

Saint James United Church

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Welcome all visitors and their families who may be worshipping with us this evening. We pray that you will feel at home here at Saint James and that you will feel the presence of God's Holy Spirit, as we worship.

Blue Christmas Service

'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' – Matthew 11:28-30

We Gather in God's Presence

Prelude

Introit # 89 MV Love Is the Touch (Verse 1)

**Love is the touch of intangible joy;
love is the force that no fear can destroy;
love is the goodness we gladly applaud;
God is where love is, for love is of God.**

Opening Prayer *Merciful God, we thank you for your healing presence. We are like empty cups waiting to be filled with your love, compassion, and healing. Hear our loneliness and fill us with your grace. Amen*

DATES TO REMEMBER

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|---------|------------------------------|------------|
| Dec. 23 | Fourth Sunday of Advent | 10:30 a.m. |
| | Coffee, Tea and Fellowship | 11:30 a.m. |
| Dec. 24 | Family Christmas Eve Service | 7:00 p.m. |
| Dec. 30 | Morning Worship | 10:30 a.m. |
| | Intergenerational Service | |
| | Coffee Tea and Fellowship | |

MISSION STATEMENT

The congregation of Saint James United Church strives to be a welcoming, caring, committed family of people from all ages and walks of life who come together in fellowship with each other and our Creator God.

We endeavour to respect each other's differences and abilities, to follow the way of Jesus, and to be open to the work of the Holy Spirit in us and through us, for the ultimate enrichment of our faith, our community and our world.

POEM FOR A BLUE CHRISTMAS

Amidst the glow of holiday cheer, it shines,
the longest night,
where loneliness battles happiness
and darkens Christmas light,
Where tears mix with toasts of joy
and memories of those gone by
are blended with carols of Christmas-time
and hearts are heavy lie,
Where friends of old have left this earth
and dreams of Christmas sleep,
and tired souls turn to cry
and dampen memories deep.
Yet deep away there is a spark of life,
of peace, of love
and traditions of old are lived again
in heaven's light above.
And memories grow true and real,
as life grows strong this way
as the longest night at Christmas-time
brightens into day.

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Call to Worship

May God be with you.

And also with you!

Let us turn to God, the Source of Life.

Restore us, O God, let your face shine, that we may be saved!

We have been fed the bread of tears and have drunk tears in full measure.

Restore us, O God, let your face shine, that we may be saved!

May those who sow in tears, reap with shouts of joy.

Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home carrying sheaves with shouts of joy.

Special Music "Where Are You, Christmas"

We Read and Meditate on God's Word

Scripture Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, 11a

First Candle

A time to weep, a time to mourn – we remember those whom we loved with body and soul – the hugs and embraces, the conversations, the quiet moments filled with meaning, the shared activities, the common purpose – spirit greeting spirit, heart meeting heart. We light this candle, trusting that the living God gives us good reason to laugh and to dance.

A time to weep, but also a time to laugh; a time to mourn, but also a time to dance!

Scripture Isaiah 40:1, 6-11

Second Candle

Life is fragile and fleeting in our eyes. We seek permanence, constancy, stability. We experience transience, change, and instability. We plan, and our hopes are shunted aside by unforeseen happenings. The foundations of our lives are shaken. So we light this candle and repeat our common faith:

Our help is in the name of God, who made heaven and earth!

Hymn #55 VU – In the bleak midwinter

Scripture John 14:1-4

Third Candle

Home is where the heart is. The Gospel of Christ is that our home is with God – in the heart of God – where there is more than enough room for all who know their need and yearn for home! So we light this candle and we proclaim that by the love of God, the broken and bruised are made whole – healed by love to be love for the healing of the nations.

Do not let our hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in Jesus, the love of God!

Hymn VU 278 “In the Quiet Curve of Evening”

Scripture Revelation 21:1-6

Fourth Candle

We long for this Gospel to fill our lives, but also the lives of all God’s human family. So we hope fervently for that blessed time when heaven comes down to earth and earth is transformed into heaven. That is God’s time when all our thirsting ends and we are satisfied by the spring that gives the water of life. We light this candle.

Alpha and Omega, our lives, our world, our longings, and our joys are in your tender, mother-like hands. Our Father, who art in heaven ...

Scripture Luke 2:10-15

Christ Candle

As we journey on, may the Gospel of great joy be born in us today and in all the days of our living. We light this Christ candle because in this humble, yet holy, child lies the hope of all the ages: the assurance that God is with us to turn our tears into joy, our mourning into laughter. The best of all, is God is with us.

We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

Hymn #47 VU– Still, still, still

Lighting of Candles of Remembrance

All are invited to come forward to light a candle in memory of a loved one, a circumstance, or an event that makes this season sad for you.

Prayer of Hope

God of hope:

give us this night a glimpse of trust and assurance, a sense of purpose and possibility. Come into our hearts and our minds, bringing comfort, health, and peace. Re-create in us a sense of thanksgiving, in the joy of your love. Amen.

Closing Hymn #67 VU– Silent Night

Blessing and Sending Forth

Allow us to see the blessing in our lives, and feel the love in our hearts and go forth in peace.

Postlude