

Jan 11

Prelude

Welcome-Eilidh

Good morning and welcome to Vancouver 1st United Methodist Church. I'm Rev. Eilidh Lowery. Joining me in worship leadership today we have our music director Martin Ellis and our liturgist Susan Bell and our call to worship leader Diana Estep.

Call to Worship- Diana

Please rise in body or spirit and join me in our call to worship with words adapted from Scott A Ressman

Leader: God of the water that welcomes us into life
and sends us out into the world, we thank you.

**People: God of the water that connects us,
where we meet the joyful Spirit,
Jesus our friend, who teaches us new things, we thank you.**

Leader: God of the water that gives us life,
that refreshes us,
and helps us start fresh again, we thank you.

**People: God of the water that can be scary sometimes,
but leads us on new journeys
from what we know to what God is still showing us, we thank you.**

Leader: God of the water,
give us new life,
bring us together,
live in us,
and help us grow as we worship this day.

People: Amen

Passing of the Peace- Susan

Remember to greet those joining us on youtube with a wave as we take some time now to greet one another with the peace of Christ.

Opening Hymn

“This Is the Spirit’s Entry Now,” found at number 608 in *The United Methodist Hymnal*.

1. This is the Spirit's entry now: the water and the word,
the cross of Jesus on your brow, the seal both felt and heard.
2. Let water be the sacred sign that we must die each day,
to rise again by his design as followers of his way.
3. Renewing Spirit, hear our praise for your baptismal power
that washes us through all our days. Lord, cleanse again this hour.

This Is the Spirit’s Entry Now, words by Thomas E. Herbranson (1972); tune: AZMON, by Carl G. Glaser, arranged by Lowell Mason (1839). Words © 19781 Augsburg Fortress Publishers. All rights reserved. Used with permission

Children’s Time-Eilidh

Have you ever been swimming in a river?
In Jesus time people went to the river a lot
They got water there
They would wash their clothes there
And they would take special baths called mikvehs
When something happened
Maybe there was a fight
Or someone did something wrong
one of the ways people would say they wanted to be make things right with God again was to go to the Mikveh
It was a way of saying sorry or of saying I don’t want things to be broken or awkward or out of sorts
I want a clean start
When Jesus came around he said God always love us no matter what
All the time
That we have a clean start all the time
Any time we want or need one and that
God is with us in all the hard stuff
And so today we are remembering that God loves us by telling the story of Jesus baptism
Of the time he went into the river to show us that we are beloved children of God.
We still do baptisms for people to claim that love

We only do it once because we know that Jesus said we can never be outside of God's good grace

No matter what!

Today we remember that and give thanks that God loves us so much.

Will you pray with me?

Thank you God

For a clean start

Thank you god for giving us Jesus and baptism

Help us to remember that you love us always

No matter what!

Amen

Special Music

Scripture Reading - Susan

Our scripture passage today comes from the book of Matthew chapter 3 verse 13 through 17. This is Mathew's telling of the baptism of Jesus.

Please stand for the gospel reading

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw God's Spirit descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from the heavens said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

Words of wisdom for all God's people. **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon-Elijah

I would love it if a sacred bath could return us to right relationship
With God
With each other
Because things feel so out of sorts
So far in 2026
We have gone into Venezuela
Bombed Syria
Drawn up plans to invade Greenland
Explored the possibility of invading Iran
Continued the violence and chaos of the new immigration policies
People are dying
Things are not right
How do we get back to right relationship?
11 days into this year I already want another fresh start.

Baptism offers that fresh start
But we in our tradition only baptize once in a lifetime.
That is because we see baptism as a permanent rightness.
That even when we feel out of sorts
Even when the world tilts off its axis we are held permanently in God's renewing love
Which then calls us to that work of right relationship
Or restoration
Of repair.
It's not some bath that is going to fix the world
It's us.
Held in the power and steadfast love of God
That resists and wins again and again
No matter how awful things are in the middle
It is always the people standing strong in God's way
Who make the difference
Who shift nations and thoughts
It's the powerful voice of Rev. Dr. King
The labor of John Lewis
The presence on Christopher Street of Marsha P. Johnson

Baptism is something that changes us,
And this is why John was so sure he should not be the one to baptize Jesus
He, a mere mortal, should not be the one providing a sacramental means of grace to the son of God.

Although it kind of seems like John didn't take much convincing
Let it be so now, for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.
What?

That's not a very compelling argument to me, Jesus
So I looked this up in a bunch of other translations of the bible
And I appreciate what Eugene Peterson wrote in the message translation
Jesus insisted. "Do it. God's work, putting things right all these centuries, is coming together right now in this baptism."

This makes me think there was a longer conversation
Perhaps about theology and truth and the nature of God
But all that was recorded was the last line about God putting things right
And this after all was the work John was a part of
Putting things right

A corrupt society
That cared more for wealth than people
Needed to change

And John knew that it was the work of the people of God to repent
And make those changes
He had learned from his father, Zechariah
A priest who held the role of preparing people to enter the holy spaces of the temple
This preparation required ritual washing
John took this message to the streets
And he said that ritual washing was for everyone to enter into better relationship with God
Gone is the idea that only certain people controlled access to God
Now all may repent and turn to a deeper faith.

Jesus tells John that he is furthering that work
Jesus is making it so that everyone can be in right relationship with God all the time
That repenting and renewal are essential to faith
Jesus says that they are part of the same journey, the same task
And so John agrees
And in that moment Jesus public ministry begins

In the bible we hear of the baby Jesus
The infant at his bris
The toddler with the magi, fleeing to egypt
Then in Luke we get the 12 year old, a young boy coming in to spiritual adulthood.
And now, he is a fully grown adult
Luke in his gospel says that Jesus was 30 at the time of his baptism
But we must remember when dealing with ages in the bible that numbers are full of symbolism
So 30 doesn't actually mean that 30 years had passed since Jesus' birth
30 means that Jesus was full of maturity, priestly readiness, and leadership.
Maybe he was 20. Maybe he was 50. Probably somewhere in between.
But whatever age he was ready for the work of leading the disciples

So baptism is about making right with God
Setting people free to be in relationship with God
And being ready to take on the life of one who follows God
And when Christ baptizes
It's not just water but spirit
So it's a continual, never ending renewal

In our tradition we baptize babies
Because at some point Christian theology became less about
being in right relationship with God and more about getting to Heaven
With high child mortality rates, grieving parents wanted to do what they could to protect
Their precious, innocent babies and children
So baptism became a way to say these children were claimed by God and saved
Covered by the spirit

Confirmation was developed to be the point then when young people could claim the faith and commit to God
Emulating the Jewish traditions of bar mitzvahs where young people demonstrate their faith and commit to a life of piety.
And the age at which this happens?
12, which signifies spiritual perfection and completeness.
At 12 childhood is completed, so it is time to step into a deeper faith

So as we sit with all of this
Numerology
And Jewish ritual
God's renewing power
And the unending desire to make the world right
We remember the gift of baptism
No matter if you are baptised or not
No matter if it was when you were a baby or an adult
Or if you've been dunked or sprinkled once or twice or more
We are claiming that God calls us, cleans us, and sets right our relationship through the power of the holy spirit
We are claiming that as confusing and chaotic and scary as things can be
God calls us to be brave in love.

The baptismal font is here at the front and there is a bowl of water at the back if you would like to take some time to pray
Reflect on God and remember that all is made new and touch the water.

I will be here on the side if anyone would like a healing or other prayer
I will be anointing those who would like with oil
You are also welcome to remain in your pew and pray or reflect on your baptism and on your relationship with God.

God we thank you for the gift of baptism
May we remember that no matter what you always claim as as your own
Help us to live as your people who accept the freedom and power God gives us to resist evil, injustice, and oppression
in whatever forms they present themselves.
Amen

Prayer Hymn-

Please rise in body or spirit as we prepare to pray together by singing Down to the River to Pray found in the green Worship and Song book at number 3164

Refrain:As I went down to the river to pray, study in' about that good ole way and who shall wear the starry crown, good Lord, show me the way.

- 1.Oh siblings, let's go down, let's go down, come on down. Come on, siblings, let's go down, down to the river to pray.
2. Oh children, let's go down, let's go down, come on down. Come on, children, let's go down, down to the river to pray.
3. Oh parents, let's go down, let's go down, come on down. Come on, parents, let's go down, down to the river to pray.
4. Oh sinners, let's go down, let's go down, come on down. Come on, sinners, let's go down, down to the river to pray.

Prayers of the People- Susan

Please be seated.

We join now in prayer with words adapted from Rev. Abi
God who shows no partiality, show your favoritism on all your people.
Send forth your justice for all to see. Save us your people.
Empower us to preach and testify to your great love and mercy. (pause)

God who makes and keeps covenant with your people,
You called us to be a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind,
to set the prisoners free,
Help us to answer your call that these things come to pass. (pause)

God of grace and glory,
We pray for those who suffer from pains and sorrows.
We pray for those whose hearts are broken.
We pray for those whose families are fractured.
We pray for those whose lives are ravaged by war.
We pray for those who struggle with poverty, and starvation
We pray for our those who are being martyred and tortured for their beliefs. (pause)
We pray now for all of the joys and concerns of our hearts (pause for a slow count to 60)

Thank you for hearing our prayers.

Thank you for pouring out your Spirit on your son
and pouring your spirit out on us too.

May we too hear you say to us this day that

“This is my child, the Beloved,
with whom I am well pleased.”

As we pray the words your son taught us.

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy 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;**

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen

Offering Invitation- Susan

Please remember to fill out the attendance sheet.

Will the ushers please come forward to receive our joyful tithes and offerings?

Offering/Special Music

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication-Eilidh

Please be seated as we dedicate our gifts to God

God let these gifts be light that they may strengthen the work of our church

Which shines your light in our community and in the wider world. Amen

Life of the Church-Eilidh

calendly.com/pastoreilidh

Mary- Hospitality

Tracy- Climate Change

Verifying info

Closing Hymn

Please rise in body or in spirit as we sing our closing hymn

“I Was There to Hear Your Burning Cry,” found at number 2051 in *The Faith We Sing*.

1. "I was there to hear your burning cry,
I'll be there when you are old.
I rejoiced the day you were baptized,
to see your life unfold.

2. I was there when you were but a child,
with a faith to suit you well;
in a blaze of light you wandered off
to find where demons dwell.

3. "When you heard the wonder of the Word
I was there to cheer you on;
you were raised to praise the living Lord,
to whom you now belong.

4. If you find someone to share your time
and you join your hearts as one,
I'll be there to make your verses rhyme
from dusk till rising sun.

5. "In the middle ages of your life,
not too old, no longer young,
I'll be there to guide you through the night,
complete what I've begun.

6. When the evening gently closes in
and you shut your weary eyes,
I'll be there as I have always been
with just one more surprise.

7. "I was there to hear your burning cry,
I'll be there when you are old,
I rejoiced the day you were baptized,
to see your life unfold"

I'll Be There to Hear Your Burning Cry, words and music by John Ylvisaker; © 1985 John Ylvisaker. All rights reserved.
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[Benediction-Eilidh](#)

We go out ready for what God is unfolding in our lives with words adapted from Revised Common Lectionary Prayers

God of grace and glory,
you call us with your voice of flame
to be your people, faithful and courageous.
As your beloved Son embraced his mission
in the waters of baptism,
inspire us with the fire of your Spirit
to join in his transforming work.

We ask this in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Postlude