation of The United Church of Canada

2023 December 10

White Gift Sunday

Advent 2



Welcome and Inclusion

We open our hearts and our church family to all people in our community regardless of economic circumstances, sexual orientation, age, gender identity, differing abilities, or ethnicity. Many people's lives continue to be devastated by hatred, prejudice, and inequality, therefore we stand with those who are adversely affected by injustice, alienation and oppression.

Welcome to Robertson-Wesley

Please know that in the eyes of God you already belong here and you are welcome to participate in any of the activities of the congregation.

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is Treaty 6 territory, a traditional meeting ground for Indigenous peoples. We acknowledge the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 4, who are of mixed Indigenous & European heritage.

ACCESSIBILITY

There is an elevator located inside the building with the glass door entrance. Access ramps can be found: inside leading from the lobby to the sanctuary and outside at the rear of the building, leading from the parking lot. There are accessible washrooms on each floor located near the elevator.



For hearing assistance download the Listen Everywhere app on your cell phone and connect to the R-W network by scanning this QR code. Please bring your own headphones to listen on. Classic hearing assists headsets are still available from the ushers.

Large print worship bulletins, and hymn books are available from the ushers.

Service animals are welcome, except where food is prepared.

We commit to make R-W a comfortable space for people with cognitive impairment. If you require accommodations related to cognitive functioning please contact the office.

BABY/ CHILDREN'S AMENITIES

People can breastfeed anywhere in the building, should you want more privacy there is designated nursing space in the Millson room, located by the grand piano. Baby changing tables are installed in all washrooms. If you wish to use it, a children's activity centre is set up in the Chapel. There are also activity books available for children. Please ask the usher.

INFORMATION

The ushers located at the entrances are here to help should you have any questions. More information about the church and church activities can be found in the pamphlet racks outside Memorial Hall.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Please do not leave valuables unattended anywhere in the church.



10209 123 St, Edmonton T5N 1N3 780-482-1587
mail@rwuc.org www.rwuc.org

Friends in Christ

Announcements at 10:15 AM

Prelude: *What Is This Lovely Fragrance?* Trad. French Carol arr. by Henry Kihlken
Dr. Allan Bevan, organ

Embracing Our Spirit

Introit: *Each Child*, Eleanor Daley

Cantillon Children's Choir

Call to Worship:

Christ is at home in your heart...
Place your hand over your heart...
Rest in the Christ light of peace beckoning
And breathe...breathe...breathe...
(a time of quiet)
Let us now worship God.¹

Hymn: *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus*

Voices United 2

**Come, thou long-expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free:
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.**

**Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art,
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.**

**Born thy people to deliver;
born a child and yet a king,
born to reign in us forever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.**

**By thine own eternal Spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all-sufficient merit,
raise us to thy glorious throne.**

Opening Prayer:

Gentle God, whose love never withers, help us to listen and serve this world with everything we are. When a voice says, "Cry out!" and we ask, "What shall we cry?" help us to stand on the mountain and find comfort as one people.

We find refuge today in your power and in your peace, as we come together in your Holy name. Amen.

¹ Written by Bev Sumbler, *Gathering*, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany, 2018/19, page 30. Used with permission.

Advent Candle Lighting:

Light the candle of hope and peace

Sung response: *Hope Is A Star*

Voices United 7 vs.1-2

**Hope is a star that shines in the night,
leading us on till the morning is bright.**

When God is a child there's joy in our song.

**The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,
and none shall be afraid.**

**Peace is a ribbon that circles the earth,
giving a promise of safety and worth.**

When God is a child there's joy in our song.

**The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,
and none shall be afraid.**

God's Holy Word

Prayer of Illumination:

In this Advent-Christmas time of giving, we ask for the gift of understanding your word. May it become in us a trust that overwhelms all doubt and fear. In Jesus' name. **Amen.**²

Anthem: *Sussex Carol*, arr. by Bob Chilcott

Cantilon Children's Choir

Scripture:

Madison and Connor Foff

Isaiah 40:1-11 • Comfort, O comfort my people!

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever. Get you up a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" See the Lord God comes with might and rules with a strong arm! You bring your reward with you, and your reparation comes before you. Like a shepherd you feed your flock, gathering the lambs and holding them close, and leading mother ewes with gentleness.

² Written by Elizabeth Stewart, **Gathering**, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany 2023/2024, p. 31. Used with permission.

May we hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.
Thanks be to God.

Reflection: *Peace found in service*

Rev. Karen Bridges

Hymn: *There's a Voice in the Wilderness*

Voices United 18

**There's a voice in the wilderness crying,
a call from the ways untrod:
prepare in the desert a highway,
a highway for our God!
The valleys shall be exalted,
the lofty hills brought low;
make straight all the crooked places,
where God, our God, may go!**

**O Zion, that bringest good tidings,
get thee up to the heights and sing!
Proclaim to a desolate people
the coming of their King.
Like the flowers of the field they perish,
like grass our works decay,
the power and pomp of nations
shall pass, like a dream, away.**

**But the word of our God endureth,
whose arm is strong;
God stands in the midst of nations,
and soon will right the wrong.
God shall feed the flock like a shepherd,
the lambs so gently hold;
to pastures of peace will lead them,
and bring them safe to fold.**

**There's a voice in the wilderness crying,
a call from the ways untrod:
prepare in the desert a highway,
a highway for our God!
The valleys shall be exalted,
the lofty hills brought low;
make straight all the crooked places,
where God, our, God may go!**

Pageant: *'Twas Before the First Christmas*, adapted by Ilona Bevan Kids' Church

Grateful Response

Pastoral Prayers

Rev. Karen Bridges

Lord's Prayer:

Voices United p. 916 A Paraphrase

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,

Source of all that is and that shall be.

Parent of us all,

Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!

The way of your justice be followed by peoples of the world!

Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!

Your commonwealth of peace and freedom

sustain our hope and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.

In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.

In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.

From trials too great to endure, spare us.

From the grip of all that is evil, free us.

For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,

Now and forever. Amen.

Bell Anthem: *Good King Wenceslas*, trad. Bohemian Carol

Kids' Church

Offering:

Your donations today support R-W Church programs and operations, as well as outreach projects and programs in the city and around the world. You can donate by e-transfer to pay@rwuc.org, cheque, debit/credit by speaking to an usher, pre-authorized remittance, or PayPal by scanning the QR code. Tax receipts are issued at the end of the year for donations over \$20 if your name and address are provided.



Offertory: *Hail to God's Own Anointed*

Voices United 30 vs. 2

Christ comes with justice surely to those who suffer wrong,

to help the poor and needy, and bid the weak be strong,

to give them songs for sighing, their darkness turn to light,

whose souls, condemned and dying, are precious in his sight.

Prayer of Gratitude:

God of love, today we offer our gifts, knowing that you bless each and every one. Today we offer ourselves, knowing that you bless each and each minute and each hour we share. In gratitude, we offer these gifts; with thanksgiving, we welcome your blessing. **Amen.**³

³ Written by **Heather McClure, Gathering**, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany, 2023-24, page 32. Used with permission.

**Jesus came bringing us hope,
Jesus came bringing us hope,
Jesus came bringing us hope,
hallelujah forever more!**

**Jesus came bringing us peace,
Jesus came bringing us peace,
Jesus came bringing us peace,
hallelujah forever more!**

**Jesus came bringing us love,
Jesus came bringing us love,
Jesus came bringing us love
hallelujah forever more!**

**Jesus came bringing us joy,
Jesus came bringing us joy,
Jesus came bringing us joy,
hallelujah forever more!**

Commissioning:

May the candle of peace burn brightly in our hearts, preparing the way for the Christ child. May we be the signs of peace in our world, as we prepare during this season of Advent.

And may we always know that we never go alone, for God our Creator, Jesus our Brother, and the Holy Spirit our Sustainer are our constant companions. Amen.⁴

Sung Benediction:

More Voices 222

**May the peace of God be your peace.
May the love of God be the love you show.
May the joy of God be the joy you know,
and may the world that God would see
be found in you.**

Postlude: *Good Christian Friends, Rejoice*, by John Carter Dr. Allan Bevan, organ

Questions for Reflection:

What do you like to do for others to show them that you care and love them?

What do others do in your life that make you feel cared for and loved?

⁴ Written by Wanda Winfield, **Gathering**, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany, 2018/2019, page 35. Used with permission.

R-W Report

Next Sunday

Sunday, Dec 17, 2023

Advent 3

Children & Youth: Children begin in the sanctuary, then go to Kids' Church. Youth meet in the youth room at the beginning of the service.

Ezra 1:1-4; 3:1-4, 10-13 • Return from exile and rebuild the temple.

Sermon: Shared Worship, Shared Celebration, Shared Grief

Unexpectedly, miraculously, Persian King Darius takes pity on the Israelites who are captive in Babylon, a newly acquired part of his empire. Central to his setting them free is his direction, God's direction, that they return to Jerusalem to resume worship in the Temple. Within the year, the Israelites are indeed gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate a holy day. Although the Babylonians had burned the Temple to the ground, a new altar was built on the remnants of the old one so that worship could be resumed, particularly the sacrifices prescribed in the sacred law. Part of this worship was the sound of priestly singing accompanied by trumpets and cymbals as in the time of King David. The sound of this liturgical music and the scent of sacrifices being made move the people to both shouts joy and weeping.

When has liturgy moved you to a feeling of great joy? When has it moved you to a feeling of deep sorrow? How was each important and meaningful?

Music: Dr. Allan Bevan, organist; Robertson-Wesley Choir

WEEK AT A GLANCE

Sun Dec 10	Sunday Worship - Sanctuary & Online	10:30 am
	Fellowship - Memorial Hall	11:45 am
	Membership Classes - Library	12:30 pm
	Lessons & Carols - Sanctuary	4:00 pm
Mon Dec 11	Spirited Art Studio - Art Studio	7:00 pm
Tues Dec 12	Scripture Reflections - Club Room & Zoom	12:00 pm
	UCW - Memorial Hall	1:30 pm
Wed Dec 13	Spirited Art Studio - Art Studio	1:30 pm
	R-W Choir Rehearsal - Sanctuary/Lower Hall	7:30 pm
Thurs Dec 14	Not Falling for You - Memorial Hall	10:00 am
	Men's Group Meeting - Away	10:00 am
	Nova Bells - Lower Hall	5:15 pm
	R-W Ringers - Lower Hall	6:45 pm

ON THE HORIZON

Sun Dec 17	Sunday Worship - Sanctuary & Online	10:30 am
	Youth Discussion - Youth Room	10:30 am
	Kids' Church - Air Room	10:45 am
	Fellowship & Bake Sale - Memorial Hall	11:45 am
	Wild Church - Away	1:00 pm

	Blue Christmas - Sanctuary	7:00 pm
Mon Dec 18	Spirited Art Studio - Art Studio	7:00 pm
Tues Dec 19	Scripture Reflections - Club Room & Zoom	12:00 pm
	R-W Board Meeting - Room 11	7:00 pm
Wed Dec 20	Spirited Art Studio - Art Studio	1:30 pm
	Labyrinth Walk - Memorial Hall	6:00 pm
	R-W Choir Rehearsal - Sanctuary/Lower Hall	7:30 pm

Volunteer Opportunities

COMMUNITY DINNER KEY LEADERSHIP VOLUNTEERS

R-W's Community Dinners are hugely successful. It is a fulfilling act of service and connection. We welcome one time volunteers and regulars with open arms on a sign up basis. At this time what we require are 2-3 people able to commit to join our leadership group. Attending the dinner once per month for approximately 5 hours and occasional email communication. Tasks include kitchen work, volunteer liaison and supporting tasks needed on the day of the dinner.

COMMUNION SERVER VOLUNTEERS

Sunday, **December 24**, we will celebrate communion, sharing Jesus' meal. All people, all ages, are welcome to serve Communion. If this is your first time, know that someone will assist you in learning how to serve Communion. You only need to come a little earlier. If you are able to serve, sign up on the tablet in the outer office, or visit rwuc.org/volunteer.

R-W News & Notes

A SERVICE OF LESSONS & CAROLS

Today at 4:00 pm. This gentle candlelight service is a classic, with a series of scripture readings that take us through the story of God's promise, Israel's longing and waiting, and the fulfilment of the promise in the birth of Christ. Listen to beautiful Christmas music presented by Robertson-Wesley's music groups and guest instrumentalists, and sing some of your favourite Christmas carols. In person and online.

WHITE GIFT SUNDAY

Today is White Gift Sunday, we will be collecting items for the Bissell Centre during worship today. There is still time to donate online through the Bissell Centres amazon wishlist, more details at <https://bissellcentre.org/festive-giveaway>. Alternatively, if you would like to donate financially to the Bissell Centre please do so on their website at <https://bissellcentre.org/helpy-holidays> or write a cheque to the Bissell Centre and mail it to them at 10527 96 st Edmonton, AB T5H 2H6.

BLUE CHRISTMAS OF HEALING

December 17 at 7:00 pm. Christmas is a holy time that is not always happy. It brings up so many memories that heighten our feelings of grief or sadness, pain or loneliness. This is a service of quiet reflection, remembrance and peace. We hope that this service will bring a sense of peace in this sacred season with quiet music, scripture, silence and candle light. Everyone is welcome.

WILD CHURCH

There are two Wild Church gatherings to look forward to this December! Firstly, as the year's longest night approaches, join the regularly scheduled Wild Church worship on **Dec 17** at 1pm to partake in a Testimony to the Light at the Winter Solstice. Our second gathering will be on the winter solstice itself (**Dec 21**) at 7pm; during this unstructured worship, we invite you, if you wish, to bring/share a reading/story on any theme related to the solstice. For both gatherings, we will meet at the Emily Murphy Park Fire Circle at Picnic Site #3. To keep warm, a fire and hot drinks will be provided (bring a mug). Remember to dress for the weather, and bring along friends of any age (or species)! For questions or transportation arrangements, get in touch by email (wildchurch@rwuc.org), website (wildchurchyeg.org), or Instagram ([@wildchurchyeg](https://www.instagram.com/wildchurchyeg)). Cancelled below -15°C with windchill.

MEN'S GROUP

The 'Annual Men's Group Christmas December Brunch Meeting' will be held 10:00 am, on December 14th, at Albert's Family Restaurant (10604 124th Street).

JOURNEY THROUGH THE LABYRINTH

How will you prepare for Christmas this year? Come for a reflective walk during Advent. The Labyrinth will be open in Memorial Hall Wednesday **December 20** from 6:30-8:00 pm.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

This year there will be four services on Christmas Eve, Sunday, **December 24**. All services will be in person and livestreamed online.

- 10:30 am Advent 4 & Communion: Sunday Worship with Communion
- 4:00 pm Family Celebration: An interactive celebration
- 7:00 pm Christmas with a Twist: A creative candlelit experience with a brass quartet
- 10:00 pm Choral Candlelight: The birth of Jesus with songs of joy for the Holy night with the Robertson-Wesley Choir.

BETWEEN THE AISLES

Hot off the presses, a new issue of *Between the Aisles* featuring musings, poetry, recipes, plus church activity listings for Advent and Christmas, grab your copy today from the racks near the entrances.

In the Community

NO ROOM IN THE INN

For nearly 25 years, *No Room In the Inn* has led a successful cross-denominational holiday campaign to raise money for housing those in need. For 2023, *A Safe Place* has been selected as the recipient organization. Since 1982, *A Safe Place* has been empowering women by providing comprehensive services, including: advocacy, education, court support, counselling, supported referrals, Community Outreach, New Beginnings, and more. The roof of *A Safe Place's* current facility, which is used to both serve clients escaping intimate violence and run the organization, is in need of immediate repairs – the cost of which is significant. This partnership with *No Room in the Inn* quite literally serves to put a roof over their heads. To donate you can make a cheque payable to R-W, writing “No Room In the Inn” in the memo line. All proceeds will be collected and forwarded to *A Safe Place*. For more information about NRII, contact Rev. Larry Wright 780-667-3225 or email nrii.edm@gmail.com

Worship Notes

Thank you to Cantilon Children's Choir, Elaine Myher (Director) and Heather Johnson (Accompanist) for their gift of music today. We want to thank the Koinonia people for delivering the White Gifts to the Bissell Centre today. Also a big thank you to the leaders of the Kids' Church and Youth Discussion, Susan Cameron, Jay Ferguson, and Vicky Mah, who have helped to put together the service today with the direction of Ilona Bevan and David Gurnett and working with the children over the past month.

The season of Advent marks the beginning of the Christian Liturgical Year. This is a time of preparation, waiting, expectation and longing as we await the coming of Christ in the form of a baby. In this season the colour blue symbolizes new life and new beginnings. You will notice that the paraments (the cloth on the pulpit and the communion table are blue). You will also notice that there are three blue candles, a pink candle and a white candle in the Advent Wreath. Each Sunday we light a candle to help us mark the next step on the journey to Bethlehem. Each candle represents a different theme: hope, peace, joy and love. The white candle is lit at Christmas in honour of Jesus, (the pink candle is joy).

Cover Image

The cover image is a photo by Daniel Salcius on Unsplash.

Minister of Faith Development and Intergenerational Ministry: Vacant

Minister of Social Justice and Outreach: Vacant

Lead Minister of Congregation and Community Development: Rev. Karen Bridges

Bridging Minister: Rev. Dirk Jessen

Music Director: Dr. Allan Bevan

Office Administrator: Elyse Munro
Facilities Manager: Brad Campbell
Financial Manager: Garth van Herwaarden

Welcome to Robertson-Wesley

If you would like you can fill out this page, tear it off, and place it in the offering plates at the exits. This form is also available to fill out online at rwuc.org/infocard

Today's Date: _____

Contact Information:

Name: _____

Preferred gender pronouns: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone #: _____

Email: _____

I would like to subscribe to the email newsletter

Yes No

I am new in the community

I am a visitor

I am interested in speaking with a minister

I am considering making this my church

Please put in the offering plate. Thank you

