



An Affirming Congregation of The United Church of Canada

2023 December 24

Sacrament of Communion

Advent 4



Welcome and Inclusion

We open our hearts and our church family to all people in our community regardless of differing abilities, ethnicity, economic circumstances, sexual orientation, age, or gender identity. 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: *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly*, Trad. Polish Carol arr. by Christopher Ruck
J. S., violin; Dr. Allan Bevan, organ

Embracing Our Spirit

Call to Worship:

We are a people open to anticipation and ready for a celebration.

Behold, the birth of the Christ child is expected.

We are a congregation that remembers the message of hope, peace, joy, and love that God shared with us all.

Behold, the birth of the Christ child is near.

We are a community inspired to live lives of service and of wholeness.

Behold, the birth of the Christ child will change who we are

In this time of worship and beyond.

Let us worship.¹

Hymn: *People, Look East*

Voices United 9

**People, look east. The time is near
of the crowning of the year.**

**Make your house fair as you are able,
trim the hearth and set the table.**

People look east: Love the guest is on the way.

**Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,
one more seed is planted there:
give up your strength the seed to nourish,
that in course the flower may flourish.**

People, look east: Love the rose is on the way.

**Birds, though you long have ceased to build,
guard the nest that must be filled;
even the hour when wings are frozen
God for fledging time has chosen.**

People, look east: Love the bird is on the way.

**Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim
one more light the bowl shall brim,
shining beyond the frosty weather,
bright as sun and moon together.**

People, look east: Love the star is on the way.

**Angels, announce with shouts of mirth
Christ who brings new life to earth.
Set every peak and valley humming
with the word, the Lord is coming.**

People, look east: Love the Lord is on the way.

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

Advent Candle Lighting:

Light the candle of hope, peace, joy and love

Sung response: *Hope Is A Star*

Voices United 7

**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.**

**Joy is a song that welcomes the dawn,
telling the world that the Saviour is born.
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.**

**Love is a flame that burns in our heart,
Jesus has come and will never depart.
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:

As we encounter the scriptures this Advent, open our hearts and minds to your presence. Give us patience in this time of waiting so that we will know your presence each step of the way. **Amen.**²

Scripture:

Yvonne Appah

Luke 1:5-25, 57-80 • Zechariah's Song.

In the days of King Herod of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Adijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years. Once when he was serving as priest before God and his section was on duty, he was chosen by lot,

² Written by Beth W.E. Johnston, **Gathering**, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany 2012/2013, p. 29. Used with permission.

according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and offer incense. Now at the time of the incense offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified; and fear overwhelmed him. But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. Her neighbours and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. But his mother said, “No; he is to be called John.” They said to her, “None of your relatives has this name.” Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, “His name is John.” And all of them were amazed. Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. Fear came over all their neighbours, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. All who heard them pondered them and said, “What then will this child become?” For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him. Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favourably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty saviour for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from old that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness, and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel.

May we hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

Thanks be to God.

Anthem: *The Little Road to Bethlehem*, by Michael Head Mireille Rijavec, soloist

Sermon: Gifts Given

Rev. Karen Bridges

O ancient love, processing through the ages;
O hidden love, revealed in human form;
O promised love, the dream of seers and sages:
O living Love, within our hearts be born,
O living Love, within our hearts be borne.

O homeless love, that dwells among the stranger;
O lowly love, that knows the mighty's scorn;
O hungry love, that lay within a manger:
O living Love, within our hearts be born,
O living Love, within our hearts be borne.

O gentle love, caressing those in sorrow;
O tender love, that comforts those forlorn;
O hopeful love, that promises tomorrow:
O living Love, within our hearts be born,
O living Love, within our hearts be borne.

O suffering love, that bears our human weakness;
O boundless love, that rises with the morn;
O mighty love, concealed in infant meekness:
O living Love, within our hearts be born,
O living Love, within our hearts be borne.

Grateful Response

A Gratitude Minute

Sylvia Duffus

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 justice, we are blessed with mercy upon mercy. Our gratitude overflows! We cannot help but offer you praise. You lavish us with never-ending love. May our offerings be blessed and our hearts be abundant with joy. Thanks be to you, Gracious God. **Amen.**³

³ Written by Laura Turnbull, **Gathering**, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany, 2020/21, page 33. Used with permission.

Sacrament of Holy Communion

All who worship with us today, regardless of age or church membership, are invited and welcome to partake in this sacrament. For people who worship online, please prepare whatever is available in your house, a cracker, bread, muffin, and juice, wine, or water. People in the sanctuary will be offered bread and grape juice. There is a gluten free option available.

All journeys begin with careful preparation: what to take, what to leave behind, thoughts of who we will meet along the way and what we will see. Our journey today to the manger begins with careful preparations made on our behalf: bread and wine made ready so that we might have food that lasts as we venture out in faith once more, knowing where we want to go but not sure how we will get there. And so we come to the table: a place of welcome and hospitality for all. It is a table for those who are just beginning the journey, as well as for those well along its dusty pathways. It is for those who are clear about their direction, as well as for those who are putting one foot in front of the other, not sure where they are going. It is for those of great faith and those who struggle to have any at all. It's for each of us and for all of us together. And we are welcome here because we gather at Christ's invitation. So come to his table and set your sights on Bethlehem.⁴

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to God.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

We give you thanks, God of peace and promise. Through the words of your prophets and the faith of your followers you prepare the way of our redemption and bring hope to birth. And though we often grow weary of waiting, your signs call us to keep watch for that day when all things shall be made new. In assurance of this hope, we join with all the company of heaven and earth to give you praise:⁵

Holy, Holy, Holy:

Holy, holy, holy God,

Power of life and love!

Heaven and earth are full of your glory!

Hosanna through the ages!

Blest is the One who comes to bring your justice to earth!⁶

⁴ Written by Bob Root, **Gathering**, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany 2015/16, p. 63. Used with permission.

^{5,6,7,8,9} **Celebrate God's Presence**, 1O001, 28Z01, 14D009, 14Oa002, 28Z020

Remembering Jesus at Table:

As we gather at this table, we remember that on the night before he died, Jesus had supper with his friends. He took a loaf of bread, thanked you as we have thanked you, broke the bread, and gave it to them, saying: "Take, eat. This is my body, given for you. Each time you do this, remember me." Then, he took a cup, and after giving thanks, passed it to his friends, saying: "Drink. This cup is the promise of God. Each time you drink from this cup, remember me."⁷

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of our faith:

Memorial Acclamation:

We remember Jesus' death.

We proclaim Christ risen.

We await the full revelation of love incarnate.

Send, O God, your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts, that all who share in this bread and cup may be the body of Christ: light, life, and love in the world.⁸

Hymn: *May We But Wait*

More Voices 175

**May we but wait upon Love's word,
Knowing our prayer is heard. (2X)**

Remembering the Community:

Remember your church, O God, redeemed by Christ and strengthened by the Holy Spirit. Reveal its unity, guard its faith, preserve its peace, empower its witness.

Remember the people who are in the ministry of your church.

Remember all your people and those who seek your truth.

Remember all who have died in Christ, and those whose faith is known to you alone. Bring them into the place of eternal joy and peace, with all the saints. We praise you in union with them, and give you glory through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And so we join in the words that Jesus taught us to say when praying:

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.

**May we but wait upon Love's word,
Knowing our prayer is heard. (2X)**

Memorial Acclamation:

**We praise you, eternal God, through Christ your Word made flesh,
and in the power of your life-giving Spirit, now and forever. Amen.⁹**

Sharing the Bread and the Cup

Meditation: *Lo, How a Rose*, arr. by Johannes Brahms

Dr. Allan Bevan, organ

Prayer after Communion:

O Lord, we thank you for the nourishment you have given us in the person of Jesus Christ. To know him is an exciting experience. To accept him is a sacrificial experience. To love him is to love one another. To glimpse into the Bethlehem stable once again is to experience your constant presence in our lives.

Thank you for Jesus Christ. Thank you, O God, for the opportunity to serve you. Amen.¹⁰

Hymn: *Angels, from the Realms of Glory*

Voices United 36

**Angels, from the realms of glory,
wing your flight o'er all the earth;
ye, who sang creation's story,
now proclaim Messiah's birth:
come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the new-born King.**

**Shepherds in the field abiding,
watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing,
yonder shines the infant Light:
come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the new-born King.**

**Sages, leave your contemplations;
brighter visions beam afar;
seek the great desire of nations;
ye have seen his natal star:
come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the new-born King.**

**Saints before the altar bending,
watching long in hope and fear,
suddenly the Lord, descending,
in his temple shall appear:
come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the new-born King.**

¹⁰ Written by Jim Hendry, *Gathering*, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany 2010/11, p. 33. Used with permission.

Commissioning:

Go from here bursting with good news, filled with courage and hope. Go into the world with a daring and tender love to serve the Lord. May the grace and peace of God our Creator through our Saviour Jesus Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you this day and forevermore. Amen.¹¹

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: *He Is Born*, Trad. French Carol arr. by Christopher Ruck

J. S., violin; Dr. Allan Bevan, piano

Questions for Reflection:

What gifts will you offer to others and to God?
How are these gifts a sign of your love?

R-W Report

Next Sunday

Sunday, Dec 31, 2023

Christmas 1

Children & Youth: Children and youth are invited to worship with their families this Sunday.

Luke 2:22-40 • Jesus presented at the temple.

Sermon: Acting in faith & being present

What does it mean to be people of faith? What does it take to be a disciple? What will our faith require of us? The community of faith is all around us both within the temple and out in the world. We often encounter people who help us and lead us in ways that we never would have expected. We too are called to lead and support others. How will we be present to God’s call? How will our actions support God’s vision for this world?

Music: Dr. Allan Bevan, organist; Jacqueline Hernandez and Raydene Koch, soloists

WEEK AT A GLANCE

Sun Dec 24	Sunday Worship - Sanctuary & Online	10:30 am
	Family Celebration - Sanctuary & Online	4:00 pm
	Christmas with a Twist - Sanctuary & Online	7:00 pm
	Choral Candlelight - Sanctuary & Online	10:00 pm
	Fellowship - Memorial Hall	11:45 am
Dec 25-30	Church Closed	

¹¹ Written by Mary Parsons, **Gathering**, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany, 2021/2022, page 35. Used with permission.

ON THE HORIZON

Sun Dec 31	Sunday Worship - Sanctuary & Online	10:30 am
	Fellowship - Memorial Hall	11:45 am
Mon Jan 1	Church Closed	
Tues Jan 2	Scripture Reflections - Club Room & Zoom	12:00 pm

Volunteer Opportunities

COMMUNITY DINNER KEY LEADERSHIP VOLUNTEERS

R-W's Community Dinners are hugely successful. It's 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. If you are interested please contact Rhonda at Rljblack@shaw.ca.

R-W News & Notes

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES TONIGHT

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

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 and guest oboist Beth Levia

SPIRITED ART STUDIO

The Spirited Art Studio will take a Christmas break from **Dec 25 - Jan 4** and will resume **January 8**.

CHRISTMAS BREAK

The Church will be closed from **December 25** to **January 1**, with the exception of Sunday Worship on **December 31**.

BIRTHDAY WISHES

Norm Thomas, a minister at Robertson when we had four ministers in the late 1960's turned 95 years old on Sunday. If you want to wish him a happy birthday, his email address is thomas75@bell.net. His address is 1692 - Horseshoe Lake Rd. Minden, ON KOM 2K0. He's a lively conversationalist and will remember where you and your parents sat! I have his phone number if you need it. - Lorna Berlinguette.

THANK YOU

Thanks to everyone who supported last Sunday's bake sale. We raised \$612.75 for the R-W Anniversary Legacy Fund. Your support and generosity is truly appreciated – thank you! - Sylvia Post

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

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 3 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). Thank you to Mireille Rijavec, soloist and J.S., Violin for your gifts of music today.

Cover Image

The cover image is by Mable Amber from pixabay.

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