

CHRISTMAS EVE / COMMUNION SERVICE

December 24, 2023 – 7:00 PM

Gathering Music: The Snow Lay on the Ground - English/Irish Carol arr. Wetzler BCUC Choir

Welcome & Announcements Rev. Kim

***Carol: O Come All Ye Faithful** – Voices United #60

(Words in English: Frederick Oakeley, 1841; Music: John Francis Wade, 1743)

1 O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant, O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
come and behold him, born the King of angels;

Refrain: O come, let us adore him 3x Christ the Lord.

2 God of God, light of light, lo, he abhors not the virgin's womb, very God, begotten, not created. R

3 Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation, sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;
Glory to God in the highest. R

4 See, how the shepherds summoned to his cradle, leaving their flocks, draw nigh with lowly fear;
we too will thither bend our joyful footsteps. R

5 Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning; Jesus, to thee be all glory given;
word of the Father, now in flesh appearing. R

Lighting of the Advent & Christ Candles: Fowler Family

Voice 1: Advent, the season of preparing, is over. Our waiting is finished.

Now is a time of fulfillment and celebration.

In the darkness of night, we give thanks for light.

Voice 2: We light a candle of hope: hope for ourselves, and for God's beloved world. (*1st Blue Candle is lit*)

Voice 3: We light a candle of peace: peace in our hearts, and on earth. (*2nd Blue Candle is lit*)

Voice 4: We light a candle of joy: joy to the world, and within our whole being. (*pink candle is lit*)

Voice 1: We light a candle of love: the promise of God's love for us, and for all creation. (*3rd Blue is lit*)

Voice 2: And now the hour has come and the season is fulfilled.

“Do not be afraid; for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people.” (*Luke 2:10*)

Voice 3: What gifts does Jesus bring to the new world?

Congregation: **Jesus brings hope for the future, peace like a river,
joy everlasting, and love for all.**

Voice 4: Christmas is the beginning of this new world, a better world, that we are boldly invited to create
together as followers of the Christ child. May it be so. Amen. (*The Christ candle is lit.*)

Sung Response: A Candle is Burning (v5) (Words: Sandra Dean, 1986; Music: James R. Murray, 1887)

We honour Messiah with Christ candle's flame,
our Christmas Eve candles glad tidings proclaim.

O come, all you faithful, rejoice in this night,
as God comes among us, the Christian's true light.

Call to Gather:

Rev. Lorrie Lowes

Like the shepherds, we come to the stable, uncertain of what we have heard and seen,
longing to hear a word of peace and joy.

Like the wise ones, we have journeys to make, gifts to offer, and hope in our hearts,
that this world can change for the better.

Here, in the stillness of a winter's night, we gather to share the light of Christ,
a light that shines in the nightfall.

**We gather in the wonder of this night
to share our joy and thanks for new life.**

Prayer of Approach: (Together) Rev. Lorrie

**Loving and generous God, we praise and thank you for the joys of this Christmas:
the music and the singing, the gathering of family and friends, the gifts we give and
receive. We thank you most of all for your great gift to us, the gift born this night –
your child Jesus. May Christ's Spirit of love fill our hearts to overflowing. May
Christ's Spirit of peace be upon everyone, everywhere. Amen.**

Special Music: O Come Little Children violin duet : Lauren & Charlotte
Heavenly Star -Valerie Mackenzie CGS – director: Erin Berard

THE WORD

Prayer for Illumination: Reader: Simon Linforth
(Laura Rousseau, Gathering, ACE 2021-20122 Used with permission.)

Holy God of angels and shepherds,
of magi and refugee families,
we pray today:
prepare our hearts
to receive the hope
of the Christmas Story. Amen.

The Reading: Luke 2:1-20 The Birth of Jesus

2 In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. **2** This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. **3** All went to their own towns to be registered. **4** Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. **5** He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. **6** While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. **7** And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

The Shepherds and the Angels **8** In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. **9** Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. **10** But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: **11** to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. **12** This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." **13** And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, **14** "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." **16** So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. **17** When they saw this, they made

known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Hear what the God of love is saying to all of us. **Thanks be to God!**

Ministry of Music: Silent Night for all the World – Mohr/Gruber adapt Choplin BCUC Choir
Languages: German, Spanish, Korean, Zulu & English

Christmas Meditation: “Love was Born at Christmas!” Rev. Kim

THE RESPONSE

Christmas Prayer: Rev. Lorrie (*UCC Intergenerational Christmas Service, 2016*)

God of hope, of silent prayers and urgent cries,
we pray for your world and its people...
for those who will spend this day alone;
for those who will not enjoy a feast this day;
for those whose tables will have an empty place this year.

Lift our hearts in anticipation of your vision.

Shine a light in the depth of fear.

Sing a song of joy in the lonely heart.

God of peace, on this Christmas day we pray
for the people of Bethlehem, of Israel and Palestine;
for refugees who have nowhere to lay their heads,
for those who find themselves in strange lands.
Watch over and protect them, God of the morning star.
Guide us in the ways of mercy and reconciliation.

Open our hearts, that we might receive you
and hear your voice, Loving God.

May we share the gift of your heaven,
your vision for all people:
hope of fulfillment, peace in our time,
joy that persists through trial and celebration,
and love that heals the wounded heart.

In the name of Jesus whose birth we celebrate at Christmas. Amen.

***Carol:** Away in a Manger - Voices United #69 (*Music: William James Kirkpatrick, 1895*)

1 Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

2 The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.

I love you, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky,
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.

3 Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask you to stay
close by me for ever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care,
and fit us for heaven, to live with you there.

Celebration of Communion

The Invitation

Kim

Friends, welcome to this still, sacred night, wherein bread is broken for the gifts of compassion, and the wine poured for the healing of all. For in this moment of celebration of the common with the extraordinary, earth with heaven, and of the humanity with the Divine, the joy and mystery of Christmas is given, not just to behold, but to live out with gratitude, love and joy.

Prayer of Thanksgiving Kim

May the peace of the Infant Jesus be with you.

And also with you!

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up before God.

Pour out your souls.

All: It is a good thing to offer our adoration and praise.

It was as a baby that you came to us, gracious God. A child in a manger, staring out in wonder and sleeping in contentment. As we celebrate Jesus' birth once again, fill us with wonder and joy. As we celebrate his birth, so we commemorate his time among us. He grew up as an adult to be your instrument of love, healing the sick, preaching your Word, being one among the people.

The Fraction Lorrie

Reader 2: We remember, how, on the night that Jesus was betrayed, he sat at supper with his disciples. While they were eating, Jesus broke bread and as he shared it, he said, "remember me."

Later, he took a cup of wine and shared it with these words: "remember me." And so, as Jesus did, we bless these gifts and share them amongst ourselves, and in doing so, we remember his presence with us – always.

Bless us, God, in the breaking of bread and inspire us through the sharing of cup. For these unfolding gifts, we are grateful. For this living hope, we offer our lives.

The Lord's Prayer Lorrie

Let us recite together this prayer that Jesus taught his friends and followers in the language of your choice.

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.

Sharing the Bread and Cup Kim

Let us now share and partake the bread and the cup reminding us of God's unconditional love.

(Lorrie & Kim serves the choir in their seats)

(The people are invited to come forward to receive the elements)

This is the bread – food for the journey. Take, eat and be nourished by God's love.

This is the cup – drink for the journey. Take, drink and be sustained by God's grace.

Prayer after Communion: Lorrie

We give thanks O God, because you have refreshed us at your table, touched our deepest needs, and called us to a life shared in memory and hope. Send us forth with courage and joy in the name of Jesus Christ, that we, too, may become bread and peace for one another and the world. Amen.

Musical Offering: Never Been a Night Like This – Larson BCUC Choir

Invitation to Offer Rev. Lorrie

As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, remember that the gift of love came to all of us, enabling us to make the world a more welcoming place for the God of joy and peace. I invite you to respond to that love by offering our time, talents and treasures together and present them as an offering to God.

Offertory Prayer:

Christmas God, on this night of many gifts, when the wondrous gift is given, receive what we have offered here and bless all those whose lives it touches, in your name. Amen.

Sharing the Christ Light: Silent Night, Holy Night - Voices United #67

Silent night! Holy Night!
All is calm, all is bright
round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy infant so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace,

Silent night! Holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight;
glories stream from heaven afar,

heavenly hosts sing Alleluia,
Christ, the Saviour, is born!

Silent night! Holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from thy holy face,
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

***Carol: Joy to the World – Voices United #59**

(Words: Isaac Watts, 1719; Music: attrib. George Frederic Handel, 1742)

1. Joy to the world! the Lord is come:
let earth receive her King!
Let every heart prepare him room,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

2. Joy to the earth the Saviour reigns:
let all their songs employ
While fields and floods, rocks,
hills and plains repeat the sounding joy
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3. No more let sins, and sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground.
He comes to make his blessings flow,
far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found

4. He rules the earth with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness
and wonders of his love,
and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love.

***Sending Forth: (Responsively) Kim**

Send us forth this Christmas Eve, O Love Incarnate,
with the light of Jesus glowing within us.

Send us forth from this feast of love to celebrate
the One who is bread for the journey and the cup of blessing.

May love, the promise of generations, attend you.

Joy, the gift of life together, fill you.

Peace, the desire of neighbour and nations, find you.

Hope, the horizon of faith, sustain you.

And may a very Merry Christmas be yours. **Amen.**