

**Congregational Church of  
Westminster West  
A United Church of Christ  
2nd Sunday in Advent  
*December 7, 2025***



*When you look around, do you see hope,  
or feel despair or confused?*

(Artwork: David Mulholland, 2025)

**Welcome, Announcements, Acknowledgement of Place**  
**Prelude**

## **Lighting the Second Advent Candle:**

**Centering Chant    “Within our Darkest Night”    Taizé**

### **Lighting of Candle 1**

Leader: In the darkness there is a way.

**Left: There is always a way God will come to us.**

Leader: We light this candle to find our way.

**Right: A Path has been made for us toward God,  
a path of love and trust.**

Leader: Show us to the way, O Christ.

**All: Come, O Jesus, and lead us in the way.**

### **Lighting of Candle 2**

Leader: God of mercy, you are coming, and we need to get ready.

**Left: Help us live in trust that you are near.**

Leader: By the light of this candle, prepare our hearts and lives.

**Right: Lead us in ways of justice and mercy.**

Leader: Straighten a path to our hearts.

**All: Prepare your way in us, O God.**

### **\* Call to Worship**

**Hymnal 859    *Thankfulness and Hope***

***NCH***

Congregation Beth El, Ontario, Canada

**(In unison) We thank you, for you are our God, and God of our fathers and mothers forever. You are the Refuge of our life, the Shield of our help. From generation of generation may we thank you and count your praises—evening, morning, and noon—for our lives which are committed into your hand, for our souls which are entrusted to you, for your miracles which are with us every day, for your wonders and goodness at all times. O Good One, your compassion does not fail. O Merciful One, your lovingkindness never ceases. Forever we hope in you.**

**\*Hymn 115: *The Baptist Shouts On Jordan's Shore***

Charles

*1. The Baptist shouts on Jordan's shore,*

Coffin,  
1736

*the earth shakes with the mighty roar,  
Awake, let lazy sleep now flee;  
behold, the voice of prophecy!*

*2. The earth and sky and sea now feel  
that which their Author will reveal:  
The Child now leaping in the womb  
as God does human form assume.*

*3. Clean up your hearts, lay down the way,*

*for God approaches day by day;  
Prepare for such a worthy heir,  
for such a guest your house prepare.*

4. *Through you, O Jesus, you alone  
salvation, solace, strength are known;  
Without your love we fade like grass,  
like wilted flowers our lives will pass.*

### **Prayer of Confession**

One: Loving God, we confess that we become consumed by  
our consumption of the hopeless spin of earthly news.

**Many: Forgive us for not hearing your liberating  
Good News. Make straight our path!**

One: Forgive us when we find it more expedient to  
surrender to the lure of unsatisfying distractions.

**Many: Forgive us for not sharing in the elevating  
Good News. Let us shout atop mountains.**

One: Forgive us when we find more certainty in cycles of  
hopelessness than in unbridled opportunities of joy in the  
life within and around us.

**Many: Forgive us for not sharing the invigorating  
Good News. Let us raise valleys.**

One: Call us back to You, O God, to be restored in Your  
hope,

reconciliation, restoration, and peace so that we may  
be your agents to make rugged places smooth and  
deserts  
like verdant plains.

**Many: Make us hear your voice crying out from the  
wilderness. Let your invitation to salvation be seen  
and heard in each humble step we take forward ...  
forward ... forward. AMEN**

**Assurance of Pardon** (Unison) from Lamentations 3:21-  
23

Psalms 8 reminds us, “When I look at the night sky and see  
the work of your fingers—the moon and the stars you set in  
place— what are mere mortals that you should think about  
them, human beings that you should care for them? Yet you  
made them only a little lower than God and crowned them  
with glory and honor.” God is so much bigger than we can  
imagine. In fact, Jesus is big enough to grant even us – even  
me – even you – forgiveness and grace. Thanks be to a God  
that big.

(Source: <https://tinyurl.com/4y6mabkw>)

\*Gloria No. 756 (As a round: unison, once; in parts, twice)

*Gloria, gloria in excelsis deo*

*Gloria, gloria alleluia, alleluia!*

## **Prayers of the People**

**L:** May the Lord be with you.

**P:** And also, with you.

**L:** Let us pray.

Joys and Concerns / Silence / Pastoral Prayer

## **The Lord's Prayer**

**Our Father/Mother/Creator, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, Your 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 let us not fall into temptation but deliver  
us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom, and the power,  
and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

**Scripture: Old Testament #1 Isaiah 11:1-10      (*The Message*)**

**11** A green Shoot will sprout from Jesse's stump,  
from his roots a budding Branch.  
The life-giving Spirit of God will hover over him,  
the Spirit that brings wisdom and understanding,  
The Spirit that gives direction and builds strength,  
the Spirit that instills knowledge and Fear-of-God.

Fear-of-God

will be all his joy and delight.

He won't judge by appearances,

won't decide on the basis of hearsay.

He'll judge the needy by what is right,

render decisions on earth's poor with justice.

His words will bring everyone to awed attention.

A mere breath from his lips will topple the wicked.

Each morning he'll pull on sturdy work clothes and boots,

and build righteousness and faithfulness in the land.

A Living Knowledge of God

The wolf will romp with the lamb,

the leopard sleep with the kid.

Calf and lion will eat from the same trough,

and a little child will tend them.

Cow and bear will graze the same pasture,

their calves and cubs grow up together,

and the lion eat straw like the ox.

The nursing child will crawl over rattlesnake dens,

the toddler stick his hand down the hole of a serpent.

Neither animal nor human will hurt or kill

on my holy mountain.

The whole earth will be brimming with knowing God-Alive,

a living knowledge of God ocean-deep, ocean-wide.

On that day, Jesse's Root will be raised high, posted as a rallying banner for the peoples. The nations will all come to him. His headquarters will be glorious.

**Old Testament Lesson #2 Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19 (*The Message*)**

72 1-8 Give the gift of wise rule to the king, O God,  
the gift of just rule to the crown prince.

May he judge your people rightly,  
be honorable to your meek and lowly.

Let the mountains give exuberant witness;  
shape the hills with the contours of right living.

Please stand up for the poor,  
help the children of the needy,  
come down hard on the cruel tyrants.

Outlast the sun, outlive the moon—  
age after age after age.

Be rainfall on cut grass,  
earth-refreshing rain showers.

Let righteousness burst into blossom  
and peace abound until the moon fades to nothing.

Rule from sea to sea,  
from the River to the Rim.

**New Testament Lesson: Romans 15:4-13 (The Message)**

That's exactly what Jesus did. He didn't make it easy for himself by avoiding people's troubles, but waded right in



and helped out. “I took on the troubles of the troubled,” is the way Scripture puts it. Even if it was written in Scripture long ago, you can be sure it’s written for *us*. God wants the combination of his steady, constant calling and warm, personal counsel in Scripture to come to characterize *us*, keeping us alert for whatever he will do next. May our dependably steady and warmly personal God develop maturity in you so that you get along with each other as well as Jesus gets along with us all. Then we’ll be a choir—not our voices only, but our very lives singing in harmony in a stunning anthem to the God and Father of our Master Jesus!

So reach out and welcome one another to God’s glory. Jesus did it; now *you* do it! Jesus, staying true to God’s purposes, reached out in a special way to the Jewish insiders so that the old ancestral promises would come true for them. As a result, the non-Jewish outsiders have been able to experience mercy and to show appreciation to God. Just think of all the Scriptures that will come true in what we do! For instance:

Then I’ll join outsiders in a hymn-sing;

I’ll sing to your name!

And this one:

Outsiders and insiders, rejoice together!

And again:

People of all nations, celebrate God!

All colors and races, give hearty praise!

And Isaiah’s word:

There's the root of our ancestor Jesse,  
breaking through the earth and growing tree tall,  
Tall enough for everyone everywhere to see and take hope!  
Oh! May the God of green hope fill you up with joy, fill you  
up with peace, so that your believing lives, filled with the  
life-giving energy of the Holy Spirit, will brim over with  
hope!

**The Gospel Lesson: Matthew 3:1-12 (The  
Message)**

**Thunder in the Desert!**

3 <sup>1-2</sup> While Jesus was living in the Galilean hills, John, called  
“the Baptizer,” was preaching in the desert country of Judea.  
His message was simple and austere, like his desert  
surroundings: “Change your life. God’s kingdom is here.”

<sup>3</sup> John and his message were authorized by Isaiah’s  
prophecy:

Thunder in the desert!

Prepare for God’s arrival!

Make the road smooth and straight!

<sup>4-6</sup> John dressed in a camel-hair habit tied at the waist by a  
leather strap. He lived on a diet of locusts and wild field  
honey. People poured out of Jerusalem, Judea, and the  
Jordanian countryside to hear and see him in action. There at

the Jordan River those who came to confess their sins were baptized into a changed life.

<sup>7-10</sup> When John realized that a lot of Pharisees and Sadducees were showing up for a baptismal experience because it was becoming the popular thing to do, he exploded: “Brood of snakes! What do you think you’re doing slithering down here to the river?

Do you think a little water on your snakeskins is going to make any difference? It’s your life that must change, not your skin! And don’t think you can pull rank by claiming Abraham as father. Being a descendant of Abraham is neither here nor there. Descendants of Abraham are a dime a dozen. What counts is your life. Is it green and flourishing? Because if it’s deadwood, it goes on the fire.

<sup>11-12</sup> “I’m baptizing you here in the river, turning your old life in for a kingdom life. The real action comes next: The main character in this drama—compared to him I’m a mere stagehand—will ignite the kingdom life within you, a fire within you, the Holy Spirit within you, changing you from the inside out. He’s going to clean house—make a clean sweep of your lives. He’ll place everything true in its proper place before God; everything false he’ll put out with the trash to be burned.”

**\*Hymn 101: Comfort, Comfort O My People**

Johannes

Olearius, 1671

1. *“Comfort, comfort, O my people,  
Tell of peace,” thus says our God;  
Comfort those whose hearts are shrouded,  
Mourning under sorrow’s load.  
Speak unto Jerusalem of the peace that waits for them;  
Tell that their sins I cover, and their warfare now is  
over.*
  
2. *For the herald’s voice is calling  
In the desert far and near,  
Bidding us to make repentance  
Since the realm of God is here.  
Oh, that warning cry obey!  
Now prepare for God a way;  
Let the valleys rise in meeting  
and the hills bow down in greeting.*
  
3. *Straight shall be what long was crooked,  
and in rougher places plain!  
Let your hearts be true and humble,  
For Messiah’s holy reign.  
For God’s glory evermore  
Shall be known o’er all the world;*

*And all flesh shall see the token  
That God's word is never broken.*

**Message:**    *Persistent Images of Hope*

**Offering of our Tithes and Pledges**

**Offertory**

**\*Doxology**

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow!*

*Praise God, all creatures here below.*

*Praise God for all that Love has done.*

*Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One.*

**\*Prayer of Dedication**

**Celebration of Holy Communion**

*We celebrate an open table. When the moment to receive communion comes, all are welcome to come forward and share in the meal. If you are unable to walk forward but would like to participate, it will be brought to you. If you prefer not to receive communion, you are welcome to remain seated in quiet meditation.*

**Communion Interlude:**

**\*Hymn 46 : *Hope of the World***

Georgia Harkness,

1954

1. Hope of the World, O Christ of great compassion,  
    Speak to our fearful hearts by conflict torn;  
    Save us your people from consuming passion,  
    From false pursuits through which our lives are worn.
2. Hope of the world, God's gift of our redemption,  
    Bringing to hungry souls the bread of life,  
    Still let your Spirit unto us be given  
    To heal earth's wounds and end its bitter strife.
3. Hope of the world, who by thy cross did save us,  
    From death and sad despair, from sin and guilt,  
    We render back the love your mercy gave us;  
    Take back our lives and use them as you will,
4. Hope of the world, O Christ, o'er death victorious,  
    Who by this sign did conquer grief and pain,  
    We would be faithful to your gospel glorious,  
    Our sovereign who forever more shall reign!

**\*Commissioning and Benediction**

**Postlude:**

\*Indicates that all who are able shall stand

## **Church and Community Notes**

As we seek a settled pastor through our search and call process, we will not be able to offer office hours as usual, but the deacons (Karen Blanchard, Charlotte Gifford, Ray Hussey, Adrienne Major, and Sue Venman) are available to support the congregation. You can leave a message on the church number (802-387-1175) or you can contact a deacon directly. In case of a pastoral emergency, a deacon will call on the Rev. Shawn Bracebridge. (pastor of the Dummerston UCC) and help a person in need get in contact with him.

## **Upcoming Events:**

Dec. 14: Advent 3, Ray Huessey

Dec. 21: NO MORNING SERVICE - Community

Candlelight Service, **5 pm**, Adrienne Major and storytellers.

Dec. 24: Christmas Eve, 11 pm, Lise Sparrow

Dec. 28: Sue Venman

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## **Worship Participants:**

Preacher: David Mulholland

Musician: Amy Cann

Deacon: Karen Blanchard

Technician: Charlotte Gifford

Trustees: Guy Payne, Chair

Elements: Charlotte Gifford

Ministers to the World: The Congregation