

Immanuel United Church
The 3rd Sunday of Epiphany
Jan 23rd, 2022

Welcome

Hi everyone! On this third Sunday of Epiphany, today, we continue to explore the gift of Epiphany. Epiphany marks the Nativity story of three wise ones following an unusual star until it stopped over the place where the baby Jesus was. "When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy."

The next four Epiphany services at Immanuel, including today's, have been created with the use of the United Church stewardship service resource, "Discover Your Gifts — Share Your Gifts (Five Sundays in Epiphany)" (https://united-church.ca/sites/default/files/2021-10/ctb-2022_discover-gifts-share-gifts.docx) to help our community of faith take a closer look at what a variety of texts have to say about gifts that are revealed to us — what it means to share those gifts as a fundamental part of discipleship.

These worship resources were collaboratively prepared by: Catherine Stuart, Regional Minister for Children, Youth, and Young Adults in the Atlantic Regions (who lives in Riverview, New Brunswick); Evan Δ∩^α Smith, Toronto Urban Native Ministry, Shining Waters Region; Ian March-MacCuish, First United Church, Mount Pearl, NL, First Dawn Eastern Edge Region; and Matthew Fillier, Lead Minister of Bedford United Church, Bedford, NS, Region 15.

Discover your gifts. Share your gifts. It's what disciples of Jesus do.

Greeting

God is good

All the time.

All the time

God is good.

Settler Acknowledgement of Our Commitment to Truth and Reconciliation

Long before my people journeyed to this land, Indigenous people were here (*Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Dene peoples, and on the homeland of the Métis Nation*), and they received from their Elders an

understanding of creation and of the Mystery that surrounds us all that was deep, and rich, and to be treasured. When they shared their vision, my people did not hear. My people tried to force Indigenous peoples to be like us, and, in so doing, we helped to destroy the vision that made them what they were.

We are in the midst of a long and painful journey as we reflect on the cries that our church did not or would not hear, and how we have behaved as a church. As we travel this difficult road of repentance, reconciliation, and healing, we commit ourselves to work toward ensuring that we will never again use our power as a church to hurt others with attitudes of racial and spiritual superiority.

We pray that all Indigenous people will hear the sincerity of our words today and that they will witness the living out of our apology

in our actions in the future.

Lighting of the Christ Candle:

We light this candle, honouring the One who said "I am the Light."

Call to Worship (based on Isaiah 62:1-5)

In this Epiphany time, we will not keep silent, we will not rest.

Our vindication shines out like the new dawn.

Light a path for us, O God, that we may move into new relationships.

We have been called by you into new ways of being.

Your torch has been passed to us, in you our light has come.

We are not forsaken; we are not desolate.

In you, O God, we find our delight.

Let glory be on our lips as we delight in your presence.

Inspire us, God, as we offer our worship.

Opening Prayer:

With open minds and open hearts, we come before you, God. You have shared tremendous news with us: news of the birth of Jesus, news of his baptism, news so incredible that it cannot be contained. We bring together all our resources, all that we are, all that we have, to share the good news. We are called to be more, we are called to be a community of faith, we are called to be the church. Be with us now as we discern your calling, as we discern our discipleship. We pray these things in the name of Jesus.

Hymn: VU 96 *Will You Come and See the Light*

Exploring the Epiphany Box:

Song: *This Little Light of Mine*

*This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.*

Imagine the kind of world we would have if we thought of all gifts and all giving as being extraordinary because they remind us that all we have is a gift from God to be shared with each other?

How would sharing this gift remind others that they, too, are a gift?

Scripture: John 2:1–11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.' Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

The Choir Anthem: (You Are) The Light of the World

Reflection: Healing every day

Recently I had an Epiphany when I woke up in the middle of night. Who or what woke me up? A dream did. But it faded away like sand slips through the fingers as soon as I opened my eyes. I thought, "If anyone asks me why I have become a minister, or chosen to be a follower of Jesus, a believer in Christian faith, how would I answer?" If I ask you why you have chosen to be a disciple of Jesus, a believer in Christian faith, how would you respond? The Epiphany talked to me: Jesus was a healer. The historical Jesus was a healer among his other identities. For example, Marcus Borg, the historical Jesus scholar and author of *Meeting Jesus Again For the First Time*, presents Jesus using five categories: charismatic (or mystic), healer, sage, prophet, and movement-founder. Borg affirms that flowing from his experience of the Spirit, the historical Jesus was Healer. Our tradition is filled with stories of Jesus performing physical and spiritual healings and exorcisms.

The Epiphany led me to a confession: If Jesus was a healer then, as a disciple of Jesus, I am also called to heal, to be healed, and practice healing in my life, in the lives of others, and in the world. I define that healing as the journey that takes us towards achieving wholeness. Individually, it could mean healing in body, mind, and spirit. Collectively, it could mean to heal a divided, wounded, war-torn society into equity, justice and peace. Cure may happen, but it is a specific aspect of healing. Healing is broader, deeper and wider than just fixing problems or being free of illness. I believe that healing contains an essential element of the divine, that is wholeness, which leads us to experience the inner depth of joy, peace, and a profound sense of fulfilment. That sense of fullness cannot be measured by the exterior standards of success.

Of course, not only Christians are called to heal. For this reason, we need an inter-spiritual, interfaith approach, a healing practice that doesn't require the confession of some sort of faith or religious worldview. In my Epiphany moment I asked myself: what could make the distinction, if I profess that, as a follower of Jesus I am called to heal and to be healed? As a Christian, it is important that I have faith in my life-long journey to learn, study, follow the way of Jesus. I profess that faith both nourishes and challenges me and others in striving toward wholeness, becoming more whole, individually and, as a community, collectively.

Healing is one of the constant themes in our lives that starts from a very young age. Children cry out loud when they have been hurt. They might have run and fallen. They hurt their knee and immediately call their parent or caregiver to come and see them. Not only does the wound cause pain, but seeing blood is very scary! Then they might cry even harder. Now, their caregiver hurries to come and put a bandage on the wound, gently blowing on the wounded spot "hoo, hoo" (Koreans do). With this expression of care, the child learns that they are loved, safe and protected. The bandage whether it

was really necessary or more symbolic, can be a big deal! In life, there are many different ways in which we are hurt and wounded, and we need care, healing and recovery, more than that of the scab on the knee. We learn the embodied understanding of how often and in which contexts we encounter the moments when we need healing and healing is happening, both in our lives and in society. It's a big deal!

In that nighttime moment of Epiphany, I pushed myself to think further. What does it mean that faith is an essential and important element in my life, a vehicle that carries me and moves me towards healing? To answer that, I will need to wrestle with the question, especially in a world that requires scientific fact, data and evidence to determine outcome. I believe that faith, focus and the creative energy of prayer, helps us to come closer to the reality for which we pray and which brings healing, wholeness, and health. Ultimately how I define them is really between my soul and the Creator. We own our truth in our distinctively unique journey of faith.

What is most probable is that the historical Jesus shared a vision of healing to the world. He shared and manifested the energy flowing from the Spirit into the physical world, as he was revealed as Love Incarnate.

What is very attractive to me when thinking about healing is that healing is what we can *choose* at various moments in our lives. Every day. It is similar to the fact that children need attention and care, every day. They might play and get hurt. The incidents are noticed; parents or caregivers show appropriate care and love, comfort and treatment at the right time. When we are mindful, we are able to notice that at a certain point of time during a conversation, an activity, a day, there can be an opportunity in which we can choose an alternative word, action, or path that would change the course of conversation, bring warmth, and healing to relationships. We can choose the Jesus' way, moving away from rigidity — i.e. unforgiving, intentionally ignoring the other's feelings, resisting openness and understanding of what is possible differently. We can always choose what would lead us closer to the path of healing, dissolving boundaries, wounds, walls, hate, apathy, and unforgiveness with the transforming and inclusive love of God. I love the image of love dissolving boundaries. It is like the lava of God's love that is powerful enough to melt the mountain rocks as it goes on its way.

In today's reading, well-known as the Wedding at Cana, there is a joyful wedding feast going on, when something goes wrong. The wine is running out early! In that culture, such a miscalculation would have been a great humiliation for the new husband and wife. Interpreting this story, many have commented about the conversation and the words which Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Jesus exchange:

Mary: "They have no wine."

Jesus: "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come."

Mary said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.

Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water."

Can you find in the story an alternative word / action / path that has been expressed to make healing happen? It could feel somewhat overreaching if I ask you to find it in today's Gospel reading, because this story is not really about healing in the first place. I know. However, if healing can happen at any moment, I believe that the story of the wedding at Cana can also be one of the healing stories. In the story, Mary noticed that wine was quickly running out, and the new husband and wife, and possibly all who celebrated in the village, could suffer from the impoverishment of the very important element for celebration and joy that night, as the result. She knew an alternative path would be needed to take place to change the course. Did Mary, with Jesus, choose an alternative action / word / path that would bring a radically different outcome that night? I think she did! Could we say that water turning into wine was the sign that healing, most needed in that village, in the community, has occurred? Because of faith of Mary and Jesus' response to it? Yes!

Could this path of water being transformed to wine in today's Gospel story describe an example we are called to emulate in our daily lives, as "healing every day"? When we notice the moment when spiritual joy is running out in our own life and the life of others, relationships are tense, our neighbours suffer from impoverishment (spiritual / material), inequity persists in society, what can we do to allow healing to occur, emerge, and to be made possible and change our lives? Could we say, like Mary, "They have no wine"? And could we act, like Jesus, "fill the jars with water."? In the reality in which they had no wine, Jesus began with what they already had — water.

Healing is the way we are called to, and it can happen with a mind that allows it to emerge, by choosing an alternative word, action and / or path. I would like to call the mind, heart and spirit, "faith". Having faith means to me that, with Jesus, *healing can happen every day*. Just like the incidents when children play, fall, and are hurt they know that they are cared for, we can notice the moment of opportunity we encounter, and use faith, as a vehicle to bring healing in the moment. How would we be able to, as children of God, and as Immanuel, a community of faith, change water into wine, healing every day?

Hymn:

VU 541 *Praise God Whom All Blessings Flow* (X2)

MV 124 *Glory to God in the Highest* (X2)

Stewardship Story: Faith Formation and Life Long Learning

At the start of this year, the Faith Formation and Lifelong Learning Cluster had two Guiding Elders, in Ann Naylor and Fjola Wasekeesikaw. In the meantime, both have found it necessary to resign from their positions. The cluster group remains, at this time, without a Guiding Elder.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 continued to make in-person Sunday School impossible during 2021. We carried on with the previous year's plan, which revolved around developing 'learning at home' packages based on the scripture passages used in worship and including the story, reflection questions, interactive activities and crafts. These resources, developed by the Guiding Elders and members of the Focus Group, were provided each week from early September until the beginning of Advent. This fall, rather than having those resources delivered to families, a one-minute video was recorded each week, most of them by Ha Na, and posted on Immanuel's website. Advent and Christmas lessons were based on a colouring book prepared by Eileen Metcalfe, which consisted of copies of the black and white illustrations made for our Advent labyrinth last year. Artists who contributed to the colouring book were Eileen Metcalfe, Lube Olesky and Jennifer Antymis.

The focus group will be meeting in the New Year to continue to plan for our ministry with children. Conversation continues between the Worship Cluster and the Faith Formation and Life Long Learning Cluster regarding participation and leadership of children in worship.

In addition to providing leadership for Sunday School, Ann Naylor helped to lead the congregation in the Intergenerational Theological Reflection project.

All resources for the project are on the Immanuel website.

Ministry with Children is supported by your financial gifts, by staff support from Ha Na and Sharon, and by the time and talents of Focus Group members and others. Thank you!

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Nicholls, Council liaison for the Faith Formation and Life Long Learning Cluster

Offering Invitation:

Our offerings of time, talent, and money will gratefully be received. Now is the opportunity to share your gifts to further the work of Immanuel United Church and the Spirit's task.

The second Mission & Service video:

Thank you for believing: Arwa's Story <https://youtu.be/6lCDCww8sno>

MV 191 *What Can I Do?*

What can I do? What can I bring?

What can I say? What can I sing?

I'll sing with joy. I'll say a prayer.

I'll bring my love. I'll do my share.

(followed by)

MV 196 *We Will Take What You Offer*

We will take what you offer, we will live by your word;

We will love one another and be fed by you, God. (X2)

Prayer:

We dedicate ourselves, our time and talents, our energies and money, to sharing the good news of God's abundant and generous love. Help us use all that we are and all that we have to ensure that this story is shared: a story of love and support, prayer and worship, a story of seeing our gifts turned into much needed resources through the mission and ministry of the church.

Bless each gift and each giver. In your Holy name, we pray. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Hymn: MV 209 *Go Make a Diff'rence*

Commissioning:

Each day we are blessed by many of God's gifts.

Enable us to use them wisely, sharing them with generous hearts.

We are called to be light in our world.

Let us share the light that never goes out.

Benediction:

God is good

all the time.

All the time

God is good.

We go in peace. Amen.