

Immanuel United Church
August 28th, 2022

An Autumn-Advent Sunday
(Advent for Autumn)

Introduction:

I've prepared this service, Advent for Autumn, with the hope that on this day, we remember together the strength and courage of Immanuel. I have enjoyed immensely the highlight of ministry and worship with you; in my life and future ministry I will always think back on the faith and learning I have been blessed to build with you in the last 5 years. In particular, I found great meaning and warmth in each year's Advent journey with you.

We extended a warm welcome to all, including Winnipeg Harvest folks and young people of Immanuel, through a Pre-Advent gathering each year. Richard Sawchuck's Ukrainian desserts, music and crafts. We made bookmarks, talking sticks and more. Lorraine taught us about the Talking Stick and other traditions with gift from her friend/Elder (show the picture.) Advent themes, songs and reflections prepared us each year for the mystery of Christmas. Advent was not just a pathway toward a destination; the process itself was a gift, imparting in us new learning, deeper understanding, because we built the understanding together, learning as a community, from a community. I learned that the process of Advent is about trust. It is also about preparation, hope, building and creating a space for Christ, with intentionality. Advent is about experientially and intentionally learning that the Light of the World is already here, when it is still dark. Darkness is nothing to fear; it is the matrix of hope for the new creation.

Welcome

Lighting the Christ Candle:

The candle is lit as a reminder of the light of Christ

Given to us all,

A symbol of God's presence

Each and every day.

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 wholeness.

**Behold, the birth of the Christ child will change who we are
in this time of worship and beyond.**

Let us worship.

Prayer:

In a spirit of peace, we come, Holy God.

Still our hearts that we might hear

Your Word for us this day.

**Sow in us the seeds of your peaceable kin_dom
that we might find our rightful place in your creation.**

**Prepare our hearts, we pray,
to receive the Sovereign of Peace. Amen.**

Hymn: VU 60 *O Come, All Ye Faithful*

Scripture: Matthew 1:18-25

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel', which means, 'God is with us.' When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Reflection: Advent for Autumn

In Advent, through the stories shared in the Bible and the new ones we create in our lives, our mind's eye receives a vision:

There is a stable in which we gather around a wooden manger.
Cradled in the hay and swaddled in strips of cloth, lies the vulnerable Christ child.
As we look among ourselves, we notice each face, each person.
All of us show vulnerabilities, a community of people unsure and humbled, as well as courageous, confident, with hopes and faith...

Remembering the past five years with "Immanuel", which is the name for all the beloved relationships, faith-building work, worship and feasts we've shared, I would like to call each person's name and remember how each of you has made me feel as I/we share ministry and life in the name of the inclusive love of God, God of Advent, Immanuel, God-With-Us.

Jennifer and Eugene — I will remember your encouragement, positivity and wonderful smiles. The way you walk so gently on the green Earth.

Sharon B — With your young-at-heart energy, your text messages and many other ways communicate your inclusive love to young people and to all.

Judy B — I appreciate your beautiful spirit of humbleness, service and warmth. You make me, and us, feel we are safe and accepted around you.

Debbie B — I look up and see the stars in your music and a positive sense of direction for your life.

Wendy — Justice-making, joy of connecting, openness to welcome new things, your bike, your walk, your run. You inspire me.

Joyce B — Your sincerity and the way you seek a better future for all are blessings to the community.

Ruth — Your wealth of wisdom and creative spirit for outreach and justice, your commitment to Truth and Reconciliation moves us to continue in our journey. Your Eldership is truly strong in our shared ministry and vision.

Linda C — That's Linda! I like to picture your glowing face in my mind. You lift us up.

Debbie C — Your soul-searching singing, tireless care for your family, your faith and putting others first gently move us to desire to be better people, our dear "crown" of Immanuel choir.

Lucille C — Our communion at Concordia Village, calm spirit and gentleness, I will remember.

Colleen, Chloe, Turk, Sage, and Oliver — Hey, I will remember you all! You've grown so much, both literally and spiritually.

Sharon D — You write a new chapter each day. Your garden, tomatoes and muffins, your attentive listening and advice on Tax Returns are my dearest and fondest memories to keep.

Sharon V — Every year, you leave your lovely Christmas cards and delicious cookies on my desk. Your presents are delight. Your partnership has been personal and caring. I have been more organized because of your support. I cannot thank you more.

Leslie D — 3D Magic glasses, forever! What would you tell the world, if asked today, about what God can do when we wear God's 3D Gospel glasses? ... I will remember your wisdom. Here we are, as we seek to truly live "God's Kingdom on Earth."

Ian — Ian was not just my tech support for worship. I admire many of the qualities that Ian presents to the congregation. For me, if I pick one, I admire his "brain" the most.

The way Ian approaches each task and offers problem-solving is an amazing dedication and creativity to witness. I can imagine Ian, in his childhood, quickly visiting his friend's home as soon as he wakes up on the weekend, to see how the most up-to-date Colour TV works. :) That enquiring spirit has made our zoom worship possible.

Scott D — Immanuel, have you visited our website yet? Thanks, Scott.

Sarah D — I will miss you, Sarah. At the first meeting here, Sarah said she's interested in Asian feminist theologians like Kwok Pui-Lan, and that's one of the reasons why she was here. She loved singing Christmas carols at her first worship with us, which our worship Elders led.

Anne and Bob D — I will be forever thankful for the profound support and friendship I received from Anne. Bob, thanks for waiting for her after each worship or event! :)

Betty F — I remember your tears. I remember your family. May Love sustain you.

Alison — Tables of welcome and feast. Legendary Fowl Supper. Behind scenes and beautiful scenes, you have made them all. You had incredible teams too! May the love of God keep your family strong.

Peter F — Hey, I never mind you playing the prelude for 5 minutes. Also, you never said no, and were always flexible and ready to play for whatever/whenever I asked you. Thank you.

Teri — Her great speech. Ha! Speaking about the matters with clarity and accuracy. Organization. Thank you.

Cathy G — I have been thinking of you. I miss the way you speak to me, your voice.

Arlene — I will remember your colours! Your inner spirit reveals who you are on the outside too through your colour choices! Your mother. Your trust. Thank you.

Linda G — Sharing your stories... Sharing your father's poems... Thank you. I also remember you once said, I am a teenager here. :)

Judy G — Purple. Fascinating joy. Your storytelling at Advent and other times. You treat us and our matters like treasures. Thank you.

Cathy H — Our fashion icon. Cathy came each Sunday with friends in her car. I will remember you, Cathy.

Bob and Ellen H — It's always been a joy to worship with you on zoom and other times. Your interpretation at the Men's Study Group immediately communicated to me you may be a minister by profession.

Crystal — Your beautiful home, I loved. My quick visit to deliver the gift from Immanuel for Savanna allowed me to see it. May you enjoy God's stories in Children's Spark Bible with your daughter.

Chantel — Your support. Your affirmation. You let me know I can be a good reflector.

Marleen and Lorne — There are lots of "favourite's" in your lives, because you have lots of love to share.

Maria — Prayers. Your kind eyes, I will remember.

Bob H — Arts. Earth. You strive to live life in the way that we pray at the end of communion, "May your gifts of love transform and enliven us / that we may live lives of thanksgiving. / May your presence among us / provoke such longing for your realm, / that we will never be satisfied / until the whole earth knows / your justice, your peace, and your love. Amen."

Contessa and Phil, Aiden and Amory — Thank you for letting me know that I was part of your family's journey. I immensely enjoyed the celebration of your wonderful wedding at the golf course.

Joyce and Bill — Your zoom chat "Good mornings" were like fine cups of morning coffee, on many Sundays. I was well-caffinated with your cheerful energy to start each Sunday's worship.

Adam — Your presence is always appreciated. I pray for your health and safety.

Jim — We rely on you. You offer a lot to keep us going. Even more, you sing too! May your love for your beloved and your family transform the world where we live with compassion and joy.

Joy — Like in More Voices 40 "Never Ending Joy", your hugs welcome more voices here and grow more joy. I will keep your wedding photo in my album!

Lorraine K — I remember where you sit, how you smile, even at my first interview with Immanuel's search team. Those gifts of yours — welcome and love — continued for 5 years. Your great-grandchildren, your sister. Tara and all. All the best wishes to them. — a spiritual hub for communities and families — be well, like a solid tree with lots of leaves!

Muriel and Bob — Your exceptional welcome and care; networks and friendship that are vast and heart-felt like the land we reside in, Manitoba — wide and stunning! Your jams and antipastas, the gifts of Advent your family shared with my family. You made my ministry here so sweet and nourishing.

Bonnie K — Your smile, your gentle joy.

Connie — Connie is someone who runs the wheel of community, friendship, family with love and humility. I believe that God's world becomes a better one each day thanks to neighbours and members like Connie and Pat. Connie, the Hole-in-One.

Pat S — Your genuine and truthful engagement with people. How can in one person, numbers and language, being a treasurer and being a writer, be one, like Pat. I loved to

share thoughts, Wordle scores, and your Advent liturgies that prepared so well for the mystery of Christmas.

Kerry — I still keep the picture of the Sunflower you've given me, when I first came to Immanuel, 2017. The flower brightens the space, just like you brighten and enlighten us with your wisdom.

Diane L — Your charity, your communion bread...

Gloria and Jack — It was always fun to talk about life with you, Gloria. I loved to say, "Hi Gloria" at Winnipeg Harvest.

Joan M — I remember how you make me, us, feel through your ministry and life-sharing: "The steadfast love of God."

Pat and Al — engaging the world with the joy of an intellectual mind. Humour? Yes! :)

Pat, your warm kindness will be greatly missed.

Olgi and Aiden — Your worldview and the way you honour your family were great lessons for me.

Karen M — I was happy to see you happy on June 18th.

Marian — Your feminist and spiritual heritage, I hope to continue on and develop myself. May your worldview and voices for the oppressed continue to change the world.

Bill M — Immanuel will continue to be part of who you are, how you feel joy and laugh for happiness. As we remember, we will be stronger. Be well, Bill.

Bonny M — Blessings for your future ministry in Selkirk!

Verna — Your ministry journey has become a source of inspiration and courage. Thank you for your unconditional acceptance and affirmation. Yes, one day, I hope to visit Fisher River.

Marlene — Yes, your Carpet Bowling group was certainly LOUD and I LOVED it.

Thank you for letting me share tea and treats with you and the community you have sustained as the leader. Your apple tree. Your heart-felt welcome. Thank you.

Eileen and Ron — I could have welcomed Scott and Michael as well. I was so excited to meet and serve your family with my drinks. I want to do that 100 times more with your family.

Betty M — Loved you, loved you loved you.

Ann and Nancy — So many deep things to appreciate about both of you. I have learned so much from you – let's always stay connected.

The Newtons — California spirit! Zoom connected us through the Pandemic. It's wonderful to see how you honour your family and tradition.

Glenn and Marg — I was privileged to have five years to witness how deeply you have earned the immense respect and love from your friends at Immanuel and beyond. Your profound morality and virtues inspire.

Jane — Like father, like daughter. :) I was so impressed to hear how you made a speech for 1 Just City. Inspiring responsibility and commitment to your friends and family. You are truly a leader.

Lorraine N — I pray for the best for the important and beautiful circles in your life — especially your family and your grandchildren.

Luba — I loved your many talents in life — arts, singing, story-telling, conversations, and more. You do not hesitate to show how much you care for others. You paint the world with your heart open. You take risk in loving. Your personality is a love story to the world God has made. A true gift.

Betty P — Dear Betty, heal well and enjoy more parties again soon! I will remember all in your family dearly. Leslie, Cathy, Terry and more.

Linda P — I always loved your gregarious extrovert personality and ways to engage with me and others. Truly pure!

Martha and Richard — Birdsongs, nature, wilderness, wildness... these are what you enjoy daily but they are also written in your "Living Scripture" — which is God's physical world. Praise be!

Vi — I remember the sentiments we shared at the riverside of your home. Visits with you were always as lovely as the sparkling surface of the water that flowed beside us.

Iris — So smart, and yet you would say, "Oh, I am not any more..." Be well, Iris. I love your conversation spices.

Rob and Marg — You are a Bee-utiful couple. Sharing reflections have been abundantly joyful with you, Marg and Rob. Thank you for kindly accepting me for who I am.

Cindy and Glen S with Lorne and Joyce Smyth — The family who taught me that miracles can be ordinary - they can happen every day, when we open ourselves to the world's wonder. You aim high with God, and achieve goals with gratitude. You do not stop pursuing more and beyond. I enjoyed working with you both.

Marvee and George — At Tim Hortons and Winnipeg Harvest, at Golspie Street and wherever 2 or 3 people gather, you are there. Your presence always brought more light to any gathering.

Lynne S — A true inspirer, encourager, and challenger. The hero in my ministry at Immanuel, who, with Leslie and I, and those who joined the Advent/Lenten planning teams each year, nurtured how we worship with faith and hope in God. You offer food for the journey ahead. I learned a lot from you, and the learning will grow like a seed in my heart.

Bob T — I was so honoured to get to know you and your family, in such a short period of time. The time is never too short to make new friends, or share our blessings. Happy Birthday, Kevin in Whistler!

Dianne T — You have many gifts to offer, and it is only possible because you equally have a lot of energy to make them happen. Thank you, Dianne, for your strength.

Karen and Jack — We are inspired to 'write for rights' every year, thanks for your hard work and white dove sugar cookies. Your delicious doves remind us all that justice and freedom depend on everyone's vigilance and advocacy. Recipe, please!

Sherry & Brodie — Champion mom and daughter — baton, 1 Just City, charity, fundraising, donation, entrepreneurship. When you met 1 Just City director here at Immanuel, your dream to serve the community bloomed immediately.

Many blessings to you all!

Hymn: VU 5 *All Earth is Waiting*

Offering

Hymn: VU 510 *We Have This Ministry* (verse 2)

Prayer:

**Here we present our gifts, O God:
Symbols of our very selves given to you,
Signs of our willingness to follow
The path of vulnerability,
Concrete expressions of our internal discipleship.
Bless them for your mission in the world,
Just as you bless us, we pray. Amen.**

Prayers of the People,

with Sung Response: MV 154 *Deep In our Hearts*

V 1.

**Deep in our hearts there is a common vision;
Deep in our hearts there is a common song;
Deep in our hearts there is a common story, telling Creation that we are one.**

Dear Immanuel United Church, let us pray together one last time with me...

God of Advent,

In this time of gathering to worship, we remember our past, celebrate it, and imagine, with hope and faith, Immanuel's continuing Advent pilgrim into future.

In 2020 Advent, we prayed with Pat, our Advent writer,

Hope!

**“Things are different, but they are also the same.
We will light the Advent candles each week.
We will hear the familiar hymns.
We will prepare to hear again the stories of Jesus’ coming to our world to bring
hope for a weary people.
We will remember that we are Immanuel — God-With-Us.
So as we prepare for the coming of the child of hope,
we will go forward together with hope.
Let us worship together.”**

May it be so as we move into the new Advent in the coming Autumn. Bless the hands and minds of the search committee, and many more works that our leadership will need to carry.

May we continue to write our common vision, common song, common story, telling Creation that we are one.

**V. 2. Deep in our hearts there is a common purpose;
Deep in our hearts there is a common goal;
Deep in our hearts there is a sacred message, justice and peace in harmony.**

Peace!

It was written for 2020, and we need the same prayer for today and tomorrow:
God of Advent,

**“As we continue our Advent journey in the wilderness,
we feel that we are in strange territory
where it is unclear where we are heading.
We long for the familiar — for the way we have always done things.
Some of the familiar is still there — Our God is with us.
God comforts and sustains us.
... Let us go forward in peace. Let us worship together.”**

May we find the strength to work together at Immanuel.
We pray for the will and the faith to be creative and courageous

in our relationships with one another.

In conflict and sadness, when dreams are destroyed and justice is ignored,
help us to persist, O God.

In sickness, when the vulnerability of our bodies is evident,
help us honour the gifts we are and have.

Loving God, you call us and equip us to care for one another;
May we step forward in faith to do the right thing.

As our Advent liturgist continued in Advent 3 2020:

“These are strange and unsettling times.

Like the shepherds on the hills, alone with their flocks,

We too can be afraid;

looking for the dangers lurking in this unfamiliar terrain.

Like the shepherds, we will listen for the angels bringing tidings of great joy.

We will hear again the good news of the birth of Jesus.

With joyful hearts,

Let us worship together.”

Loving God, where the brokenness resides,
help us offer healing and wholeness for one another.

Help us grow together...

Keep us all in your love, in our diverting paths.

Together, one with Christ, bound and strengthened by your Spirit, journey with us,
Immanuel, God-With-Us, as we come before you, let us find the ways of hope, of peace,
of love and of faith, together.

A time of offering personal prayers.

V 4.

Deep in our hearts there is a common vision;

Deep in our hearts there is a common song;

Deep in our hearts there is a common story, telling Creation that we are one.

Let us gather our prayers together as we say the prayer that Jesus left us: “Eternal
Spirit” VU 916

**Eternal Spirit,
Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be.
Father and Mother 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.**

Hymn: MV 40 *Never Ending Joy*

Commissioning and Benediction:

**And now into God's world we go:
Grateful for a love that holds us fast,
Ready to live our gratitude in the world,
Thankful that we have been blessed,
Eager to be a blessing
In all the places life calls us to be.**

Amen