

Sunday December 6, 2020 Advent 2

Setting 4

**Prelude:**

**Welcome:** A warm welcome for all who have joined us today. We welcome Rev. Doug Reble, Assistant to the Bishop who is our guest homilist.

**Confession:** In the name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Most merciful God, **we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.**

**For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

**Gathering Hymn as the Advent Wreath is Lit:** ELW 249 “*On Jordan’s Banks*”

**Greeting:** The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

**Kyrie:**

**Prayer of the Day:** God of timeless grace, you fill us with joyful expectation. Make us ready for the message that prepares the way, that with uprightness of heart and holy joy we may eagerly await the kingdom of your Son, Jesus Christ, who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen.**

**First Reading:** Isaiah 40: 1 - 11

A reading from Isaiah.

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.

A voice cries out: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

A voice says, “Cry out!” And I said, “What shall I cry?” All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.

Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!"

See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

**Song to Welcome the Gospel:** ELW 250 "*Blest Be the God of Israel*"

**Gospel:** Mark 1: 1 - 8

The holy gospel according to Mark. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending you my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'" John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

And people from the whole Judean countryside and all people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his

sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

**Homily by Rev. Doug Reble, Assistant to the Bishop:** In the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who was born a babe in Bethlehem, grace to you and peace.

First of all, let me say what a privilege it is to be with you, the members and friends of Zion Lutheran Church in Pembroke on this Lord’s day, the Second Sunday of Advent. This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Yes even with Covid, let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Before I turn to my sermon, this is a good time for me to thank you, the members of Zion, for your partnership in ministry with the Eastern Synod. To thank you for your support of the synod and wider church through your prayers and benevolence offerings over the years including during this pandemic. It has been said that no one is anyone without everyone. I like that. It tells me we need each other. Now more than ever. We are in ministry together. No one is anyone without everyone.

I also have a personal thank you to share. To your pastor, the Rev. Stephen Scheidt. We were so happy at synod office when you became pastor of Zion just over a year ago, Stephen. Trust me Zion was too. Those good feelings only grew as you got to know this place and this place got to know you and Jan. Please know our hearts and prayers are with you as you make another transition at end of the month when you are no longer the pastor of Zion. May God bless you with strength and peace and much rest.

But I did come to preach a sermon so I better do that now. Let's start with a question. Who said, "There's no place like home." "There's no place like home."? Do you remember the little girl from Kansas who clicked her ruby red slippers together as she repeated that line over and over? Who could forget Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz, who had a dream about being away from home. And what a dream it turned out to be, a dream filled with action, adventure, suspense and drama.

Lurking beneath the surface of that dream was the constant desire of a little farm girl to return to the stability and security of her home in Kansas and it was that longing for home that kept Dorothy on that yellow brick road. The longer she was away from home, the more precious home became to her.

Meanwhile, back at home, Auntie Em was keeping the home lights burning. At times during the dream, Dorothy could actually visualize Auntie Em's face and hear her voice calling out to her. And the power of that vision kept her moving, focused and determined. There were detours and roadblocks along the yellow brick road. She and her companions had to go through a time of testing. But in her heart, Dorothy knew where she belonged.

In her book "The Preaching Life", American pastor and theologian Barbara Brown Taylor reflected on the word "home" and all the images that simple word calls to our minds. She writes, "My house is much more than my residence. My home is a promise I make to myself when I get too tired to go on. You can go home soon, I tell myself, and that knowledge spreads through me like the sun on a cold day so that I can go on, for a little longer at least."

Home. What a compelling, elusive word that is. What a strong hunger the human heart has for home, and what a hard thing it is

to find and keep a home – not just a building, but a place to belong – a place to be from and a place to go to. A safe place where one is known and a safe place from which to know the world. A nest, a family, a stable fortress in a vast and frightening universe. Did I just say frightening universe? Think Covid. Think living in a pandemic.

Friends, home is what Dorothy longed for. That is what we all need. But, of course, the difference between us and Dorothy is that we do not live in a dream world or a bubble. The world in which we live in is very much real. There are no magical ruby slippers that we can click together so that everything can be made right again. If only.

Friends, if you have ever been to a place in your life when there was nowhere you could call home, if you have ever been snatched away from everything you hold dear, if you have ever looked around and nothing seemed familiar, the Bible has a word for you. If you have ever wondered where God was and what God was doing and why God allowed certain things to happen, if you often remember the good old days and long for their return, like now during this pandemic as I think about it, it might help you to know that the Bible has a word which conjures up all these images and feelings. It is the word “exile”.

Exile is when you feel abandoned. Exile is being cut off from home. Exile is being cut off from the past. Exile is dreading the unknown future. Exile is a time when God seems to be at least silent, maybe even absent, or even worse, unconcerned. Nothing makes sense when you are in exile. Exile is facing up to the stark reality that some of the dreams which have propelled you for so long may never be fulfilled.

One of the darkest, most dreadful times in the history of God’s people was that period of time in the sixth century BC when they

were in exile. The Babylonians had destroyed the Temple and the holy city of Jerusalem, snatched the people Judah from their homeland and all that was dear to them and transported them against their will to a land and culture that was distant and strange to them. Haunted by the memories of their tragedy, stripped of their dignity, and ridiculed by taunts of their captors, they wept until they could weep no more. And their grief had just begun. Soon their sorrow turned to anger and their tears to rage. Their frustration turned into violent hatred and their grief into bitterness. Why can't things be like they used to be? Have you ever said that? Ever said that over these last nine months?

Into that setting, the prophet Isaiah came speaking on behalf of God, today's first reading. "Encourage my people. Give them comfort and announce that the exile is over. Their warfare has ended. Their sin has been forgiven. Prepare the way of the Lord right here in the wilderness. Clear a path and make a highway for God in the desert. For there in the wilderness, the Syrian desert which stands between where you are in Babylon and where you want to be in Jerusalem, God will make a way. For every wrong will be made right. Every valley will be lifted up, every mountain and hill be made low. The uneven ground will become level and the rough places will be made smooth. So, go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere. Shout it as loudly as you can with confident assurance.

Do not be afraid to shout the good news. For unlike the grass and flowers that wither and fade, what God says will never change. God's word is sure. God's promises are true. God has not abandoned you any more than a shepherd would abandon his sheep. God cares for you as gently and as tenderly as a shepherd who carries the lamb in his arms. The home fires are burning. The porch light is still on. Come home.

From an historical standpoint, this prophecy was partially fulfilled in 539 BC, when Cyrus of Persia issued a decree permitting the exiled people to return to their homeland. But centuries later this prophecy was re-applied in a new context when John the Baptist announced the coming of Jesus, today's gospel reading.

What the prophet of the exile, Isaiah announced, John the Baptist echoed. Even when our disobedience, our, at times sinful disobedience lead us away from home, God has left the porch light on. God has kept the home fires burning. God has made a way, cut a road, cleared a path from the desert all the way home. It is not just that God will bring you home. It is that God will be your home. Where ever you are, God will be your home.

Friends, this is the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and we need that news now more than ever. The good news is not just that we can be where God is, but that in Jesus Christ, God has come to be where we are, where you are. Home is not just where you can be with God in the life to come. Home is where God has come to be with us in this life – in the midst of exile, in the barrenness of the desert, in the confusion of the wilderness AND in this craziness called Covid. It is because of this good news that I can say don't give up. Don't lose hope. Keep the faith. God will never abandon us.

Back to the Wizard of Oz and then I'll close. What Dorothy missed and longed for was not so much the place, but the face. When she was away from home, the one picture she could not get out of her mind was the face of Auntie Em calling out her name and beckoning her to come home. The picture the prophet wants to leave in our minds is a picture not so much of a place, for the place in the end is incidental. It is a picture of God, as strong as a warrior and as gentle as a shepherd, calling us home.

My sisters and brothers in Christ. It is the Second Sunday of Advent, Christmas less than three weeks away. The porch light is on. The home fires are burning. Home is where God is. There's no place like home, because home is not a place. This Advent season, God will bring you home and God will be your home. God will never abandon us. For that we say, "Thanks be to God." In the name of the God who loves us all. AMEN.

**Hymn:** ELW 255 *"There's a Voice in the Wilderness Crying"*

**Prayers of the Faithful:** God of hope, you raised up John the Baptist as a herald who calls us to turn our faces to see the Christ as he comes to us, and you help us prepare our hearts for his holy presence. Make our hearts and minds warm and loving, and fill our mouths with songs of praise and joy in your presence as you come to us. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of generosity, we thank you for the gifts you have given us that we can share with others as an offering to you, along with our thankful hearts. Bless all we give and do in your name, that your Holy Work and your Holy Will may be done among us and in your world. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of gentleness, we pray for all who are troubled in heart, mind, or spirit this season. Send us to them and help us comfort them. When we are struggling, hold us in your mercy, renew us in your love, and spark the hope that is ours in you. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for Florence Felske, Richard Hubert, Dorian Verch, Sharon Watt, and all who seek your healing touch and the gift of your peace. Hold them in your mercy, and journey with them in their illness, bringing them healing and peace. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who are ill with Covid-19 and for all who care for them and all who are working on vaccines. Bless this Holy Work. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Hear our humble prayers, that we may serve you in holiness and faith, and give voice to your presence among us as you come to us in your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you now and forever. **Amen.**

Gathering all our prayers into one, we pray the prayer that you have taught us: Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom 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 who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. **Amen.**

**Blessing:** May our Gracious God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless us and keep us in the Risen Life of Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Sending Song:** ELW 264 *“Prepare the Royal Highway”*

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**Postlude:**

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**News and Announcements:**

**Please Pray for Those Who are Ill, in Hospital, or Requested Special Prayers:** Florence Felske, Richard Hubert, Dorian Verch, Sharon Watt.

**SERVICE BROADCAST ON COGECO**

Cogeco Community Channel is now broadcasting Zion's services at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings, a week later. Advent 2 service will be broadcast on December 13th at 9:00 a.m.

### **GLUTEN FREE COMMUNION BREAD**

If you wish to receive a gluten-free host (bread) as we commune today, please let pastor Stephen know prior to this morning's celebration or ask one of our guides to share that information with him.

### **MID WEEK HOLY COMMUNION AT ZION**

Our mid-week celebration of Holy Communion this month will be held Wednesday, December 9 at 10:30 a.m. This simpler and shorter celebration of Holy Communion, with a smaller gathering, is perfect for anyone who needs to avoid crowds during the Covid season, as there is ample room for social distancing.

### **Important Christmas Eve Worship Information, Including How To Register For Worship On Christmas Eve**

We will gather for worship on Christmas Eve, December 24 at 11:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. at Zion. Please note that these times are somewhat different from last year, mostly because we need time to clean the Church after each time we gather this year. The 11 a.m. worship will be recorded and will be available for viewing Christmas Eve on our website or on our Facebook page for people who, because of Covid restrictions, would prefer to remain at home on Christmas Eve.

Joining us on-line is one way that you can still be part of our celebrations on Christmas Eve. Please remember that attendance at each of our Christmas Eve celebrations cannot exceed 100 people, which is allowed by Public Health for our Church. Perhaps you might consider, for this year only, planning

to attend at 11:00 a.m. or 7:00 p.m. as the mid-afternoon attendance tends to usually be much higher in this parish than the other times on Christmas Eve, and we may not have sufficient allowable seating at 3:00 p.m.

Please register your intent to join us for worship by phoning the Parish office, anytime from Monday to Thursday, in the morning (9:00 a.m. until Noon) up until December 21, giving us the time you plan to attend on Christmas Eve, as well as the names of those who will be attending with you. Volunteers will assist Jean with the registering, and will be happy to receive your phone call.

### **JAM JAR FUNDRAISER – Gifts from the Heart**

The Social Ministry Committee would like to express our deepest gratitude for your generosity in supporting our Jam Jar fundraiser again this year. Canadian Lutheran World Relief's Gifts from the Heart will be most grateful for the support. What a team we are!

**Together we raised \$1,482.00.**

The funds will be designated as follows:

- i. Tiny Hearts- whole gardens: 2(\$75.00)
- ii. Water purification device: 2(\$17.00)
- iii. Build a Latrine: \$200.00
- iv. Pair of Goats: 2(\$70.00)
- v. Flock of chickens: 3(\$45.00)
- vi. Garden tools: 2(\$75.00) *matched 3x's*
- vii. Crop know-how: 2(\$100.00) *matched 3x's*
- viii. Fight drought: \$250.00 *matched 3x's*
- ix. Seeds: 4(\$50.00) *matched 3x's*
- x. Emergency food: \$20.00 *matched 4x's*
- xi. \$3.55 extra will be added to gifts from the heart.

\*The gifts that are marked **matched 3 or 4 x's** mean that for every dollar we donate, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank and the Canadian Government donates 3 or 4 dollars.

Thanks be to God for your generosity in bringing hope and help to the weary world.

## **CHRISTMAS DONATIONS**

If you wish to sponsor a poinsettia, or make a donation to a special fund in memory of a loved one, or in thankfulness to God for His many blessings, please make your **written** request on a donation form (*located on the registration table by the entrance*), and deposit it either in the offering basket, or place it in the office correspondence mailbox located on the steel office door by the elevator.

Filling out one of these forms will ensure that your announcement will appear exactly as you wish. The cost for a poinsettia is \$12.00 and \$25.00. **The last day to order poinsettias is December 7th.** Your special Christmas donation may also be designated to one of the following funds: Building, Organ Restoration, Stained Glass Window Repair, Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR), Good Shepherding, General, etc. **The last day to make this special request is December 20<sup>th</sup>.**

**GIFTS FROM THE HEART CATALOGUE** – Give a meaningful gift from the comfort of home with Canadian Lutheran World Relief's Gifts from the Heart catalogue. Your gift to a loved one will provide meaningful, tangible items for people around the world facing hunger, poverty and the threat of COVID-19. No matter which gift you choose, the gifts you give will change lives

and touch your loved ones! Visit [www.clwr.org/GFTH](http://www.clwr.org/GFTH) to learn more. Catalogues can also be picked up at the registration table by the entrance.

### **CHRISTMAS SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE**

A virtual Christmas Service of Remembrance will be held on Saturday, December 12<sup>th</sup> at 2 p.m. ([www.mdbfuneralhome.com](http://www.mdbfuneralhome.com)). The home page will provide a link to the service, which helps us remember our loved ones and comforts us in our grief.

### **RAFFLE IN SUPPORT OF CAMP LUTHERLYN**

Camp Lutherlyn is hosting a raffle with 13 various prizes to be given away. Tickets are \$10.00 each or 3 for \$20.00, and can be purchased from the church office, on line or from various members of the board. For more information, please check out their website ([www.lutherlyncamp.ca](http://www.lutherlyncamp.ca)) or their Facebook page. Draw date is December 12, 2020.

### **KIWANIS CLUB CHRISTMAS TOY & FOOD DRIVE**

The Kiwanis Club of Pembroke is again holding a Christmas Toys and Food Drive in support of the purchase of Toys for less fortunate families in our community. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, this year it will be a virtual fundraising effort. In an attempt to limit the risk of contracting Covid-19, there will be no volunteers stationed at local stores. For the same reason, no actual toys or food will be collected. Funds raised will be used to purchase toys, which volunteers will place in safe bags for pick up by families who have registered for help.

Surplus funds received will be distributed to St. Joseph's Food Bank (50%), St Vincent de Paul Soup Kitchen (25%) and The Grind (25%). Several other service groups and organizations are working together with Kiwanis to help with this project.

Donations can be made in three ways:

1. mailed to Pembroke Kiwanis , 961 Pembroke St, Pembroke ON K8A 8R4. Make cheques payable to Kiwanis Toy and Food Drive, or
2. eTransfer to [ToyDrive@PembrokeKiwanis.org](mailto:ToyDrive@PembrokeKiwanis.org)(use password Toys), or
3. Dropped off at Studio Dreamshare, 18 Pembroke St. W.

Receipts will be issued for donations of \$20 or more.

Thank you for your support in this important Christmas project.

### **Today's Video Has Been Brought To You By Zion Lutheran Church's Production Crew:**

**Presider:** Pastor Stephen Scheidt

**Musician:** Blaine Sack

**Worship Assistant/Reader:** Gayle Seegmiller

**Videorecorder:** Ty Phannenhour

**Projectionist:** Ellen Vandersleen

**Credit Researcher:** Diane Hammel

### **Today's Scheduled Worship Leaders**

**Counters:** Doug & Pauline Malliff, Susan Dupuis

**Guides:** Vince & Emma Rabishaw

**Sexton:** Diane Hammel

## **This Week at Zion – December 7 - 13**

<b>Monday</b>		<b>Deadline to Sponsor a Poinsettia</b>
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>9:30 a.m.</b>	Tai Chi (Intermediates)
	<b>7 p.m.</b>	<b>Council Mtg.</b>
	<b>7 p.m.</b>	Narcotics Anonymous
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>10:30 a.m.</b>	<b>Mid-Week Service</b>
		<b>BULLETIN DEADLINE</b>
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>10 a.m.</b>	Holy Communion
	<b>11:30 a.m.</b>	<b>Confirmation Class</b>