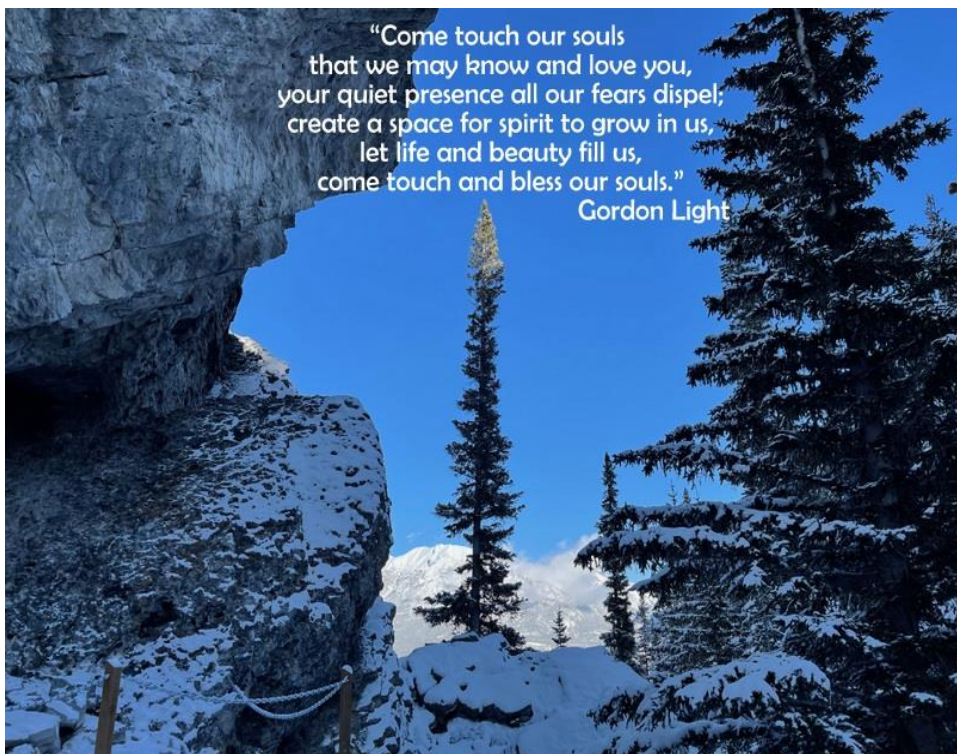




An Affirming Congregation of The United Church of Canada

2024 January 14

Epiphany 2



“Come touch our souls
that we may know and love you,
your quiet presence all our fears dispel;
create a space for spirit to grow in us,
let life and beauty fill us,
come touch and bless our souls.”

Gordon Light

Welcome and Inclusion

We open our hearts and our church family to all people in our community regardless of sexual orientation, age, gender identity, differing abilities, ethnicity, or economic circumstances. 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: *Fugue in C minor*, by W. F. Bach

Dr. Allan Bevan, organ

Embracing Our Spirit

Call to Worship:

When we come to this place, what are we looking for?

When we gather together, what do we hope to find?

Community? Caring? Christ?

When we come to this place, what are we bringing?

When we gather together, what do we hope to offer?

Our loves? Our lives? Ourselves?

Whatever you're looking for, whatever you bring, know this:

this is God's home, you are God's beloved, and you are welcome here.

Let us worship God.¹

Hymn: *Jesus, Teacher, Brave and Bold*

Voices United 605

Jesus, teacher, brave and bold,

let us serve you, young and old.

Let us faith-filled workers be,

all around, your wisdom see.

Let us play and dance and sing,

your goodness find in everything.

Jesus, friend, so strong and true,

show us good, brave work to do.

Show us those who need a friend,

all things broken help us mend.

Free our minds and stretch our care,

teach us to serve you everywhere.

Prayer of Transformation:

Blessed God, we cry out to you from the depths of our being, in this hour of need and concern. Though we believe and have committed our lives to you, we feel faint of heart and slow of action. Although we desire to live out our faith, challenges arise every day that seem to make living out faith a major obstacle. Even when we pray it feels like we are merely uttering empty words. When we go to worship it seems that nothing moves or inspires us. In this wilderness of disjointed reality make us whole and shore up our faith. Let our faith be that of the mustard seed, that it may grow into a tree of strong belief. Anoint our eyes, ears, and heart, that we are moved as we prepare to come to worship, that we might fully participate in our adoration of you. Please

¹ Written by Richard Bott, **Gathering**, Pentecost 1, 2018, page 33. Used with permission.

send your messengers that we might sense your presence in more profound ways, knowing that this lull in our faith will pass. We know that you have heard our prayers and our cries, and for this we give thanks. Bless the faith of our community that the lives we live become a beacon to all, signalling that you are real, that you love us, and that you are still in the healing business. **Amen.**²

Coming into God's Presence

Rev. Karen Bridges

God's Holy Word

Hymn: *God in the Darkness*

More Voices 17

**God in the darkness,
God beyond our knowing,
patient creator,
seed in secret growing,
rock of the living,
water ever flowing,
come and renew us.**

**God in the darkness,
God in all our grieving,
friend of our tears,
companion never leaving,
drawing us past
the limits of believing,
come and renew us.**

**God in the darkness,
God of holy dreaming,
giver of hope,
and pledge of our redeeming,
Spirit of truth,
our memory and meaning,
come and renew us.**

Prayer of Illumination:

As we prepare to receive, O God, your sacred story in word and in song, make us ready to grasp its true meaning. Then send us forth to live and to tell the story, in Jesus' name and for Jesus' sake. **Amen.**³

Scripture:

Mark 4:1-34 • Parables of sower and mustard seed.

Marilee Stephens

² Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, *The Undivided Soul; Helping Congregations Connect Body and Spirit*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), p. 205-206.

³ Written by Catherine Tovell, **Gathering**, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany, 2023/24, page 47. Used with permission.

Again Jesus began to teach beside the sea. Such a very large crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat on the sea and sat there, while the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. He began to teach them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundred fold." And he said, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!" When he was alone, those who were around him along with the twelve asked him about the parables. And he said to them, "To you have been given the secret of the kin-dom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables; in order that they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but no understand; so that they may not turn again and be forgiven." And Jesus said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. These are the ones on the path where the word is sown when they hear, Satan immediately goes, and takes away the word that is sown in them. And these are the ones sown on rocky ground; When they hear the word, they immediately receive it with joy. But then have no root, and endure only for a while; then, when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. And others are those sown among the thorns: These are the ones who hear the word, but the cares of the world, and the lure of wealth and the desire for others things comes in and choke the word, and it yields nothing. And these are the ones sown on the good soil: they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty and sixty and a hundred fold." Jesus said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under the bushel basket, or under the bed, and not on the lampstand? For there is nothing hidden, except to be disclosed; nor is anything secret, except it comes to light. Let anyone with ears to hear listen" And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you. For those who have, more will be given; and from those who have nothing; even what they have will be taken away." He also said, "The king-om of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle because the harvest has come. "Jesus also said, 'With what can we compare the kin-dom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.'" With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

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

Thanks be to God.

Trio: *Hymn of Promise*, by Natalie Sleeth

Claire Rolheiser, Jacqueline Hernandez, Raydene Koch, soloists

Sermon: Emerging Church Growth

Rev. Karen Bridges

Hymn: *Through the Heart of Every City*

Voices United 584

**Through the heart of every city
runs the flow of human need.
'Mid this glass and steel are pulsing
smouldering wick and bruised reed.
Has our church a word to offer,
some hope shining from our creed?
Walking through the concrete furrows
Jesus sows the Word as seed.**

**Through the passing generation,
in their spirit, flesh and bone.
Jesus Christ becomes incarnate:
holy hearts are living stone
building here a house of refuge,
as a temple, as a home.
So within the city's shadow
Jesus's planted Word has grown.**

**Through our worship and our witness,
Jesus, grant that we may still
hear the heart-beat of compassion
calling us to do your will.
You, our vine, and we, your branches,
deadened not by any chill,
working for that final city
where the harvest is fulfilled.**

Grateful Response

Pastoral Prayers

Rev. Dirk Jessen

Lord's Prayer:

Voices United p. 921

**Our Creator, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
thy kin-dom come,
thy 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 those that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kin-dom and the power and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

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: *Song of Thankfulness and Praise* **Voices United 101 v. 4**
**Grant us grace to see you, Lord, mirrored in your holy Word;
with you grace our lives endow, grace to imitate you now,
that we like to you may be at your great epiphany,
anthems be to you addressed, God in flesh made manifest.**

Prayer of Gratitude:

Grant that these gifts, O God, be used to extend and fulfill your ministry in this world, the same ministry to which we are called.
Amen.⁴

Hymn: *Come, You Thankful People, Come* **Voices United 516**

**Come, you thankful people, come,
raise the song of harvest-home!
All is safely gathered in,
safe before the storms begin;
God, our maker, does provide
for our needs to be supplied:
come to God's own temple, come,
raise the song of harvest-home!**

**All the world is God's own field,
harvests for God's praise to yield;
wheat and weeds together sown,
here for joy or sorrow grown;
first the blade, and then the ear,
then the full corn shall appear:
Harvest-giver, grant that we
wholesome grain and pure may be.**

**For our God, one day, shall come,
and shall take this harvest home,
from the field shall in that day
all offences purge away;
giving angels charge at last
in the fire the weeds to cast,
but the fruitful ears to store
in the garner evermore.**

⁴ Written by Donnie Morrison, **Gathering**, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany, 2023/24, page 48.
Used with permission.

**Even so, God, quickly come
to your final harvest-home!
Gather all your people in,
free from sorrow, free from sin;
there for ever purified,
in your presence to abide:
come, with all your angels, come,
raise the glorious harvest-home.**

Commissioning:

And now let us go forth boldly to do God's work in the world, propelled by the strength of the Spirit in us, by the strength of our faith, and by our great love for God, for creation, and for all God's people. And most of all, let us go forth overflowing with God's love and God's peace, bringing comfort, healing, and the peace of Christ to all we meet along our way. And as we go, may the wind of the Creator be at our back, may the risen Christ journey by our side, and may the Holy Spirit dance before us, leading us in paths of righteousness.

Amen.⁵

Postlude: "*Little*" *Prelude and Fugue in F*, by J. S. Bach Dr. Allan Bevan, organ

Questions for Reflection:

What changes can you make to help your soul be a more fertile ground for the Word of God?

Reflect on the various programs, events and aspects of the ministry at Robertson-Wesley and which ones are sitting in fertile ground yielding an abundance of fruit?

R-W Report

Next Sunday

Sunday, Jan 21, 2024

Epiphany 3

Communion and Gratitude Minute

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

Scripture: Mark 5:1-20 • Jesus heals a possessed Gentile

Sermon: Staying to Heal

The Gospel of Mark moves at a breakneck pace because of the urgency of what Jesus has to accomplish. A storm on the Sea of Galilee has deposited Jesus and his disciples in Gentile territory, a place faithful Jews like them would not have voluntarily ventured at that time. Not only that, but they didn't end up in a nice, quiet setting, but in a cemetery that was the uncontested domain of an apparent madman. Something within - a demon

⁵ Written by Robert Cosbey, **Gathering**, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany, 2023/24, page 48. Used with permission.

it turns out - compels the man to approach Jesus and beg him to go away. Instead, Jesus stays and dramatically heals the man. This one healing sends out ripples, even shockwaves.

Music: Dr. Allan Bevan, organist, Belle Canto Choir

WEEK AT A GLANCE

Sun Jan 14	Sunday Worship - Sanctuary & Online	10:30 am
	Youth Discussion - Youth Room	10:30 am
	Kids' Church - Air Room	10:45 am
	Fellowship - Memorial Hall	11:45 am
	Remit Conversation - Club Room	12:00 pm
Mon Jan 15	Spirited Art Studio - Art Studio	7:00 pm
Tues Jan 16	Scripture Reflections - Club Room & Zoom	12:00 pm
	R-W Board Meeting - Room 11 & Zoom	7:00 pm
Wed Jan 17	Spirited Art Studio - Art Studio	1:30 pm
	R-W Choir Rehearsal - Sanctuary/Lower Hall	7:30 pm
Thurs Jan 18	Not Falling for You - Memorial Hall	10:00 am
	Nova Bells - Lower Hall	5:15 pm
	R-W Ringers - Lower Hall	6:45 pm
Sat Jan 20	Church Games Night - Memorial Hall	7:00 pm

ON THE HORIZON

Sun Jan 21	Sunday Worship - Sanctuary & Online	10:30 am
	Youth Discussion - Youth Room	10:30 am
	Kids' Church - Air Room	10:45 am
	Fellowship - Memorial Hall	11:45 am
	Wild Church - Away	1:00 pm
Mon Jan 22	Spirited Art Studio - Art Studio	7:00 pm
Tues Jan 23	Scripture Reflections - Club Room & Zoom	12:00 pm
Wed Jan 24	Spirited Art Studio - Art Studio	1:30 pm
	R-W Choir Rehearsal - Sanctuary/Lower Hall	7:30 pm
Thurs Jan 25	Not Falling for You - Memorial Hall	10:00 am
	Nova Bells - Lower Hall	5:15 pm
	R-W Ringers - Lower Hall	6:45 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.

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

The Board of R-W is working on creating a new team of people (3-5) that will form the Nomination Committee. The nomination committee is responsible for seeking people to fill the elected roles on the R-W Board. Each year there are 1 - 4 roles that need to be filled. The team also updates the job descriptions when necessary. This is a great way to get to know people in the community of faith and the goal is to help people discover where their gifts from God would best be suited. The work of this team happens primarily from November until the Annual Meeting in March. The Board is seeking people who are willing to talk to others and ask questions. It is helpful if you are a good listener that can match skills with roles. If you are interested in learning more about this role please contact Rev. Karen Bridges: karen.bridges@rwuc.org.

COMMUNION SERVER VOLUNTEERS

Sunday, **January 21**, 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 (10:00 am). If you are able to serve, sign up on the tablet in the outer office, or visit rwuc.org/volunteer.

R-W News & Notes

GREEN BITES

Expensive housing, unsafe public transit, encampments for the homeless; all are symptoms of modern life, whether urban or rural. Strong Towns, headquartered in Minnesota, was founded about ten years ago. The organization encourages collaboration especially with municipal governments because of the many opportunities to work together with other community members. One of its first campaigns was to advocate against further highway expansion in order to draw attention to post-Second World War Suburban Development (i.e. Sprawl) that took place throughout North America. Membership in Strong Towns includes many Canadians, no doubt because the US and Canada share the same problems. For more information check out strongtowns.org. The videos and podcasts suggest ideas that may or may not be worth considering in Edmonton.
-The Environmental Stewardship Group.

REMIT INFORMATION

The Northern Spirit Reps will be available **today** at 12:00 noon, in the Club Room to discuss the following Remit: Establishing an Autonomous National Indigenous Organization. Visit rwuc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Remit-Establishing-an-Autonomous-National-Indigenous-Organization.pdf for a supplementary resource.

ANNUAL REPORT

The deadline for reports from the committees, pods and groups of the church is **February 4**. Send your information to mail@rwuc.org with “2023 Annual Report Submission” in the subject line.

CHURCH GAMES NIGHT

Saturday, **January 20** from 7:00 - 9:00 pm. Come and participate in a Church Games Night. Bring a snack to share, bring your friends, family and children if you have them. This is an all age event. Bring your favourite board game if you have one! There will be a variety of different games that we will play together and in small groups. It will be lots of fun.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

Tuesdays at 12:00 pm on Zoom and in the Club Room. Reflect on the scripture passages for the upcoming Sunday. We are using the practice of Lectio Divina which means we read through the scripture three times. You will be invited into some moments of silence, and if you are willing you are invited to share with the group. You don't need to be a Biblical Scholar. God speaks through the scriptures and it is wonderful to hear the diversity of messages that are received. Contact the office for the Zoom link. Come with a bible and a journal, or simply yourself! Tune in when you can.

SPIRITED ART STUDIO

Spirited Art Studio is a free secular community art program providing an informal, welcoming and inclusive space where we come together to nurture our creative spirit through art and craft activities. There are as many pathways to creativity as there are individuals! Projects are diverse and fun, no previous experience is required and all supplies are provided! Learn a new process or bring your own projects to work on. Come see what adventures await you as you create, learn and make new connections. **Mondays** from 7:00 - 8:30 pm and **Wednesdays** 1:30 - 3:00 pm.

NOT FALLING FOR YOU

Not Falling for You is a free physical activity program for adults 50 and above, aimed at reducing the risk of falling through mobility improving exercises. R-W is collaborating with Alberta Health Services to host these classes.

Information and Registration: Thursday, **January 18** at 10:00 am.

Classes: Thursdays 10:00 – 11:15 am, **January 25 – April 18**.

WILD CHURCH

On **Jan 21** at 1:00 pm, Wild Church will gather with the theme of “Fire and Ice”. We will meet at the Emily Murphy Park fire circle. Dress for the weather. A fire will be provided for warmth, and the gathering will be cancelled if temperatures drop below -15C. All are invited, including our four-legged friends! Follow us on Instagram @wildchurchyeg

READING THE BIBLE IN A YEAR

Have you always wanted to read the bible cover to cover? We have a booklet that gives you a reading each day throughout the year for those of you who are interested. We would also like to set up a few groups that could provide a place to discuss what you are reading with others. Please let us know if you would prefer daytime, evenings or weekends, and if you would prefer in person or online. Email or contact Rev. Karen Bridges at karen.bridges@rwuc.org. The booklets will be available on Sunday.

KOINONIA

The first gathering of Koinonia of 2024 will take place on Sunday, **January 28** in Memorial Hall. We will start with our usual, but always amazing Potluck Supper at 5:30 pm. Please watch this space next week for information about the program that will follow supper. For basic information about Koinonia, please see the poster on the bulletin board outside Memorial Hall. Looking forward to seeing you! - Larry Wright

BETWEEN THE AISLES

The deadline for the next issue of Between the Aisles is Sunday, **January 28**. This year Robertson-Wesley (originally Robertson Presbyterian Church) is celebrating its 110th birthday! Do you have photos taken at Robertson-Wesley? How about a special memory of R-W, perhaps your first visit to this church, an outstanding service? Why not write about it and submit it to the church at news@rwuc.org, attn Between the Aisles, by **January 28**. When the next issue is available for the public in mid-February, your name will be in print!

Worship Notes

In the season of Epiphany we honour the power of light. This is the season we learn what it means to be a disciple. The word disciple means “learner.” This is a time to learn more about our faith, to ask questions and deepen our understanding of who God is and where the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives and in the world. This is a time to grow in our faith and learn how to live our faith in the world. What is your biggest faith question this Epiphany Season?

Cover Image

The cover image was taken by Rev. Karen Bridges on Oct 30, 2021 in Canmore, AB. Words come from the hymn “Come Touch Our Hearts” found in More Voices 12, words by Gordon Light.

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