



## BETHEL UNITED CHURCH

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Minister: Rev. Norm Laird  
Organist and Choir Director: Robert Don

January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Second Sunday After Christmas

10:30 a.m. Family Worship

### THE APPROACH

Musical Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship

One: God is Holy Mystery,  
beyond complete knowledge,  
above perfect description.

**All: Yet, in love, the one eternal God seeks  
relationship.**

One: So God creates the universe  
and with it the possibility of being and relating.

**All: God tends the universe,  
mending the broken and reconciling the  
estranged.**

One: God enlivens the universe,  
guiding all things toward harmony with their Source.

**All: Grateful for God's loving action,  
we cannot keep from singing.**

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Prayer: (together)

**We come to you with gratitude, O God,  
thankful for your presence at all times.  
We come before you grateful for the multitude  
of voices in different languages, from different places,  
who cannot keep from singing your love.  
We come before you grateful for the beauty  
of the natural world  
that sings its own love songs.  
God of all song,  
blend the richness of all these harmonies together,  
so that the one melody of "another world is possible"  
sings forever in our hearts. Amen**

Passing the Peace of Christ

Hymn: 87, I Am the Light of the World

### THE WORD

Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12 *p. 2*  
The Visit of the Wise Men

Children's Time

Hymn: 82, A Light Is Gleaming

Scripture: Ezekiel 18:30-32 *p.785*  
Matthew 5:38-41 *p. 5*  
Concerning Retaliation

Dialogue/Sermon

### THE RESPONSE

Prayer of Humility: (together)

**Loving God, you challenge us to listen to the pain  
of our world,**

**To not stray from the hard, cold truths that surround us.  
We resist facing the pain in our own hearts when we face injustice,  
to feel the deep despair of this world, of all creation.  
We sometimes turn from recognizing our own involvement in injustice:  
    **in our personal lives,  
    our church community,  
    our local and global communities,  
    and in the natural world.**  
We cry out to you, compassionate God,  
to hold us as we seek to find your way,  
and guide us as we seek to walk in your love.  
**Amen****

Assurance of God's Love

The pain and sorrow we feel is God's reminder of our ability to be compassionate and loving people. Know that God walks with us in our despair and uncertainty,  
Calling us to be justice-making people.  
God's love transforms all.

Hymn: 595, We Are Pilgrims

Minute for Mission: "M&S and a Colombian Partner"

Offering

Offertory Prayer: (together)

**We come to you this day, O God,  
with gifts and resources for the ministry of the church –  
in this congregation and in our local and global community.  
We offer these gifts as members of a community**

**that believes in your transforming love.  
We offer these gifts to you  
because we know another world is possible.  
Your love transforms all. Amen**

Prayers of the People: **Another World is Possible**

God, source of love, creator of the universe, although we do not want to be part of any injustice and cruelty in our world we are sometimes caught up in a net of greed, injustice and cruelty – a net cleverly woven to prevent us from living your love in the world. A net woven by empire that seeks to stifle all difference and diversity.

**And yet you give us prophetic voices that say "another world is possible."**

Holy One, you bless us in our relationships with global partners in the South, who, from their own experiences of oppression and marginalization, encourage us to create spaces for hope and transformation in the places we work, worship, and live. Spaces that fray the net of empire so that new ways of living and being in community emerge.

**Within those spaces, we hear "another world is possible."**

In breakfast programs for hungry kids, in homeless shelters, in the long lines in hospital corridors, in detention centres for those held without trial, in homes where abuse and violence prevail, in the places where people have given up hope of meaningful, adequately paid work, it is difficult to see how we can loosen this stifling net that empire has wrought.

**We lose heart. And your ever-present love reassures us "another world is possible."**

Our relationships with groups, partners, and movements in Canada who experience oppression and marginalization within a "rich" country encourage us to create spaces of hope and transformation in the places we work, worship, and live.

**Holy One, you bless us through those close to us who say "another world is possible."**

In our forests and by our oceans, in the soil and sand and bedrock of this world, we see the powerful changes that are caused by our misuse and abuse of creation. We mourn the loss of disappearing species, of habitat, and of respectful relations with the earth and all who live here.

**And yet, Creator, the wind, the rain, and the eagle whisper to us "another world is possible."**

You bless us with hearts that have the capacity to carry both joy and pain, hearts that can live your transforming love in the communities we belong to, hearts that no net can hold.

**In our hearts we hear your voice singing "another world is possible."**

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Hymn: 154 MV, Deep in Our Hearts

Commissioning

One: As God's people, will we stick our heads in the sand and hope empire will go away?

**All: No!**

One: As God's people, will we anaesthetize ourselves, accepting only happy thoughts, upbeat beliefs?

**All: No!**

One: As God's people, do we abandon faith, and only take care of ourselves?

**All: No!**

One: As God's people, do we cave into despair and limp fearfully through life?

**All: No!**

One: Christ sends us forth into the world as his very body, to love and serve, to seek justice and resist evil.

**All: Strengthened by God, we go forth!**

**Community overcomes empire every time.**

**We will build Christ's community everywhere!**

Choral Amen

Postlude

† † †

**Is It Empire?**

**Empires are about allegiances and values.** The nature of the Basilea or "kingdom" of heaven or of God was contrasted with the nature of the kingdoms of the earth from the beginning of the gospels. Claiming Jesus as "Lord" meant rejecting that Caesar had your ultimate loyalty.

Empires of this world are complex and multifaceted. They can now be bigger and affect life in more places more quickly than in previous eras because of innovations in communications, transportation, and other technologies. History records the rise and fall of empires on all continents but Antarctica – and even there empires have staked claims and have had their impact.

Are we living in the midst of empire right now, today?

**You might be living in the midst of empire**

- if most owners of companies making goods and providing services in your community don't live in your town, province, or even your country
- if the CEO of your company makes 500 times what an entry level production worker does
- if the meat, produce, and grains produced down the road are not for sale locally
- if faith groups are labelled "special interest groups" and thought to be useful only if they feed the poor
- if producers of military goods are thriving while music and art struggle to find a place in schools
- if keeping your culture, religion, and language alive takes deliberate effort

*--The Rev. Marilyn Leuty is the minister at Trinity United Church in Grimsby, Ontario, and is a member of the United Church's Mission Theme Consultation Group.*

## The Life and Work of the Congregation January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009

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**Happy New Year and welcome!** We are glad you came! **Visitors** are asked to sign our guest book in the vestibule. **All are invited** to the auditorium following the service for refreshments and visiting.

**Coffee (regular and decaf.) and juice** are being served in the narthex each morning before the service. This is an opportunity to socialize prior to the Sunday worship services and is one way congregations are engaging in the **Emerging Spirit Campaign**.

**Leading the service this morning with the Rev. Jeanette Liberty-Duns** are some of the people who participated in the "Challenging Empire" workshop held last fall.

**Empire** is defined as the complex systems of domination at work in the world. It's about power -- power that is used unfairly to create inequality. It's something we are all part of.

### **This morning:**

**Head usher:** Marguerite Irvine

**Ushering and greeting:** Don and Gladys Kemmer,  
Lilah Brehon and Lillian Genereux.

**Reader:** Rev. Barbara Martin

**Today's bulletin** is sponsored by Lillian Genereux in memory of her husband, Henry.

**Norm** will be back in his office Wednesday, January 14<sup>th</sup>.

**After Coffee Time today, the Christmas decorations** will be put away. Plan to stay for a short while, if you can, and help take down and pack away the decorations.

**The Mitten Tree** by the Lectern will become a 'mitten tree' after the service today. Any donations you wish to make of hats, scarves, mitts and socks are welcome. If you purchase mitts, the waterproof ones are best. **After February 1<sup>st</sup>, the items will be taken to the Inner City Ministry.**

**'The Good News Ensemble'** is ten singers and musicians who travel from church to church once per month with an upbeat and encouraging Good News message. Their presentation is a jazz, swing and soft-rock gospel sound. They present traditional religious songs as well. Several songs are special arrangements out of Voices United. This group was formed in 2002 and see themselves as an inter-faith group. **'The Good News Ensemble' will be our guests at the regular worship service next Sunday, January 11<sup>th</sup>.** See **bulletin insert.**

**To help prevent the spread** of colds and flu-like illnesses, please remember to use the **hand sanitizer** that is provided on the table in the narthex and on the table at coffee time.

**The Vilorja Martial Arts Academy** will be meeting in the gymnasium this evening. Please stay for a few minutes after coffee time, if you can, and help put away the tables and chairs. Thank you.

**"Interesting/Educational Things To Do"** – (Described on pages 3 and 4 of the Advent 2008 Newsletter):

**'100 Mile Potluck Supper', Sunday, January 18<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m.** hosted by the Outreach Committee. Please bring a dish in which the main ingredients will have been produced or grown within 100 miles of Saskatoon. Amy Joe Ehman will speak to us about the benefits of eating locally-grown produce, meat, etc.

**'Dessert & Discussion':** 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month, beginning **January 15<sup>th</sup>**, 7:15 p.m. at Tastebuds on Lorne Avenue.

**'Movie Night': Friday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 7:30 p.m.,** at the home of Glen and Karen Baxter, 205 Tucker Crescent (955-6262). What's Playing? – "What Dreams May Come". See sign-up sheet on the bulletin board.

**'January Book Discussion' – Awareness** by Anthony DeMello, **Sunday mornings 9:15-10:15, beginning January 25<sup>th</sup> to February 15<sup>th</sup>.** Sign-up sheet is on the coffee table. Books (cost approx. \$20.00) will be available January 18<sup>th</sup> for those planning to participate.

**'Finding Stillness in a Hectic Life'.** Discussion on this topic will be held February 3<sup>rd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup>, 7:15 p.m. at Bethel.

**A reminder from the Worship Committee:** perfumes, after-shave lotions and other kinds of scents can cause real difficulty for those who have allergies. Let us try to keep this in mind as we come together for worship.

**Meals on Wheels: Volunteers** are needed to continue delivering meals. The sign-up calendar is on the literature table. Bethel's coordinator is Shirley McKay (374-4883).

**Greeter and Lift Operator:** Please see the sign-up sheet on the coffee table.

**Samples of the 2009 Bulletin Covers** are in the church office. If you wish to sponsor a bulletin to honour a loved one, a birthday, anniversary or other special occasion, the cost is \$30. All contributions are tax deductible.

**2009 Canadian Church Calendars** will be available from the countertop next to the church office today at the reduced price of \$3.

**2008 Annual Reports:** People or groups who will be writing reports are asked to submit them to the church office **by next Sunday, January 11<sup>th</sup>**. The goal is to have the printed 2008 Annual Reports available to the congregation the Sunday prior to the Annual Congregational Meeting to be held February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Thank you.

*-Bev.*

**The Congregational Annual General Meeting** will be held after worship on **Sunday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009**. Everyone is invited to join in a potluck sandwich lunch, followed by the meeting. Please plan to attend this important meeting.

**Check out Bethel's website** for general information about our church, our service and news and events. The site address is: [www.bethelsaskatoon.com](http://www.bethelsaskatoon.com) or go to the WonderCafe site and do a church search using either the church name or postal code. **Any information for our website** must be forwarded through the church office. Information from a source, other than the church office, will not be posted.

**The Bethel UCW** will hold a General Meeting on Thursday, January 8<sup>th</sup>, at 1:30 p.m. in the gym.

**Scripture readings for next Sunday, January 11<sup>th</sup>:**

Genesis 1:1-5, Mark 1:4-11

**Stewardship Seconds 2009 - January 4<sup>th</sup>:**

Praise the Lord! From God's fullness we have all received grace upon grace.

**Meetings and events this week:**

**Monday:**

-Cubs, 7:00

**Tuesday:**

-Beavers, 6:30

**Wednesday:**

-Choir Practice, 7:00 p.m.

-Scouts, 7:00

**Thursday:**

-UCW General Meeting, 1:30 (Gym)

**Friday:**

-Beaver Sleep over, 6:00

**Advance Notice:**

- Communication & Contact Committee, January 11<sup>th</sup>, 11:45
- Bible Study resumes Wednesday, January 14, 10:00
- Ministry & Personnel Committee Christmas Luncheon, Thursday, January 15<sup>th</sup>, 11:30 sharp.
- Oliver Lodge Service – Bethel will be in charge Thursday, January 15, 2:00
- Installation of UCW, Sunday, January 18<sup>th</sup>
- '100 Mile Potluck Supper' Sunday, January 18<sup>th</sup>, 5:30