

**BELLS CORNERS UNITED CHURCH**  
**DECEMBER 18, 2022 4th SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

\*Indicates stand as able

\* *The live service will be broadcasted and recorded on YouTube, check your email for the link.*

**9:45 am Gathering Music / Carol Sing / Announcement Slides**

**\*Advent Hymn: People Look East VU9**

1. People look east. The time is near  
Of the crowning of the year  
Make your house fair as you are able,  
Trim the hearth and set the table.  
People look east and sing today:  
Love the guest is on the way.

2. Furrows be glad though earth is bare  
One more seed is planted there:  
Give up your strength the seed to nourish,  
That in course the flower may flourish.  
People look east and sing today:  
Love the rose is on the way.

3. Birds, though you long have ceased to build,  
Guard the nest that must be filled;  
Even the hour when wings are frozen

God for fledging time has chosen.  
People look east and sing today:  
Love the bird is on the way.

4. Stars keep the watch. When night is dim  
One more light the bowl shall brim,  
Shining beyond the frosty weather,  
Bright as sun and moon together.  
People look east and sing today:  
Love the star is on the way.

5. Angels announce with shouts of mirth  
Christ who brings new life to earth.  
Set every peak and valley humming  
With the word the Lord is coming.  
People look east and sing today:  
Love the Lord is on the way.

***Welcome & Centering for Worship:***

**Rev. Lorrie Lowes**

Good morning! I welcome and greet you in the name of Jesus Christ, on this Fourth Sunday of Advent - the Sunday of Love, as we prepare ourselves to welcome the birth of Jesus. After the service, we hope you will join us for coffee and fellowship in the main hall. Friends, the Advent season seems to be flying by! it is important in all the hustle of preparation and celebration that we take some intentional time to slow down and remember what this season is meant to be: a time of waiting for the birth of Jesus. Let us now gather in worship.

***Lighting of the Advent Candle: The Advent of Love Acolytes: the Ducette family***

(Wanda Winfield, Gathering ACE 2022-2023 Year A. Used with permission.)

*(The first three Advent candles of hope, peace, and joy are lit.)*

Today is the advent of love. As we light this candle, we remember all who are feeling lonely and distressed at this time of year.

We live in a world that fears the stranger and the strange.

We light this candle as our commitment to love that is expressed in inclusivity.

We are the community that welcomes unconditionally and generously.

We light this candle for Jesus, the Lover of All. *(The fourth candle is lit.)*

***Sung Response: A Candle is Burning (Verse 2) VU 6***

(Words: Sandra Dean, 1986; Music: James R. Murray, 1887)

A candle is burning, a candle of love,  
A candle to point us to heaven above.  
A baby for Christmas, a wonderful birth,  
For Jesus is bringing God's love to our earth.

***Call to Gather: (Responsively) Rev. Lorrie Lowes***

(Gill LeFevre, *Gathering A/C/E 2020/21*, p30. *Used with permission.*)

The excitement of Christmas is building.

**We have one week to go!**

We are waiting.

**Waiting for gifts and surprises, for parties and treats.**

Yet we are also waiting for meaning.

**We seek a reassurance that lasts longer than candy canes or wrapping paper.**

Still, we are also waiting for belonging.

**We crave community and a place to feel accepted, just as we are.**

The fulfilment of Christmas is awe-inspiring every day of the year.

**It is a gift for us without limits, just waiting.**

God's love is always ready for us.

***Opening Prayer: (Unison)***

(Emily Perry, *Gathering A/C/E 2018/2019*, p 31. *Used with permission.*)

**Giving God,**

**Once again the tables have turned; the seasons have completed their tasks of  
nourishing the earth.**

**Now, in the time of rest and recovery, we are given a special gift, the baby who will  
change everything for all of us, for all time.**

**We welcome this child, who brings the gift of your love and blessings,**

**As we join with the angels who sing once more of peace on earth. Amen.**

***Special Music: Thou Shalt Know Him – Sirett***

**BCUC Choir**

***Time for the Young at Heart***

**ErinBerard**

*Prayer of Jesus / The Lord's Prayer:*

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kin-dom 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.

And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kin-dom, the power and the glory,

Forever and ever, Amen.

**\*Song: Tune (Kumbayah My Lord)**

We are loving, God, come by here (x3)

Oh, God, come by here

**Prayer for Illumination: (Unison)**

**Reader: Brian Lipsett**

**In this busy time of waiting, O God, still our minds and open our hearts to receive your word of love for today, in words written so long ago. Amen.**

**The Scripture Readings: from the NRSV Updated Edition**

**Isaiah 7:10-16** Isaiah Gives Ahaz the Sign of Immanuel

<sup>10</sup> Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, <sup>11</sup> “Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” <sup>12</sup> But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” <sup>13</sup> Then Isaiah said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals that you weary my God also? <sup>14</sup> Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel. <sup>15</sup> He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. <sup>16</sup> For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

**Matthew 1:18-25** The Birth of Jesus the Messiah

<sup>18</sup> Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. <sup>20</sup> But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

<sup>23</sup> “Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son,  
and they shall name him Emmanuel,”

which means, “God is with us.” <sup>24</sup> When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife <sup>25</sup> but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

May the God of love dwell where the word is spoken. **Thanks be to God!**

**Ministry of Music: See Amid the Winter’s Snow - Butler**

**BCUC Choir**

**Sermon: “The Stuff of Dreams”**

**Rev. Lorrie**

***Prayers of the People:***

**Rev. Lorrie**

Holy Dreamer,

At this time of year, we are all dreamers. Our children dream of sugarplums and gifts from Santa; families dream of perfect gatherings with loved ones; workers and students dream of time to rest; skiers and snowmobilers dream of fresh new snow... there is much to dream of in these winter days and so much to celebrate.

In our dreaming, help us remember to notice the joys that are already present with gratitude and praise.

In our dreaming, let us imagine a world without pain, conflict, oppression, and injustice.

Let us dream of the ways we can help make your dreams for this world come true.

At this time of year, we know that not everyone finds joy in the busyness of the season, that it is hard for some to face the jingling bells, bright decorations, and songs of joy.

Many are dreaming of an end to suffering, a return of lost loved ones, of reconciliation, of an end to the noises and fear of war, of a safe place to live and the necessities of life abundant. Many dream of ways to put that feeling of joy onto the faces of those they love. We know you dream of these things too. Let them feel the comfort of your love surrounding them. Let us make that love apparent in the ways we share love in the world.

Holy Dreamer,

We offer specific prayers for those in our faith family who are facing a difficult time with the season of joy this year... for those among us who are ill, for those who are grieving, for those who are facing financial hardships, for those who are lonely... We pray for our neighbours near and far, for our interfaith and ecumenical friends, here in Bells Corners, and for our friends in Chipembi, Zambia. We give thanks for the wonders of today that make relationships possible across the city and around the world.

Holy Dreamer,

As the celebration of Jesus' birth draws near and our anticipation grows, let us dream with you of the world he showed us is possible. We pray with the Christ child that your Kin-dom come, that your will be done and the Holy dream come true. Amen.

***Musical Offering:*** (Advent Memorial Flowers)

***Invitation to Offer:***

**Rev. Lorrie**

*(Lori van Santvoort-Jansekovich, Gathering A/C/E 2021/22, p 34. Used with permission.)*

It is the season of Advent, the season of gifts and giving. With love in our hearts, let us worship God with our offerings as we anticipate in wonder the birth of the Christ child.

We are not passing the offering plates this morning as we continue to follow health protocols, but you will find those plates on the table in the narthex. There are many additional ways you can financially support the work of the church – through PAR, by dropping into the office or using the mail slot by the kitchen door, or by e-transfer. Thank you for your continued love and support of Bells Corners United Church.

**\*Offertory Hymn: Verse 4 - In the Bleak Midwinter VU 55**

(Words: Christina Georgina Rossetti, 1872; Music: Gustav Theodor Holst, 1906)

**What can I give him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;  
If I were a wise man, I would do my part;  
Yet what I can I give him, give him my heart.**

**\*Offertory Prayer: (Unison)**

(Bob Root, *Gathering A/C/E* 2021/22, p35. *Used with permission*)

In these days of waiting, O God,  
As Mary grew Jesus in her womb, so grow in us a spirit of generosity.  
Bring to birth within us a passion for justice and peace.  
As we share these gifts which you have entrusted to us,  
So may your dream for the world come closer to fulfilment.  
We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

**\*Advent Hymn: Love Is the Touch - MV89** (alternate tune VU624)

1. Love is the touch of intangible joy; Love is the force that no fear can destroy; Love is the goodness we gladly applaud; God is where love is, for love is of God.	3. Love is the light in the tunnel of pain; Love is the will to be whole once again; Love is the trust of a friend on the road; God is where love is, for love is of God.
2. Love is the lilt in a lingering voice; Love is the hope that can make us rejoice; Love is the cure for the frightened and flawed: God is where love is, for love is of God.	4. Love is the Maker and Spirit and Son; Love is the kingdom their will has begun; Love is the path which the saints have all trod: Love is where God is, for love is of God.

**\*Sending Forth: Rev. Lorrie**

Be people of love.

In this Advent season, we need to see, feel, and share love. Let love live in your heart and shine in everything you do. Go out into the wonder of God's creation, sharing hope, peace, joy, and love with all those you meet. Amen

**\*Sung Blessing: Joy Shines as the Solitary Star MV 220**

(Words: Catherine Faith Maclean; Music: Janet Bauman Tissandier)

Love shines as the solitary star.  
Faith is the inner light.  
You and I together mirror the Light of Lights,  
and illumine the pathway home. (Twice)