

Introduction to our Advent series

The Advent Season is typically associated with a season of joyful anticipation. As children we may remember the countdown beginning, perhaps with an Advent calendar with a chocolate for every day. Decorations and lights come out of the closets and a whole new repertoire of music finds its way into our ears in anticipation of a season of joyful festivities. We look forward to celebrating the birth of Jesus. While this year's pandemic restrictions may keep us all closer to our homes than we would like, preparations for Christmas are nonetheless appropriate.

This year's Advent theme, "On the Road . . ." conveys not only a contemplative anticipation but it elicits a sense of movement. It then begs the question: What are we moving towards? Does the movement end at Christmas? The birth of Jesus, Emmanuel—God with us, opens for us a new era of God journeying with us and we journeying with God along the road of faith and faithfulness. In preparation for such a journey, we begin with opening ourselves in **readiness** to new understandings and a willingness to **repent** and leave behind attitudes and priorities that obstruct our movement. This opens us to visions of the possibility of **restoration** and justices in our world as we finally approach the manger with the full **revelation** of the child. Such revelation indeed calls for **rejoicing** on Christmas Day. How will this revelation guide our steps into a new year as we continue our journey on the road? In the midst of this year's pandemic, let's allow prayerful contemplation to prepare us for the revelation of God's love manifest in the child. And then, individually and as a congregation, let's consider how we can continue to make this love manifest in our world, guided on this road by the **radiance** of Epiphany and Emmanuel – God with us!

Wild and lone the prophet's voice – STS #8

Wild and lone the prophet's voice echoes through the desert still, calling us to make a choice, bidding us to do God's will:
"Turn from sin and be baptized;
cleanse your heart and mind and soul.
Quitting all the sin you prized, yield your life to God's control."

"Bear the fruit repentance sows: lives of justice, truth, and love.
Trust no other claim than those; set your heart on things above.
Soon the Lord will come in pow'r, burning clean the threshing floor:
then will flames the chaff devour; wheat alone shall fill God's store."

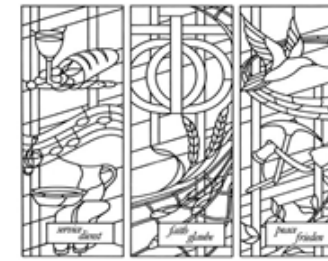
With such preaching start and bold John proclaimed salvation near, and his timeless warnings hold words of hope to all who hear.
So we dare to journey on, led by faith through ways untrod,
till we come at last like John – to behold the Lamb of God.

Now the Heavens Start to Whisper – Voices Together #237

Now the heavens start to whisper, as the veil is growing thin.
Earth from slumber wakes to listen to the stirring faint within:
seed of promise, deeply planted,
child to spring from Jesse's stem!
Like the soil beneath the frostline,
hearts grow soft to welcome him.

Heavy clouds that block the moonlight now begin to drift away.
Diamond brilliance through the darkness shines the hope of coming day.
Christ, the morning star of splendor,
gleams within a world grown dim.
Heaven's ember fans to fullness;
hearts grow warm to welcome him.

Christ, eternal sun of justice, Christ, the rose of wisdom's seed,
come to bless with fire and fragrance hours of yearning,
hurt and need.
In the lonely, in the stranger, in the outcast, hid from view;
child who comes to grace the manger,
teach our hearts to welcome you.



Altona Mennonite Church

Sunday School – Adults & Children: 10:00 am
Sunday Worship Service: 11:00 am

VOLUME LIX No.46

December 13, 2020

On the Road...to Restoration

Gathering

Prelude

Welcome

Hymn HWB #184 Hark! The glad sound

Call to Worship – Adapted from Psalm 126:2-6

Leader: The Lord has done great things for us, and so we rejoice!

People: Our mouths are filled with laughter, and our tongues with shouts of joy.

Leader: Those who sow in tears will reap shouts of joy.

People: Those who go out weeping will come home with shouts of joy.

All: The Lord has done great things for us— we rejoice!

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-11

Lighting of Advent Candle: music

Prayer of Confession

Leader: God, we confess we do not always recognize you.

People: We confess that when we do, we do not always receive you.

All: Open our eyes to see you and our hearts to receive you.

Hymn SS #8 Wild and lone the prophet's voice

AMC Contact information:

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Altona Mennonite Church is on Treaty One Territory.

Listening

Monologue Reading

Hymn VT #237 Now the Heavens Start to Whisper

Scripture Reading: Psalm 126

Sermon Radical reversal of reality

Hymn HWB #181 My soul proclaims with wonder

Responding

Prayers of and for the People

Offering

Benediction: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24, 28

Music

Postlude

Speaker: Pastor Dan Kehler

Worship Leader: Elaine Loewen

Monologue: Dale & Sandra Klassen

Music: Loren & Lori Hiebert, Elaine Loewen, Bretlyn Loewen

Sound: Lorraine Heinrichs

Worship & Meeting Events at AMC

Dec. 20 Fourth Sunday of Advent online service

Theme: On the road...to Revelation *Speaker:* Dan Kehler

Scripture: 2 Samuel 7:1-11; Psalm 89:1-4, 19-20; Romans

16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38, 46b-55 *Worship Leader:* Andrea

Hildebrand *Musicians:* Marilyn Houser Hamm, Edna Zacharias

Sound: Perry Batchelor

Dec. 21 Longest Night – we remember from our homes

Dec. 24 Christmas Eve

Dec. 25 Christmas Day

Dec. 27

Birthdays: December 16 – Elizabeth Falk

Anniversaries: December 17 – Dan & Crystal Kehler

AMC ANNOUNCEMENTS

- When you go to our church website, you will notice that it looks quite different. Thanks to Kevin Neufeld for setting it up!

- If you have pictures of how you are celebrating Advent, please send them to this email address, and they will be added to the gallery.

- An order for Rejoice! Devotional guides will be made by the end of this month. If you have not been receiving it and would like to start, please let Lori Hiebert know soon. The cost for the year (4 quarterly guides) is \$48, payable to AMC in whatever form you use.

- Thank you to all of you who have rediscovered the alternative ways of donating to AMC since we've had to cancel in-person worship. Our audio services have been great to keep us connected to AMC, but it's not the same as seeing each other. Our pastors and a few others are working to set up the facility to video record our services, which will add to our connection. Thankfully a Grant will help offset costs, but we still have our regular expenses, and are currently \$9,000 into our Line of Credit, so please give generously. Options to give are online through Access Credit Union, (using your 7-digit phone number as your account number), e-transfer to amchurchdonations@gmail.com, or a cheque mailed it to AMC, Box 1237, Altona, ROG 0B0. Thank you.

WIDER COMMUNITY & MISC. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Christmas at CMU Highlights!** COVID-19 prevented CMU from hosting its annual Christmas at CMU musical celebration. While we lament the loss, the university is nonetheless sharing selected pieces of an earlier Christmas at CMU program. Be drawn into the spirit of Advent and enjoy the music! Find this curated selection of musical ensembles at www.cmu.ca/christmasatcmu, launched on **Friday, December 18 at 7:00 PM (CST)**.

PRAYER AND PRAISE

- Pray for Pastor Dan Kehler, and for Dave & Hildie Regehr as they together lead the church.

- Harv Heinrichs has been diagnosed with Lymphoma. The week of daily treatments went well. Seven of eight weekly treatments are completed. Mostly they have gone well, with occasional low points. Still praying for continued strength, healing and good results!

- Pray for Ken & Marianne Braun and Mike Tarnick who are at Eastview.

- Pray for Ken Hamm, who is back at the Altona Hospital. The surgeon is pleased with the latest x-rays. Pray for an appetite and strength. Remember him and his family in your prayers, especially now that visitors are limited or not allowed at all.

- Anne Loewen goes for chemotherapy monthly. Pray for strength, safety and peace.

- Pray for all those for whom mental health makes daily life a struggle. The current situation increases anxiety for many.

- Pray for those who experience physical pain, and for friends and family who help with their care.

- Many of our church family have other family they are concerned about. Pray for healing, strength and calm for all.

Prayer for Our Community

- Pray for ALL the teachers, students and staff as they navigate all the regulations and requirements.

- Pray also for the Health Care Providers.

- Pray for Doug Klassen (MCCanada's Executive Minister) and for church leaders at all levels of our conference.

- Pray for Rick Neufeld and Peter Rempel who are adding the duties of MCManitoba's Executive Minister to their other roles. Michael Pahl will be assuming that position in January 2021.

Prayer for Our World

- **AIMM appoints new executive coordinators: John Fumana and Bruce Yoder** - John Fumana of Democratic Republic of Congo, and Bruce Yoder of Listowel Mennonite Church in Ont. will work as a team to give leadership to this Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission. Former executive coordinator Rod Hollinger-Janzen says, "The complementary skill sets of Bruce Yoder and John Fumana, together with their shared passion for Christian mission... position AIMM well for an exciting future."

If you would like to add or remove any prayer requests, please contact the church office.