



Kensington Presbyterian Church
Growing in faith and sharing God's love
 since 1786

Surprise?

December 24, 2023

WELCOME, to worship. We are offering a variety of ways for people to gather. We are welcoming people to worship in person (with singing), as well as through Zoom, YouTube, and this printable PDF.¹ If this is how you are worshipping, know that you are not alone... and if you like, you can invite those who live with you to join you, or connect with others through the phone or outside.

If you have any prayer requests, ideas, or just want to talk, please reach out to your elder or Rev. Peter (Peter@Kensingtonchurch.ca).

Announcements

Clicking on or tapping blue text will take you to a web-site

Advent & Christmas:

Christmas Eve: tonight at 7 pm

a time of readings & carols, thoughts & prayers

Christmas Morning: 9:30 am pot-luck & singing

Church Office: Will be closed from the 25th to Jan 8th.

If you need something, please contact Rev. Peter directly.

Zoom Prayer Group: Thursday at 6:30 a.m.

[us04web.zoom.us/j/773730107?](https://us04web.zoom.us/j/773730107?pwd=eUo2M09YMEw5dkZvdm9uQmpHNIUrUT09)

[pwd=eUo2M09YMEw5dkZvdm9uQmpHNIUrUT09](https://us04web.zoom.us/j/773730107?pwd=eUo2M09YMEw5dkZvdm9uQmpHNIUrUT09)

Jesus & Java: won't officially meet this week, but your welcome to go

Drop Box: Food donations are welcome for the local Food Pantry, diapers for young mothers through Head & Hands, and cloths & accessories for the New Hope Boutique.

¹ note: that the footnotes are not as thorough as an academic paper.



John the baptists' nativity

Contacts

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Approaching God

🗨️ Call to worship

The prophets call and the psalmists sing to announce that God is love.

“For the mountain may depart and the hills may be moved, but my steadfast love shall never depart from you...and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord who has compassion on you.” (Isaiah 54)

“Give thanks to the LORD, who is good...give thanks to the Lord of lords, whose steadfast love endures forever.” (Psalm 136)

From the mystery of God’s love came our creation. We are nurtured daily by it. The power of God’s love is transformative; because we have received God’s love, we cannot remain the same.

Love means seeking the best for others. Love is compassion for all creation. Love speaks the truth with kindness. Love is the way of seeing others as God sees them.

Holy are you, Source of all new life among us.

Jesus Christ is the love of God come into the world.

We join with all creation and lift our hearts in joyful praise.



**We light this candle to burn for love.
(while lighting the candle of peace)**

🎵 Hymn: Hope is a star - verse 4.....pg 10 (119)

youtu.be/OwrfmAHWuy4?t=139



Wise Men - R Cunningham



Prayer of Approach

Praise God

Praise the Lord with all our hearts.
For God promised to stay us,
with all of creation,
and God has.

We hear this through stories of the Bible & stories of the church.
Always different, always the same.
Always reforming, and always formed around you Lord,
reaching out in love to bring the way of peace.


Praise God,

Praise Jesus with all our hearts.
For you came to walk with us,
shining light on the path.

With your light,
we see the ways we walk off the path,
the ways we hurt, more clearly.
We are sorry for the suffering we have caused,
or allowed to happen. . .

Praise God,
Praise the Holy Spirit with all our hearts.
Because you do offer us forgiveness.
You continue to help us walk in the way of peace.
Building a community here, and throughout the global village,
to share your love and peace.

As we wait, help us to live out the prayer you teach us:

 The Lord's Prayer (please use a version you are comfortable with)

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**


Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours**

Amen.

 Assurance of Pardon
Hear the good news spoken through Zachariah
God has visited his people
and has redeemed them.

God has raised up a mighty saviour
from the house of David.
God spoke through the prophets of old
so that we would be saved from our enemies
God has shown mercy and has remembered his promises.
Amen.



Listening to God

 Children's Time

What are some things that make you angry?

Does it feel good to be angry?

(What do you look like when you're angry?)

We all get angry sometimes. What's important is being able to let go of the anger in a way nobody is hurt more.

This may take courage to forgive the person who made you angry.

It will mean telling them why you are angry or hurt. It means letting the anger go and thinking about other things. It means telling the person you forgive them and are not going to think about what they did.

It can be hard.

(This is also true if you are angry with yourself,
or even God.)

prayer

Dear Jesus, help us to say sorry when we hurt others,
and to be able to forgive as well.

Amen.

♪ Hymn: Will your anchor hold.....pg 11 (744)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=PTfypuXwrMA

🙏 Prayer for Illumination

Lord, open our hearts and minds
through the power of your Holy Spirit,
that we may be open to the unexpected
and trust in you.
Amen.

✦ Intro to the readings

Luke's gospel starts with a greeting and then gets right into the story... or Zachariah. We'll hear most of it today. While Jesus isn't mentioned, it is about preparing the way for Jesus coming.



Zacharias Elisabeth praying - Mann

📖 Reading: Please look up the passages in your own Bible,² or click on the name to be taken to an online version.
[Luke 1: 5-15a](#)
[Luke 1: 57-66](#)
[Luke 1: 57-79](#) (responsively)

✦ Sermon: Surprise?

*Dear Lord, please bless these words
and the meditations of our hearts. Amen.*

Today we are having two worship services! What's with that? The Worship & Music Committee talked about it. We wondered if people would actually come. What would we miss if we cancelled one? Especially with chances to gather last Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and tomorrow.

I think what swung the discussion wasn't that this is the fourth Sunday of Advent; it was the comment that "this is what you do on Sunday morning."

You might have a more intense or personal reason to come, but 'just what you do' is a good one. It falls under what we call a 'Christian Practice'. These are ways we practice being a Christian so that when times are dark we have practised looking for the dawn.

Today's passage starts by Zachariah going to church. Now he has a bit more responsibility than you. He was a priest. People now become priests or ministers because they feel that God has called them personally, and the church agrees. This wasn't the case for Zachariah. He was a priest because it's what his family

² If you'd like a new Bible with helpful notes, I recommend the 'Life with God Bible' NRSV from Renovaré. ISBN 0061834963 or for the more academically inclined, The New Oxford Study Bible NRSV

did. This was their role in society going back centuries. Whether they feel like it or not, it's just what they do.

We don't know exactly what being a priest involved for him. Some people imagine it meant going to Jerusalem and going behind the curtain to where God lived - possibly a once in a lifetime experience. Others think he was a priest in a community and did this on a regular basis. Either way, Zachariah was at church that day because it was 'just what he does'.

Being an "old" man, I think it's safe to assume that this is something Zachariah has done before. He knows what to expect. There will be the feeling that this is a special place. (Perhaps you've noticed that about some places. I noticed this on Iona in the 6th century abbey - it just feels closer to God). Then Zachariah will go through the routine - light the incense, pray, go back out & bless the people gathered. He knows what to expect.

Except, this time it wasn't as expected. This time he went to church like normal and something different happened.

It makes a good argument for coming to church just because it's what you do.

This time, God shows up.

Now, we always believe God shows up. This is watered down a bit by the belief that God doesn't live here in the church, but is always with us - always showing up.

Still, sometimes there's a special connection. Sometimes you feel at peace; or something clicks and there's a connection between God and your life. Zachariah receives a pretty clear connection - terrifyingly direct.

That God works through the unexpected shouldn't be a surprise - you could even say God being doing the unexpected should be expected. Zachariah will sing and refer to David, the youngest son in a large family with the lowly job of a shepherd - who became the greatest king of Judah & Israel. Nobody expected that. Zachariah then remembers Abraham. Thinking of Zachariah & Elizabeth having a baby in their old age, we might also remember Abraham & Sarah - and the time three strangers unexpectedly walked near their camp. Abraham invited them for refreshments, only to discover they were from God... and predicted he & Sarah would have a baby in their old age. In response, Sarah laughed.

If you didn't remember that story, that's okay. I don't think God will take your voice away. Zachariah, the priest, should have remembered it. Maybe he was made silent to give space to remember how God works. ...and losing his voice was unexpected.

As the priest on duty that day, Zachariah was to light the incense, say some prayers, and then return to the people and speak God's blessing. That's what normally happened. There was nothing wrong with it. Except now God was doing something unexpected.

God doing the unexpected is something to keep an eye out for.

and it begs the question... what is God doing?

It's not a question that Zachariah likely asked in the moment. These moments tend to be the person's whole reality. Think of when you encounter God in worship through an unexpected peace or connection. Did you analyze the experience, or just be in it? Still, it's a good question to ask when there's time to ponder it. What is God doing?

Well... it's a new chapter in "the way of peace".

It starts with Elizabeth getting some peace - or at least quiet, as Zachariah can't talk. But God is doing more - building a new reality. When Zachariah receives his voice back, we hear more.

Zachariah starts by praising God for what God has already done - promises fulfilled. Zachariah then praises God for promises to come. Like in the past, these promises will become real. These aren't secret promises known only to priests. Everybody knows about the covenant (agreement) between God and the people. God will look after them, and they will only have God.

God showing up to save the people of Judah & Israel is expected. God creating, or re-creating, a new Kingdom/reality on earth is expected. Peace is expected. How God will overturn their enemies ...that's unexpected.

This is the plan. Little baby John will grow up to teach people knowledge of salvation. This is more than just telling them 'it's going to be okay, God will save you.' This involves telling them about the enemies they need saving from... and it's not the Romans. They need saving from the way they live. They need saving because other things are coming between them and God, them and each other. This is the enemy of peace - and unexpected.

What sort of things lead us to sin?

- Fears: It's easy to be afraid we won't have enough. A common one is will we have enough to eat or wear. Do we trust God and others to help, or do we sacrifice them to economically look after ourselves?
- Respect: In Biblical times it was called honour, and it was even more important to your place in society than now. Still, it's easy to find massive houses and million dollar

cars around. Is it about need, or trying to buy respect? How does giving respect for things hurt relationships? encourage sin?

- Justice: is hard. It can be small, like when somebody doesn't seem to be paying attention to what you're saying. You can be hurt and decide not to bother telling them things again. Damaged relationship. Sin. It can be massive, like the quest for justice between Israel and Hamas.

In all these cases there is a lack of trusting God - of placing God first. This damages the relationships with God, and with others, ...with all of creation. This is not the 'way of peace'.

It's not really a surprise. In Biblical times they heard readings from the prophets about looking to God for your needs & justice - and looking after each other. This is their part of the covenant with God. The answer baby John will propose is also expected: forgiveness.

Thankfully God doesn't sit there waiting for us to make the first move. God sends people like John to prepare the way; to remind people about sins - about what hurts relationships. This comes with reminders that we are all God's children - we are all connected. When we do something that hurts someone else, we hurt God. When we hurt creation, we hurt God. ...and God offers forgiveness for those that turn around.



Dorothy Day and the Holy Family of the Streets
Kelly Latimore

Being forgiven builds trust, and trust in God brings peace that our needs will be looked after.

God's forgiveness also helps us to forgive as well - to re-form relationships. They won't be the same, but there can be healing.

It's hard. It means giving up something. It means trusting.

and we can't force somebody to forgive us, or accept our forgiveness. It can be hard to let go of how we define ourselves - whether that's our needs, or need for respect, or pain. It can be hard to accept 'the way of peace'.



Three wise men and a wall - Jim Forest

I'm going to end with a story.

There were two neighbours out in the country, and they hadn't talked to each other in ...maybe two years. It started over a stray cat. It hung around with of of the them, and then it went over to

the other porch. Whenever they talked they started arguing over that cat - until they quit talking.

A traveller came through looking for work. The one farmer said, "You say you're a carpenter? Well, I got some work for you. You see that house over there, that's my stupid neighbour. You see that ditch, he calls it the creek. He dug it out. If he's going to try and divide us with that, I'd just as soon finish the job. Can you build me a fence so I don't have to look at him again?"

The worker replied, "Well, yeah, I could do that. You'd need to invest in a lot more wood, but I can get started with what you have by the barn."

When the man came back from town, he looks out at where his new fence ought to be. That carpenter has built a bridge. out of his wood. and here comes his neighbour. across his bridge. onto his land wearing that goofy smile. and walking up to his truck.

And his neighbour says, "You're a brave man. I didn't think you'd want to speak to me again. I feel like a fool. I'm sorry for building the creek without telling ya. ...and about the cat."

and the man finds himself saying, "Ahh, heck, I knew it was your cat. I'm sorry too."

and so through the unexpected dawns forgiveness and peace.

*To God be all the glory
Amen.*



Responding to God

🎵 Hymn: Blest be the God of Israel.....pg 10 (752)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=M9AuunN2CNc

💬 FaithTalk: These are some questions for you to discuss with somebody... or many somebodies.
Do what you feel safe (and practice stretching a little).

Memories: Recall a time in worship when you felt at peace, or a connection with your life. Consider what God was doing.

Wonder: How do our actions/values change when fear/hurt rules our hearts?

Etching: As you are comfortable, share a grievance or pain that shapes your actions.

Actions: While you can't make people forgive, how do you apologize?

Values: Ponder the 'way of peace', and life.

Prayer: ...that we will be open to the unexpected, and that we can say sorry for the ways we sin.

✦ Spirit Sightings

It was wonderful to see the blending of different communities last Friday with people from Kensington Sunday morning, the Friday Films, the Korean Presbyterian Church, & the children's theatre, and our physical neighbours. There was singing, food, crafts & laughter. When people gather, especially when we can talk celebrate God (like at Christmas time), the Holy Spirit moves and breaths life.

Thank you to everyone who helped!



Kensington Caroling

✦ Offering

Financially, we have set up a donation option on our **website**: kensingtonchurch.ca. Just click the '**Donate Now**' button, and then the pretty button. It gives you various options that are easy to follow.

You can also donate through **interac e-transfer**. Our name is Kensington Presbyterian Church and the e-mail address is info@kensingtonchurch.ca.

Mailing a cheque or signing up for Pre-Authorized Remittance (**PAR**) are also good options.

🙏 Prayers of the people

○ come, o come, Immanuel.

Come Lord Jesus, come.

Surprise us by your presence,

surprise us with your blessings.

We pray this morning for those who are afraid,
for those whose fears are controlling their values and actions.
We pray for those who are afraid of not having enough to eat,
of losing their home,
of losing their families,
of losing their independence,
of losing their health.
We pray for those who are afraid.

God of love
Come Lord Jesus, come.

We pray this morning for those who struggle for respect.
May they feel your love,
and learn to trust that you will always value them.
May they be able to live in ways,
that share this love with everyone
and all creation.

God of love
Come Lord Jesus, come.

We pray this morning for those who thirst for justice.
May we all turn to you for justice,
so that cycles of violence and will stop.
May you help us to set boundaries that protect everyone,
and help those who hurt others to realize the pain they cause.
May your love bring healing, hope, and even joy
into everyone's lives.

God of love
Come Lord Jesus, come.

We come to you, confident that you are active,
because we have seen you active before.

In Jesus name
Amen.

♪ Hymn: O Come, O Come Emmanuel.....pg 12 (122)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xtpJ4Q_Q-4

✦ **Benediction** (Ephesians 3:20-21)
*Now to him who by the power at work within us
is able to accomplish abundantly far more
than all we can ask or imagine,
to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus
to all generations, forever and ever.*
Amen.



Hope is a star

MOON BEAMS Irregular

Unison

1. Hope is a star that shines in the night,
 2. Peace is a rib - bon that cir - cles the earth,
 3. Joy is a song that wel - comes the dawn,
 4. Love is a flame that burns in our heart.

lead - ing us on till the morn - ing is bright,
 giv - ing a prom - ise of safe - ty and worth.
 tell - ing the world that the Sav - iour is born.
 Je - sus has come and will nev - er de - part.

Refrain

When God is a child there's joy in our song. The last shall be first

and the weak shall be strong, and none shall be a - fraid.

Words: Brian A. Wren (1936-) Music: Joan Collier Fogg (1949-)

Words: copyright © 1989 by Hope Publishing Co. Music: copyright © 1989 by Hope Publishing Co.

Blest be the God of Israel

MERLE'S TUNE 13 13 13 13

Unison

1. Blest be the God of Is - rael, who comes to set us free,
 2. Now from the house of Da - vid a child of grace has come,
 3. On those who live in dark - ness the sun be - gins to rise,

who vis - its and re - deems us, who grants us lib - er - ty.
 a Sav - iour who will lead us to our e - ter - nal home.
 the dawn - ing of for - give - ness up - on the sin - ner's eyes;

The proph - ets spoke of mer - cy, of res - cue and re - lease;
 Be - fore him goes his her - ald, fore - run - ner in the way,
 to guide the feet of pil - grims a - long the paths of peace.

God shall ful - fill the prom - ise to bring the gift of peace.
 the proph - et of sal - va - tion, the mes - sen - ger of day.
 Oh bless our God and Sav - iour with songs that nev - er cease!

Words: Luke 1:68-79; paraphrase, Michael Perry (1942-1996) Music: Hal H. Hopson (1933-)

Words: paraphrase, copyright © 1973 by Hope Publishing Co. Music: copyright © 1983 by Hope Publishing Co. CCLI #4440603

Will your anchor hold

WILL YOUR ANCHOR HOLD 10 9 10 9 with refrain

F B \flat 6 F/C C F

1. Will your an - chor hold in the storms of life, when the
 2. Will your an - chor hold in the straits of fear, when the
 3. Will your eyes be - hold through the morn - ing light the

C (F \flat) C/G G7 C C7/E F C

clouds un - fold their wings of strife? When the strong tides lift and the
 break - ers roar and the reef is near? While the surges rave and the
 cit - y of gold and the har - bour bright? Will you an - chor safe by the

7 F F7 B \flat F/C C7 F

ca - bles strain, will your an - chor drift or firm re - main?
 wild winds blow, shall the an - gry waves then your bark o'er - flow?
 heav - en - ly shore, when life's storms are past for - ev - er - more?

Refrain F B \flat /F F

We have an an - chor that keeps the soul

F/A F C F /E \flat

stead - fast and sure while the bil - lows roll, fast - ened to the rock which

B \flat /D F/C B \flat (F) B \flat F/C C7 F

can - not move, ground - ed firm and deep in the Sav - iour's love!

Words: Priscilla Jane Owens (1829–1907) Music: William James Kirkpatrick (1838–1921);
 harmony, Francis B. Westbrook (1903–1975)

Words: public domain Music: harmony, copyright © Oxford University Press

Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel

Unison

1. Oh come, oh come, Em-man - u - el, and ran-som cap-tive
 2. Oh come, oh come, thou Lord of might, who to thy tribes on
 3. Oh come, thou Wis-dom from on high, and or - der all things
 4. Oh come, thou Branch of Jes - se, free thine own from Sa - tan's
 5. Oh come, thou Key of Da - vid, come and o - pen wide our

Em Bm G Am Em D Bm C

Is - ra - el, that mourns in low - ly ex - ile here,
 Si - nai's height, in an - cient times didst give the law,
 far and nigh; to us the path of knowl - edge show,
 tyr - an - ny; from depths of hell thy peo - ple save,
 heaven - ly home; make safe the way that leads on high

Am Bm Em Am Em Bm

6. Oh come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer
 our spirits by thine advent here;
 disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
 and death's dark shadows put to flight. Rejoice!...
7. Oh come, desire of nations, bind
 all peoples in one heart, one mind;
 bid envy, strife and discord cease,
 and be thyself our source of peace.
 Rejoice!...

Words: Latin, 13th century; translation, John Mason Neale (1818-1866); French, H. Écuyer
 Music: Gregorian plainsong; arrangement, Healey Willan (1880-1968)

Words: public domain Music: arrangement, copyright © Michael Willan, executor of the estate of Healey Willan

Refrain

un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
 in cloud and maj - es - ty and awe.
 and cause us in her ways to go. Re-joice, re-joice!
 and give them vic-tory o'er the grave.
 and close the path to mis - er - y.

Em D G Am Em G D Em Bm

Em-man - u - el shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el.

G Am D Em G/B Em Am Bm Em

1. Oh! viens bientôt, Emmanuel,
 nous délivrer du joug cruel,
 et du péché briser la loi;
 ton peuple entier s'attend à toi.
 Joyeux, levez les yeux au ciel,
 voici venir Emmanuel!

2. Oh! viens bientôt, que ta clarté
 dissipe nos obscurités.
 Errants et tristes dans la nuit,
 nous appelons le jour qui luit.
 Joyeux, levez les yeux au ciel,
 voici venir Emmanuel!

3. Oh! viens bientôt, descends vers nous.
 Saint Fils du ciel, aimant et doux.
 Aux cœurs troublés apporte donc
 la paix divine du pardon.
 Joyeux, levez les yeux au ciel,
 voici venir Emmanuel!

4. Oh! viens bientôt, puissant Sauveur,
 nous réveiller de nos langueurs!
 Il n'est que toi, celeste Pain,
 qui puisse apaiser notre faim.
 Joyeux, levez les yeux au ciel,
 voici venir Emmanuel!

Rejoice! Christ is born!



Hope is not lost even in the face of poverty, injustice and disaster.

The church, through PWS&D, responds to God's call to reach out to those in need. Together with our partners, we are making a positive impact in our global community, helping those affected by disasters and providing a sustainable way out of poverty.

Encouraged by God's promise of abundant life, we are addressing hunger, poverty, injustice and disaster. Our efforts are focused on caring for the poor, sick and vulnerable. Through our collaborative efforts, we aim to restore human dignity, alleviate suffering and promote community cooperation.

As a reflection of Christ's hope, peace, joy and love, we are striving toward a sustainable, compassionate and just world.

As we celebrate the birth of Christ, let us remember our brothers and sisters across the globe. Your support is crucial to the success of this transformative work.

This Christmas, help to bring hope, peace, joy and love around the world, please support PWS&D.

Sunday, December 24 ——— MISSION MOMENT

Through Presbyterians Sharing we shine Christ's light in Canada and around the world. We are there when a prisoner in Malawi discovers Christ's love through Bible study, and when an Indigenous woman in Taiwan reads the Bible in her own language for the first time. We are there when a congregation adapts to meet community needs in new ways and when a theological student in Canada, Malawi, Nigeria, Ghana or Beirut graduates, ready to serve God. We are there when a child receives a healthy snack and after-school support from an inner-city ministry, and when a refugee claimant needs a friend. We are also there for one another as we pray, serve and share the gifts God has given us. When we put our gifts in God's hands, God does remarkable things!



DAILY PRAYERS

Sunday, December 24 We pray that the love we know in Christ will nourish and nurture our love until we conform to the pattern of Christ's life.

Monday, December 25 (Christmas Day) We thank you, loving God for the gift of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ who brings reconciliation. May we come to know you more clearly and serve you more faithfully as we receive the Christ Child again.

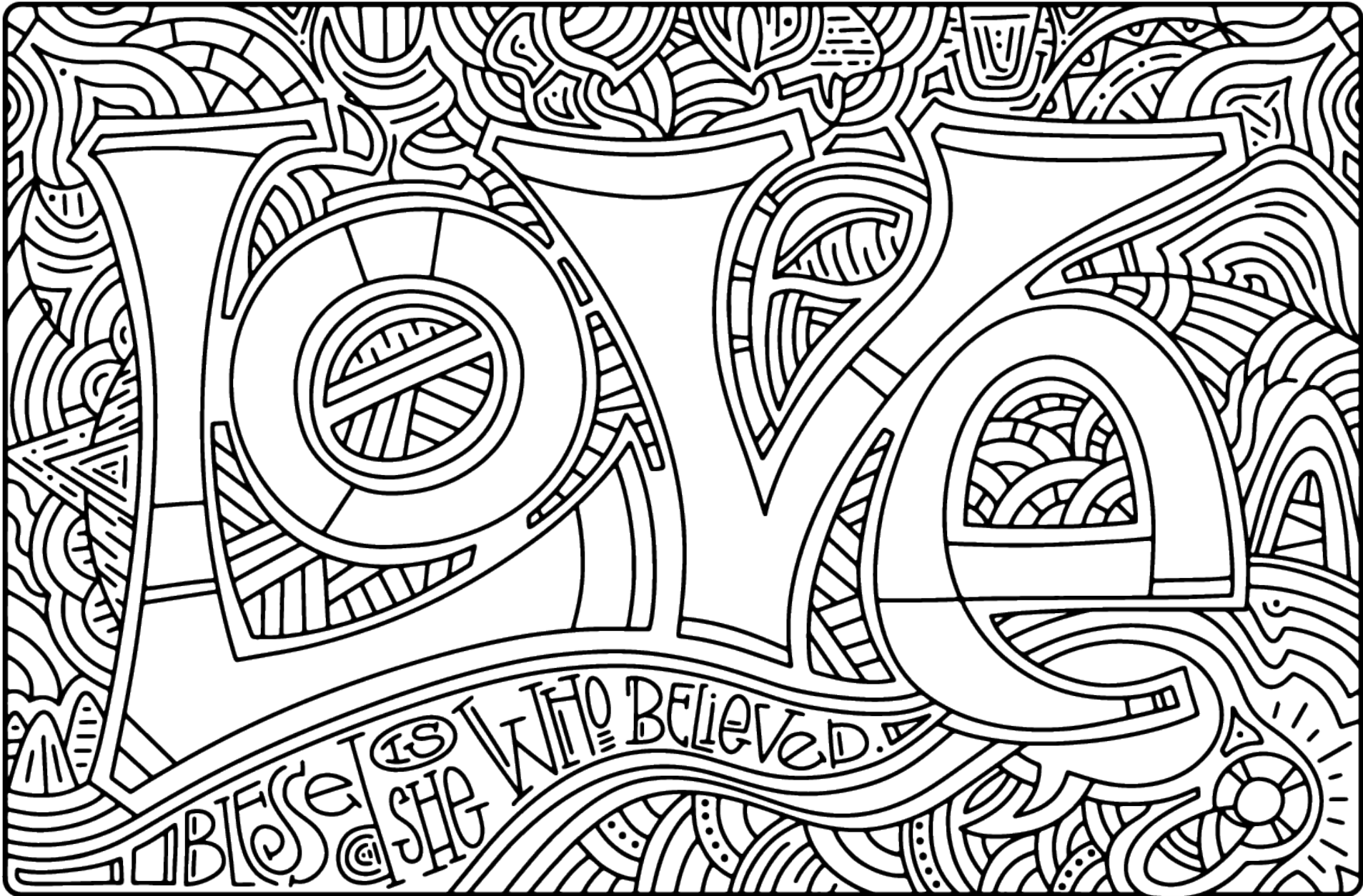
Tuesday, December 26 For Christ, there was no room in the inn; we pray for those who seek shelter. Christ had to flee his birthplace; we pray for those who seek refuge. Christ read scripture as a child; we pray that God's wisdom will enlighten our minds and direct our paths.

Wednesday, December 27 We pray for Cedar Tree Ministries, an outreach ministry for Indigenous people on Vancouver Island that hopes to bring healing and reconciliation between the church and the First Nations, as well as to worship God.

Thursday, December 28 We pray for Bishop Szablocs Bogdán as he provides leadership to the Reformed Church in Romania, Királyhágómellék District for the next five years.

Friday, December 29 We give thanks for the Rev. Mary Fontaine, Moderator of the General Assembly, and the connections she is making with congregations and individuals as she serves the church.

Saturday, December 30 Christ was born as one of us and, in him, God shows us how much the world is loved. We pray that God's love blesses and fills the world.



illustratedchildrensministry.com