



We are
Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge and
Knox, Didsbury Pastoral Charge
of the United Church of Canada



Sunday January 9th, 2022

Minister: Rev. Tammy Allan

Musician today: Janice and Barry Beaudry (Knox /Olds)

Our mission statements:

Olds: A Family of Faith, Spiritually Motivated, Welcoming and Caring

Sundre: Believing, Caring, Sharing

Knox Didsbury: Caring, Sharing, Believing

As we worship we gratefully acknowledge that our churches are located on the ancient and traditional lands of the people of Treaty 6 (Sundre) and Treaty 7 (Olds and Knox) and all are part the lands of Metis Nation Region 3.

May we cherish and care for these lands and the people, just as those who came before us have done.

Prelude

Announcements

-Coffee time – Tuesdays at 10:00. Zoom link in Friday's email.

Lighting the Christ Candle

We gather in the Season of Light, Epiphany, to celebrate the light that shines in our lives eternally. We light this candle, praying that hope, love and light may fill our hearts.

Call to Worship

God spoke through the prophet, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you."

God calls us by name, we belong to God.

God is our Saviour, we are precious in God's sight.

Come let us worship our God, who leads us into new life.

Hymn VU 395 Come In, Come in and Sit Down

Opening Prayer

Many voices speak to us. We are torn in many directions. To whom should we listen? To what should we pay attention? Which voices are the right ones? How do we hear the voice of God in all the noise? Help us, O God, to listen with our hearts. Help us to open ourselves to your voice that forgives

us when we do wrong, that calls us to serve you and others, that invites us to use our voices to seek justice. Amen.

Wood Lake Publishing, 2021 Seasons of the Spirit, SeasonsFusion pg. 114-5

Time with the Children in all of Us

Memories of baptism? Your own, your child or grandchild's, or perhaps a God child? A moment in our lives that reminds us that we are God's beloved.

Hymn MV 30 It's a Song of Praise to the Maker

Readings

Today is "Baptism of Christ Sunday" in the lectionary calendar. Our readings remind us of the stories that inform our own convictions, practices and beliefs around this sacrament.

Isaiah 43:1-7

43But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. ²When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. ³For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. ⁴Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life. ⁵Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; ⁶I will say to the north, "Give them up," and to the south, "Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth— ⁷everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

Luke 3:15-17 and 21-22

¹⁵As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

²¹Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, ²²and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

Response to the Scripture Reading

This is the witness of the people of God.

Thanks be to God.

Reflection

Today is Baptism of Christ Sunday. It is a day that is celebrated in each lectionary calendar year, always falling on the Sunday after Epiphany.

Just last month, (here) in Sundre, we had the wonderful opportunity to celebrate the baptism of 7 children – ranging in age from a few months old to 14 years. They were all cousins, so no uncomfortable fear at all; and because of COVID precautions, their parents held them and sprinkled the water upon them, too.

I remember after my first baptism of Christ Sunday in Olds, talking to the children about why we baptize, and how that welcomes a baby or child, or even adult, formally into the church community, and into the family of God. That afternoon, parents of two of those children called me, and we scheduled baptism for them.

On this Sunday, when there is not a celebration of baptism, we often would take time to remember our own baptisms, to remember that we are baptized people, many of us, and we would give thanks for that. Sometimes we would accompany that with having children sprinkle water over the people in the pews with pine bows, as they said those words “Remember your baptism and be thankful.”

With health precautions, I invite you to simply remember...and perhaps when you next encounter water – doing the lunch dishes, perhaps, or having a cool refreshing drink of water, that you take a moment and give thanks – for your community of faith that supports you, and for the love of God that enfolds us all.

Baptism is one of the two sacraments in our United Church tradition. It offers us a new beginning, whether we are a few months old or many years old. And each time we remember our baptism, we are reminded of that gift of grace that God gives us, unconditionally. We are God’s beloved, wholly and completely loved – each and every one of us.

In our baptismal liturgy, we promise to follow in the way of Christ; or to guide our children in following in his way. In our tradition, we generally do that publically – because we value the support of community in walking with us – the community also makes promises to support those who are being baptized – we promise to be with one another along the journey of faith.

Even in the situation of a emergency baptism – say at a hospital bed side, for instance – I would invite a member of one or two of our Pastoral Care teams to represent the congregation, and come with me for that sacrament – for again, in our tradition – the sacrament is between the baptism candidate (or their parents on their behalf in the case of a child or infant, God, and the community of faith.

And you know that in an emergency, you too, could offer the gift of baptism to someone who asks for that – the key phrase to include in that – I baptize you, in the name of the Father, in the name of the Son, and in the name of the Holy Spirit. With each phrase, a sprinkling of water. And then the sign of the cross on hand or forehead – marking the person as a child of God’s, forever loved.

Years back, I started a new tradition – borrowed from a colleague and friend, in inviting Sunday School children into the act of baptism, by taking part in the marking with the sign of the cross; I’ve expanded that to include family members doing so as well. Especially with Sunday School children – they may not remember their own baptism, yet I have found that they more often than not remember the children or infants whose foreheads they got to bless with the sign of the cross. It’s a really important community connection for children and families.

In the church of my youth, Southwood United in Calgary, when they built the new building, it included a full immersion baptismal pond. It had been the dream of the minister at the time, whose doctoral work focused on baptism, and particularly adult, believers baptism. The font was quite lovely – it was located at the behind the choir loft. There was a stone wall above it, with a “waterfall” that circulated the water, down the wall and into the font.

On the west side of the font was – and still is – a beautiful commissioned stained glass piece depicting a mountain scene. On the east, a stunning prairie scene in the stained glass.

Why the immersion pond?

In early Christian years, the tradition of immersion baptism, and of wearing white for baptism emerged out of the idea of repenting, turning toward God, and being reborn. You see, in the early days of Christianity, knowledge of how the body works was quite simple and basic. It was believed that one died when one’s breath stopped.

People of that time didn’t understand what we know now about brain and heart function, as determinates of life.

So, one way sure to stop one’s breathing was to be immersed in water. The water cut off one’s ability to breath; hence the belief that being immersed was a death...and that gasp of air one would take upon being lifted up out of the water was rebirth. It was a new start, a cleansing way to begin anew.

Also in those very early years, you were immersed in water wearing nothing but your birthday suit – and when you arose from the water, you were enfolded in a white robe – symbolic of the purity of the moment, and of the newness of your

life. Hence, came that tradition of wearing white at baptism. Just some of the history behind Rev. Don's passion for the sacrament, and for creating the pond at Southwood.

Several Calgary churches of other denominations rented Southwood's sanctuary on weekend afternoons for adult baptism, but it was never used for a baptism of any of the United Church members. And a decade or so ago, when doing upgrades to that space, the immersion pond was finally removed. The stained glass and stone wall remain.

In today's gospel reading, we hear how Jesus' baptism. It was a public occasion that established his relationship with God, as God's beloved son.

We heard that as Jesus was praying, "the heaven was opened, ²²and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." (Luke 21-22) The dove becomes one of the key symbols for baptism.

That word, 'beloved' comes from two words - 'be' and 'loven' – meaning, of course 'to love.'

This week's Season's of the Spirit commentary reminds us that the early readers of Luke's gospel "would interpret and understand this voice from heaven as giving both authenticity and authority to Jesus' ministry. The love that Jesus later proclaims in his ministry is first extended to him (at baptism). We too, are given the promise that identity and authority are our as we recognize God's presence in our lives and set out to do God's work."

Wood Lake Publishing, 2021 Seasons of the Spirit, SeasonsFusion pg. 112

Baptism regardless of the age of the candidate, the person being baptized, has from the beginning been understood as a symbol of God's generous grace – as God's beloved, we too, are recipients of that grace...when we stray from the path God would have us follow, we are given the opportunity to learn from our mistakes and return to God's way.

We are called to live out of a place of gratitude for that incredible gift of grace.

So how do we do that? What does it mean to live out of that grace?

I believe a good starting point is to see one another as God sees each of us – as beloved. How might our approach to neighbour or stranger be different if we saw them through that lens – that understanding that they are beloved – by God, and as followers of God's way – by us?

Would that approach help us to see beyond differences, to find common ground, to find the heart of compassion in all our relationships – old and new? With family, with friends, with coworkers and strangers alike?

Would that approach – seeing our neighbour as beloved of God – help inform our shared mission and ministry as 3 communities of faith, coming together to serve God? Would it help define how we connect with the world around us, locally within our communities, and as members of the global community?

As we move into this new year, and continue on journey of faith together, may we remember that we are a baptized and baptizing people – beloved of God, and called to love all of God’s creation. May it be so. Amen.

Hymn MV 161 I Have Called You By Your Name

This Week’s Minute for Mission
A Better World: One Water Project at a Time

Published On: December 1, 2021

Photo Credit: CLWR/E. Paulley



According to UNICEF, more than half of the global population does not have access to safe sanitation and 2.2 billion people still lack access to safe drinking water. Today—Baptism of Jesus Sunday—is a good day to consider our relationship with water.

How many Bible stories do you know have to do with water? Many of us have heard the story of Moses making water flow from rock and parting the Red Sea. We may remember stories about Jesus turning water into wine, walking on water, and calming it, too. So often, water is the focal point of God’s miracles and grace. It figures prominently because it’s necessary.

Clean water is essential to life, and yet around the world people suffer for lack of it.

The issues are complex. Climate change is altering weather and water patterns, causing shortages and droughts in some areas and floods in others. In some parts of the world, a growing population means rising demand and there isn’t enough water to go around. Water infrastructure problems sometimes mean people can’t access water even when it is available. There are racial and gender implications to accessing water, too. Did you know that, on average, women and children in the Global South walk nearly 6 kilometres to access water and carry nearly 19 liters of water every day?

Through **Mission & Service** you help provide solutions to water issues worldwide. Your generosity supports irrigation projects and provides accessibility to water. Your gifts help construct bore holes, wells, and rain catchment tanks, which in turn address food security and sanitation issues in communities. During crises, your gifts help deliver drinking water where it’s needed most. In the midst of the

global pandemic, your support is helping to construct sanitation stations and share life-saving hygiene communications through flyers and radio programs. Thank you for your generosity! Together, we *can* build a better world. One water project at a time.

Offertory Music VU 538 For the Gift of Creation

Offertory Prayer

O God, we bring our gifts of time, talent and treasure this day. We offer these gifts in gratitude for the abundant love we receive from you. May what we offer be used to bring hope to a hurting world, and joy to those who live in fear. Amen.

Prayers for the Day

O God of all seasons, we come to you in prayer on this January day. We pray for all who find the winter brings with it particular challenges: with the longer hours of darkness, may we find hope in the brightness of the moon, and the gradual increase in day light.

With the cold and wind, may we find comfort in the warmth of our homes and community gathering places. We pray for those for whom that comfort is hard to find.

With the icy roads, may we find gratitude for those who work to sand, salt and clear our roads, and those who guard our safety, road plough drivers, tow truck drivers, police and other emergency personnel.

As the skies brighten and the Chinook winds warm us, may we be thankful for the presence of friends and family, and the warmth of time shared in community.

Help us too, to share the warmth of your love, and to invite others to experience that warmth, O God.

Hold those in need of your healing presence in love – we pray today for the families in our community experiencing loss of a loved one, and living with grief; - we pray for Merillee, her brother Bill, and the rest of their siblings, as they grieve the loss of their dad.

For those struggling with the economic realities of our time, with loss of employment, or not enough employment for sustainable living, we pray for hope, O God.

Olds and Knox (Didsbury) both host live worship each week, while the worship leadership alternates locations, and worship is live-streamed to the other church. You are welcome to attend either location at 9:30 am.

Sundre continues to have in- person worship at 1:30. All are welcome there, too! You can access the livestream at www.oldsunited.ca (click on the Livestream link).

The bulletin and sermon will continue to be posted to the websites, for those who are unable to join us. We also have a Facebook Page, Olds and Sundre United Churches.

Each week, via email, there will be updates and announcements. If you'd like to receive those emails, please contact one of the church offices and ask to be included.

Questions? Wish to financially support our ministries? To Contact us:

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Rev. Tammy's confidential email minister@oldsunited.ca

Sunday Jan. 9 – Rev. Tammy in Olds, streamed to Knox

Sunday Jan. 16 – Rev. Tammy at Knox, streamed to Olds

Sunday Jan. 23 – Olds

Sunday Jan. 30 – Knox

Sunday Feb. 6 – Olds

Sunday Feb. 13 – Knox

Sunday Feb. 20 – Olds

Sunday Feb. 27 - Knox