



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

*Ready to change*

*January 12, 2025*

**WELCOME**, we come to you from the un-ceded lands of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation.

We're glad this PDF has come to you.<sup>1</sup> If you're using a device, clicking on or tapping blue text will take you to a web-site. We are also welcoming people to worship in person on Sundays at 10:30, over Zoom, and on YouTube. Know that you are not alone.

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*

**Sunday Singing:** Join Zoé Sundays at 10 to run through the day's music, and sometimes other tunes.

#### **Prayer Groups:**

**Zoom:** Wednesday 6:30 am

**Woman's Prayer Group:** Thursdays 2-3:30 pm at Cathy's house  
talk to Ines or Cathy for more information

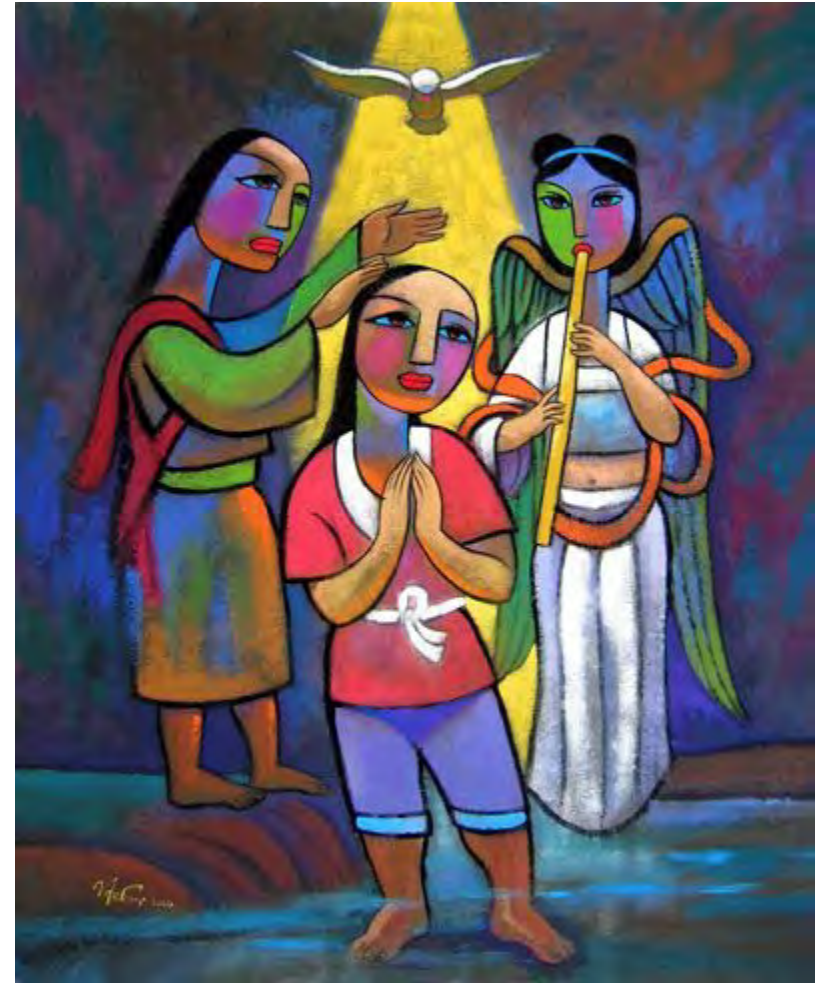
**Bible Study on Luke:** Wednesday 7-8 pm over zoom and in person

**Jesus & Java:** Thursday, 3:30 pm at Beetz, 5914 Sherbrooke @ Clifton  
A casual discussion about life and God

**Friday pizza & movies:** 6:30 pizza followed by movie  
RSVP with Peter appreciated Jan 17: Abominable

**Drop Box:** Food donations are welcome for the local Food Pantry,  
diapers for young mothers through Head & Hands.

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



Baptism of Jesus III - He Qi

### *Contacts*

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## Approaching God



### Lighting of the Christ Candle

Jésus Chris est la lumière du monde.  
Jesus Christ is the light of the world.



### Call to worship

Create in us a clean heart, O God,  
**that we will be filled with the joy of your salvation.**  
May your living water pour over us  
**until we float in your steadfast love.**  
Lord, open our lips.  
**And our mouths shall proclaim your praise.**

♪ Hymn: O breath of life come sweeping through us....pg 10 (384)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-r3xd9\\_P3k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-r3xd9_P3k)



For God so Beloved - Jules Atkinson



### Prayer of Approach

Lord, we have heard something and come looking.  
Sometimes it feels like we are in the bustle of the city,  
sometimes lost in the wilderness  
and sometimes both.

**Through it all, your Spirit calls,  
and has guided us to this time and place  
to this community.**

We come looking for comfort  
and relationship  
and hope for a better future.

Help us to see your future  
and to see our past.

We recognize that our actions do affect our relationship with you,  
with others,  
and with creation...

There are times when we keep the gifts you have given us  
as if they were just for us...

There are times when we use the power you have given us  
in money, or education, or position  
to make our lives better  
even when causing others to suffer...

**We pray for you to create in us a clean heart,  
and to put a new and right spirit within us.  
Restore in us the joy in following your way,  
and make us willing to make those changes.**

May your Spirit continue to shape us as we pray the prayer Jesus  
teachers:

🧘 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 from Psalm 85  
Salvation is at hand for those who fear God,  
Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;  
righteousness and peace will kiss each other.  
Amen.



### *Listening to God*

✦ Children's Time

What's it mean to feel sorry?  
...feeling bad when you've done something that is wrong  
or hurt someone  
ex. not wanting to do things in the morning, even when you  
know it makes life hard for others. You feel sorry that you  
are giving them a hard time.  
What's it mean to repent? (it's word used a lot in the Bible)  
...to change so that you don't do it again

ex. you feel sorry, and so start going to be bed earlier,  
or cut out desserts and TV in the evening to sleep better  
or get up earlier so you have longer to wake up  
...the point: you do something new; you change

The challenge: to think of something you are sorry about, and  
then what can you change to do better. (note: it's okay to ask  
for help)



Prayer:

*Dear Jesus, help us to notice when we hurt others,  
and to change our ways to be more helpful.*

Amen.

♪ Hymn: Lord I want to be a Christian.....pg 10 (571)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rzt62ITBCww>

🧘 Prayer for Illumination

Lord, open our hearts and minds  
through the power of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may hear your word for us today.  
Amen.

✦ Intro to the readings

Our reading from Luke jumps forward about 15 years. Jesus is  
now about 30, but he's more of an off-stage focus today. The  
focus is on John the Baptizer and what he's telling people - and  
it's a real Fire and Damnation sermon. Not the sort of thing you



do now unless you want people to be offended and walk out... except that's not what happens here.

A few details to clarify before Laura shares the readings.

- people wore sandals and the roads & paths were all dirt. Their feet were literally dirty and untying someone else's sandals was considered a job for the lowest servant.
- The soldiers in the passage are likely not Romans, but Jews serving King Herod.
- The talk of levelling mountains and filling in valleys is not about ecological abuse or disaster, but about how if you are trying to get somewhere, then it's easier if the path is straight and flat.



And two points for the Psalm

- Hyssop is in the mint family and has antibacterial properties. It was also used in a cleansing ceremony.
- To blot out something goes back to when it took time for ink to dry and would use a blotter to soak up extra ink so it wouldn't make a mess.



Water - Phil Irish



Reading: Please look up the passages in your own Bible,<sup>2</sup> or click on the name to be taken to an online version.

[Luke 3: 1-22](#)

[Psalm 51](#)



Sermon: Ready for change?

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

Imagine a place where people have been talking about the need for change - for a while. Life is hard. They need another leader. There were different ideas as to what needed to happen, but what if you were somebody who knew? You knew that change was coming and what to do.

John knew, but he couldn't call a press conference. There were no newspapers, radio, websites, ... Though, there were reporters. In a way. If somebody saw or heard something, they would report it to a friend - who reported it to a friend - who reported it to a friend.

Does this remind you of the game 'telephone'? (where you sit in a circle and whisper a sentence to somebody, who whispers it to the next person, and so on - and when it gets back to you it's totally different.) Well, they were better at it since most people then had to depend on their memory to remember everything.

And news was spreading.

There was a man going up and down through the wilderness along the Jordan river<sup>3</sup> talking about change - and he's different. He doesn't pretend everything's okay, but talks just like a prophet from the Bible. He's all accusatory. He's talking about how the

<sup>2</sup> If you'd like a new Bible with helpful notes, I recommend the 'Life with God Bible' NRSV from Renovaré. ISBN 0061834963

<sup>3</sup> or for the more academically inclined, The New Oxford Study Bible NRSV about 140 km as the dove flies (there's lots of twists)

way things are is wrong and not helping. This acknowledgement is affirming. He's telling everyone that they must change their ways, or worse will happen. It's so familiar it's comforting. And we know how the story went before.

When the people were being oppressed as slaves in Egypt God led them out and through the wilderness to learn how to live God's way. Later when the leaders and people of Judah and Israel were not living God's way they were warned by prophets. When they didn't change the kingdoms were conquered, cities destroyed, and people taken into exile. Then the prophets reminded them that when they learned their lesson and turned to God they would also return to their land - and they did.

Now there is a voice crying out from the wilderness, just like a prophet of old. While the words are harsh, could it be that the time for change has come? Is this good news? Can there be hope?

Yes  
but is the change that happens ever quite as we hoped for?

The people are hoping for salvation - God delivering people from their needs into the well-being that God intended. John talks about the coming of salvation. This is great. But what do they hope for?

This passage doesn't go into the crowd's expectations. We can imagine it included freedom from government interference in their lives - such as enforced labour and being taxed into slavery. Perhaps God would use the Heavenly Host of angels to kill the Romans.

What we do have in this passage is John's expectations. He talks about the coming Saviour cutting down those who are not bearing good fruit and using them to fuel the fire. While the fire

may be useful for heating or cooking, it's a short life for the fire wood. Later he talks about the grain being safely stored, and the rubbish being swept up and burned. John is expecting a Saviour who will clean house - and those who aren't a part of the solution will come to a fiery end.

Are John's expectations completely in line with God's plans? We'll hear more on that in about a month.<sup>4</sup>

What about the author's expectations? This chapter starts<sup>5</sup> by naming the important leaders of the day: the Roman Emperor, local leaders (under Rome), and the Jewish high priest. Why? One reason could be that Luke believes the events and characters happened in this specific context. Including non-Jewish leaders could also suggest that this story is for more than Jews - it's for everybody. It could even be suggesting more. That John and Jesus are 'on the same stage' as Caesar and the others. Luke is expecting "*the salvation of God*" to be big.



As Christians, we believe that Salvation has come, but is still being realized. What are you expecting?

For salvation to be needed, things can't be all good the way they are. This means things need to change. John is calling for people to start with themselves. If they repent for their sins, then this will smooth the way for the coming Reign of God.

Begging Jesus - T Schmalz

<sup>4</sup> Luke 7

<sup>5</sup> Just a note on chapters. They were added in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, with verses added in a 1555 edition. That said, it is the start of a new section.

To break down the religious language a little. Sins would be things you do that hurt your relationship with God, other people, or creation. Repent, as covered in the children's story, means not just regretting what you did (or didn't do), but also changing your ways so you're not likely to do it again. The Reign of God is when the world will be living God's way - which as that is how creation is designed to be, will be the best way for all.

John sees this coming. A smooth landscape would make it easier, but that's not the lay of the land. However, if they can change how they live God's reign will come smoother - like not having to climb out of valleys and over mountains to get where you're trying to go.

To get people to change he doesn't use charm. Yet despite calling them "*a brood of vipers*", the people come to John and ask what they can do. They remember the prophets of old, their harsh words and that they had specific suggestions. "*Then what should we do?*" they ask John. 'How do we change?', and John gives them nice practical and achievable advice. He doesn't say give everything you have to the poor,<sup>6</sup> but if you have two coats and somebody doesn't have any, give them one of yours. When the tax collectors come and ask, John doesn't tell them to give up their job collaborating with the evil Romans, but just to not take any more from people than they are required to. Show mercy to those in need, and practice justice.

This reminds me of two conversations I had this week with people wondering about helping the homeless they see around the city. John's advice is a challenge to support the vulnerable (very much like the prophets of old). His advice doesn't make you vulnerable - or that you keep more than you need. It means considering what God has provided for you - and what you can share. In Canada that will likely mean keeping more than one

coat. If you don't have anything planned this afternoon, perhaps it's a gift of time to look through your closets and boxes. You can consider how these items have been a gift from God, and whether they could be a gift to someone else.

Not that this is easy. If it was, you wouldn't have those things any more. This is acknowledged in the passage as well. It seems that people who have lots, like King Herod, can find it hard to change/repent. John told the tax collectors not to take more than they needed, and the soldiers not to abuse their power... Herod did both on a bigger scale. He wasn't just not producing good fruit, but was bruising so many others. He's one of the reasons people were looking for change/Salvation.

Why these thoughts of others? Shouldn't they work hard to get ahead? What's wrong with using what opportunities you've been given to get ahead, or great a little comfort? Why? Because for God, community and relationships are important. This runs through the entire Bible.

I remember in school the teacher triggering a debate as to the best way to help others: do you help meet their needs, or change the causes that lead to the needs. For example: do you provide an 'out of the cold' program for people living on the street with nowhere to go - or do you provide more mental health workers so less people end up on the street in the first place. I think the answer is both. In John's world people didn't have any say in how society functioned, but they did in their own lives. They can help meet another person's needs by not exploiting them, or sharing what they have. And this will help make life smoother - and help prepare the way for the Lord's reign - for God to bring salvation. It may be one life at a time, but that makes a difference.

If you are intimidated by how much needs changing in the world, try just one opportunity at a time.

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<sup>6</sup> that'll be another story and another context.



Baptism - Jesus Mafa

And this community aspect to what John is calling people to consider is not only about helping smooth things out for Salvation to come - but it shows up.

Joining the community gathered around John, Jesus comes. With all the others, he is baptized to show that his life is turning from the way it was to focus on God - and we know that in Jesus' case his impact will be bigger than the rest of the community around John - bigger even than Caesar.

While the change may not happen the way people had hoped for, Salvation has come in Jesus.

...and God is *"well pleased."*

*To God be all the glory  
Amen.*



## *Responding to God*

♪ Hymn: Spirit of the living God.....pg 11 (400)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrwRS1h-rmY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrwRS1h-rmY)

🗨 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: Have you ever heard a 'fire and brimstone' sermon? How did it make you feel?

Actions: What is something that you are sorry about. How could you repent/change to make yourself less likely to do it again?

Values: What 'good fruit' do you see in your conversation partner. What fruit do you want to bear?

Wonder: Consider the image of 'blotting' out our sins instead of erasing or forgetting is interesting. It suggests God absorbs our sins, pulling the stain out of us - or at least stopping them from making a bigger mess. What do you think/feel about this image?

Prayer: ...that we will clearly hear God's Spirit like she's physically with us.

## ✦ Spirit Sightings

One of the programs supported by Presbyterians Sharing is Hummingbird Ministries. It is led by the Rev. Mary Fontain - the first Indigenous moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Hummingbird





promotes healing for Indigenous generations, addressing the trauma of a colonial past while nurturing hopes for a brighter future.

When I was in Vancouver I was honoured to join in their arts festival which helped build community and healing.



## Offering

Financially, we have set up a donation option on our **website:** [kensingtonchurch.ca](https://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](mailto:info@kensingtonchurch.ca).

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



## Prayers of the people

This week we will be passing around our prayer diary and having a prayer based on that. You are welcome to create your own prayer based on this<sup>7</sup>...

Creator,  
water pourer,  
hear our prayer for the world  
that we may find ourselves  
with you  
in the swirling dust of people's lives,  
living in the light  
brought through love  
and proclaiming justice.

For conflict in the world...

Hear us as we pray  
for those who live daily  
with fear and conflict,  
worry and violence.

For those suffering in the world  
because of natural disaster...

Hear us as we pray  
for those coping with disaster  
long after we've forgotten about it.

For those coping with a sharper,  
more uncertain world  
in fear of itself  
and each other,  
in religion and politics.

Hear us as we pray  
for a distrusting world.

And for our own communities  
and neighbourhoods...

Hear us as we pray  
for our friends and family,  
for those seeking peace  
and those living with anxiety.

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<sup>7</sup> from *Spill the Beans* #21



Hear us as we pray for those around us  
and through whom we live life.

Water pourer,  
hear our prayer for the world  
that we may find ourselves,  
with you,  
in the swirling dust of people's lives,  
living in the light

in Jesus' name.  
Amen.

♪ Hymn: O holy Dove of God descending.....pg 11 (392)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOnT2uqyug8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOnT2uqyug8)

✦ Benediction  
As we contemplate the changes that God is bringing to the world,  
may you remember:

*That God is above us and beneath us  
before us and behind us  
walking beside us  
and living within us all.*  
Amen.



## MISSION MOMENT

Sunday, January 12

With support from Presbyterians Sharing, Hummingbird Ministries promotes healing for Indigenous generations, addressing the trauma of a colonial past while nurturing hopes for a brighter future. Led by the Rev. Mary Fontaine, the first Indigenous moderator of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, the ministry fosters healing and reconciliation through cultural arts, including dance and drama performances. Additionally, Hummingbird Ministries connects with congregations across the PCC to provide healing through workshops and events like National Indigenous Peoples Day, the Christmas Circle, and the Peace through the Arts Festival.



### DAILY PRAYERS

**Sunday, January 12 (Baptism of the Lord)** Let us remember our baptism and pray that we will live in ways that fulfil the promises made on our behalf, and may we boldly confess Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour.

**Monday, January 13** We pray for the Rev. Lora Nafziger and her family as she begins her second year as Staff Support and Counselling Advisor at the United Mission to Nepal headquarters in Kathmandu.

**Tuesday, January 14** We pray for St Paul's PC in Hamilton, Ontario as they engage in a community that is hurting from opioid addiction and homelessness, and for Hamilton Urban Core as it runs treatment and outreach services from its temporary home at St. Paul's.

**Wednesday, January 15** We pray for residents of St. Andrew's Hall who gather on Wednesday evenings for soup and discussion on the Christian faith and mental health using the Sanctuary Course materials under the leadership of Chaplain Rev. Sumarme Goble.

**Thursday, January 16** We pray for the Rev. Dr. Pat Dutcher-Walls, Moderator of the 2024 General Assembly, as she connects with Presbyterians across the country in her visits and through letters and articles.

**Friday, January 17** We pray for Cedar Tree Ministries on Vancouver Island as it works towards healing and reconciliation, serving Indigenous communities through spiritual, social and mental health services. We pray also for its Director, the Rev. Joey Cho.

**Saturday, January 18 (World Week of Prayer for Christian Unity)** We pray for the members and work of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee.

## 384 O Breath of life, come sweeping through us

SPIRITUS VITAE 9898

1. O Breath of life, come sweep - ing through us; re - vive your  
 2. O Wind of God, come bend us, break us, till hum - bly  
 3. O Breath of love, come breathe with - in us, re - new - ing  
 4. O Tongues of fire, come rest up - on us, so we may

church with life and power. O Breath of life, come cleanse, re -  
 we con - fess our need; then in your ten - der - ness re -  
 thought and will and heart: come, Love of Christ, a - fresh to  
 speak your word a - right; kin - dle the flame of love a -

new us, and fit your church to meet this hour.  
 make us, re - vive, re - store, for this we plead.  
 win us, re - vive your church in eve - ry part.  
 mong us; e - quip your church to spread the light.

Words: Bessie Porter Head (1850-1936), alt; v.4, Iona Maclean (1954-)

Music: Mary J. Hammond (1878-1964)

Words: v.4, copyright © The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1997 Music: copyright © the estate of Mary J. Hammond

## Lord, I want to be a Christian

I WANT TO BE A CHRISTIAN 14 11 6 11

1. Lord, I want to be a Chris - tian in - a my heart, in - a my heart;  
 2. Lord, I want to be more lov - ing in - a my heart, in - a my heart;  
 3. Lord, I want to be more ho - ly in - a my heart, in - a my heart;  
 4. Lord, I want to be like Je - sus in - a my heart, in - a my heart;

Lord, I want to be a Chris - tian in - a my heart.  
 Lord, I want to be more lov - ing in - a my heart.  
 Lord, I want to be more ho - ly in - a my heart.  
 Lord, I want to be like Je - sus in - a my heart.

In - a my heart, in - a my heart, in - a my heart,

Lord, I want to be a Chris - tian in - a my heart.  
 Lord, I want to be more lov - ing in - a my heart.  
 Lord, I want to be more ho - ly in - a my heart.  
 Lord, I want to be like Je - sus in - a my heart.

Words: African-American spiritual Music: African-American spiritual

Words: public domain Music: public domain

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## Spirit of the living God

1. Spir - it of the liv-ing God, fall a-fresh on me. Spir - it of the  
 2. Spir - it of the liv-ing God, move a-mong us all; make us one in

liv - ing God, fall a-fresh on me. Melt me, mould me, fill me,  
 heart and mind; make us one in love: hum-ble, car - ing, self-less,

use me. Spir - it of the liv-ing God, fall a-fresh on me!  
 shar - ing. Spir - it of the liv-ing God, fill our lives with love!

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## O holy Dove of God descending

1. O ho - ly Dove of God de - scend - ing,  
 2. O ho - ly Wind of God now blow - ing,  
 3. O ho - ly Rain of God now fall - ing,  
 4. O ho - ly Flame of God now burn - ing,

you are the love that knows no end - ing; all of our shat - tered  
 you are the seed that God is sow - ing; you are the life that  
 you make the word of God en - thrall - ing; you are that in - ner  
 you are the power of Christ re - turn - ing; you are the an - swer

dreams you're mend - ing:  
 starts us grow - ing: Spir - it, now live in me.  
 voice now call - ing:  
 to our yearn - ing:

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