

## BELLS CORNERS UNITED CHURCH

### FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS / CELEBRATION OF BAPTISM

December 31, 2023, 10 am Joint Service with Glen Cairn & Kanata Congregations

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

**Gathering Music: News in Bethlehem Town** – Davenport/Schram combined Choir

*\*Indicates stand as able*

**\*Opening Carol: Hark the Herald Angels Sing** – Voices United #48

(Kim): *The cheery tune of "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing" was not the author's idea. Charles Wesley, one of the founders of Methodism, requested a slow, somber melody when he wrote the song in 1739, but apparently it wasn't terribly popular that way. In 1840, a new collection of carols featured a melody adapted from a cantata by Felix Mendelssohn. The cantata was, interestingly, originally written to commemorate the four hundredth anniversary of Gutenberg's invention of the printing press—a rather unlikely source for a Christmas carol.*

1 Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King,  
peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled!"  
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,  
join the triumph of the skies;  
with the angelic hosts proclaim,  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

*Refrain:* Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King!"

2 Christ, by highest heaven adored,  
Christ, the everlasting Lord,  
late in time behold him come,

offspring of a virgin's womb.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;  
hail the incarnate deity,  
pleased with us in flesh to dwell,  
Jesus, our Emmanuel! R

3 Hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings,  
risen with healing in his wings.  
Mild he lays his glory by,  
born that we no more may die,  
born to raise us from the earth,  
born to give us second birth. R

**Lighting the Christ Candle:** Acolytes: David Stafford & Barbara Bole

**"The Light of Love"** excerpt, Stanley Oguh

Through the darkness, there came a light  
Though so far but yet so bright.  
I close my eyes and look for deep insight.  
I walk this darkness without a fright.  
I never believed I'd find this love,  
Like that beautiful star from above.  
I questioned love and what I feel  
With Jesus' light, my love is real. (*The Christ Candle is lit*)

**Sung Response: Take Up This Light** (Tune: More Voices #213)

Take up this light of Christ and share it with the world  
Take up this light of Christ and shine it brightly  
In every moment of the journey we live the light of Christ  
Dare to shine, hope, peace, joy and love, This candle of Christ.

**Welcome and Announcements**

Rev. Kim Vidal

Good morning!

On behalf of the congregation at BCUC, I welcome and greet you in the name of Jesus Christ on this First Sunday after Christmas. I especially welcome the congregations of Glen Cairn, Kanata and St. Paul's Carp for joining us in today's service where we listen to stories behind some of our well-loved Christmas Carols.

Today we especially welcome the Martin and Kemp families as we welcome their 2 children in a sacrament of baptism. Please join us for refreshments and fellowship after the service in the main hall.

### ***Centering for Worship:***

Friends, let us take a moment to reflect and remember what Christmas and the coming year mean for us. Let us now centre ourselves in God's presence as we gather in worship.

### **\*Carol: He is Born – Voices United #50**

(Lorrie): *Often considered the best known traditional French carol, "Il est né, le divin Enfant" comes from the region of Provence. The original version has four stanzas and the refrain. A variety of translations into English exist, but the one most commonly used today is by George K. Evans (b. 1917), a Kentucky native who served as a music editor for the educational publisher, Prentice-Hall. His translation first appeared in The International Book of Christmas Carols (1963), compiled by Walter Ehret. Dr. Evans served as the primary translator for this influential collection. Both the text and the tune date back to at least the mid-19th century—the tune found in R. Grosjean's *Airs des Noël lorrain* (1862) and the French text in Dom G. Legeay's *Noëls anciens* (1875-1876).*

*Refrain:* He is born, the divine Christ Child;  
play the oboe and bagpipes merrily!  
He is born, the divine Christ Child;  
sing we all of the Savior mild.

*Chorus:* Il est né, le divin Enfant,  
Jouez, hautbois, résonnez, musettes;  
Il est né, le divin Enfant;  
Chantons tous son avènement!

1 Through long ages of the past,  
prophets have foretold His coming;  
through long ages of the past,  
now the time has come at last!

2 Ah! qu'il est beau, qu'il est charmant,  
Que ses graces sont parfaites!  
Ah! qu'il est beau, qu'il est charmant,  
Qu'il est doux le divin Enfant.

### ***Call to Gather: (Responsively)***

Rev. Lorrie Lowes

Come to this place to be opened to the wonder and mystery that awaits you.

**We come to catch a glimpse of God's mystery as we search for new meaning this Christmas.**

Come and let your hearts be touched by God's presence.

**We come to be filled anew with God's love.**

Come to hear God's voice through words that empower and carols of celebration.

**May the wonder and joy of this night open our hearts to**

**receive the miracle of Christmas – Emmanuel, God-with-us.**

### ***A Christmas Prayer of Confession:*** Rev. Lorrie

Gordon Nodwell, 1980

Together, let us pray.

**God of stable, stars and surprises; Of light and hope and new life:**

**Open our eyes and hearts to your presence in our world;**

**Forgive our obsession with property and possessions;**

**Forgive our compromises and narrowness of vision.**

**Open us to your grace, That we might hear again the song of the angels,**

**And respond with a song in our hearts,**

**And in our lives. Amen.**

*(Moment of Silent Reflection)*

### ***Assurance of Love:*** Calling on God P. Bankson & D. Sokolove

We stumbled, and fell in through the door,

and found ourselves gathered at a familiar table of forgiveness.

The wonder is, you met us where we were, and welcomed us as we are.

**Thanks be to God. Amen!**

**Carol: “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear,” – Voices United #44**

(Kim): *Written by Massachusetts Unitarian minister Edmund Sears, this pastoral-sounding carol carries a much deeper meaning than simply retelling the birth of Jesus. Sears hoped to offer an uplifting message amid the great poverty he was witness to and to remind people that God, in the form of a child, had entered a world sorely in need of love and peace. Richard Storrs Willis’ tune, CAROL, paired with the words only a year later, gave the carol its lasting appeal and one of its two most common tunes, the other being NOËL.*

*A very fine movie made in 1992, A Midnight Clear, tells the story of American and German soldiers laying aside their weapons on Christmas Eve of 1944. The story ends tragically, as miscommunication causes hostilities to resume. Yet, the powerful third verse of the carol, with its invitation to hush the noise of battle in order to hear God’s “love song” to the earth and all people, is a strong one. This carol speaks gently, yet powerfully, God’s word of peace amid strife and weariness.*

1 It came upon the midnight clear,  
that glorious song of old,  
from angels bending near the earth,  
to touch their harps of gold,  
"Peace on the earth, good will to all,  
from heaven's all-gracious King!"  
The world in solemn stillness lay  
to hear the angels sing.

2 Still through the cloven skies they come  
with peaceful wings unfurled;  
and still their heavenly music floats  
o'er all the weary world;  
above its sad and lowly plains  
they bend on hovering wing,  
and ever o'er its Babel sounds  
the blessed angels sing.

3 Yet with the woes of sin and strife  
the world has suffered long;  
beneath the angel strain have rolled  
two thousand years of wrong;  
and warring humankind hears not  
the love song which they bring.  
O hush the noise and cease your strife,  
and hear the angels sing.

4 For, lo! the days are hastening on,  
by prophets seen of old,  
when with the ever-circling years  
shall come the time foretold,  
when peace shall over all the earth  
its ancient splendours fling,  
and the whole world send back the song  
which now the angels sing.

**Poem: “Christmas is for Children” (Anonymous) Reader: Tamara Glanville**

Christmas is for children--  
at least that's what they say,  
It's time of wide-eyed wonder, a magic holiday  
When candy canes and gingerbread  
fill tummies with delight  
And little sleepyheads try hard  
to stay up through the night.  
Yes, Christmas is for children--  
anyone will tell you so.

The twinkling, colored lights on trees  
make youngsters' eyes just glow!  
Each package and each stocking  
is approached with childish joy  
And toys bring squeals of laughter  
from each eager girl and boy.  
Yes, Christmas is for children--all they say is true.  
How wonderful that at Christmas time--  
grownups are children, too!

**Hanging of the Tree Symbols: A Hearty Welcome**

**Celebration of Baptism:** Rev Kim & Rev. Lorrie

Child: Miranda Analeigh Martin  
Mother: Victoria Martin

Child: Abigail Dianne Kemp  
Mother: Aarika Kemp, Father: Matthew Kemp  
Godparents: Jane Spencer & Al Ripley

**\*Carol: “Silent Night, Holy Night” – Voices United #67**

(Lorrie): *In 1816, Father Joseph Mohr wrote the poem “Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht!” while stationed at a pilgrim church in Mariapfarr, Austria. Two years later, now at St. Nicholas’ church in Oberndorf, he asked Franz Gruber to set the poem for guitar and choir, which the two performed on Christmas Eve of 1818. Since then, a legend has grown around the circumstances of this collaboration, beginning with a broken organ at St.*

*Nicholas' and ending with a dramatic, last-minute musical setting for the now-familiar carol. To what extent the legend of the carol's origins is true is perhaps less important than its beauty and simplicity.*

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.

**Prayer for Illumination:** (based on Luke 2: 1-20 by poet Andrew King)      Reader: Keith Bailey

Here is the emptiness of my night  
may it be filled with your glory  
Here are the silences of my heart  
may they be filled with your songs  
Here is the watchfulness of my eyes  
may they be opened to wonder  
Here is the listening of my soul  
may it hear the joy of your love

Here is the hopefulness of my journey  
may it lead me swift to your side  
Here is the searching of my anxious mind  
may it find rest in your peace  
Here is the wood and straw of my days  
may they be a bed for your presence  
And here is the humble cave of my life  
may it be your home, gentle Saviour. Amen.

**Gospel Reading: Luke 2:22–40 (NRSVUE)**

**Jesus Is Presented in the Temple**

<sup>22</sup> When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord <sup>23</sup> (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), <sup>24</sup> and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.” <sup>25</sup> Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. <sup>26</sup> It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. <sup>27</sup> Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what was customary under the law, <sup>28</sup> Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, <sup>29</sup> “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word, <sup>30</sup> for my eyes have seen your salvation, <sup>31</sup> which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, <sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.” <sup>33</sup> And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. <sup>34</sup> Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed <sup>35</sup> so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul, too.” <sup>36</sup> There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, <sup>37</sup> then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. <sup>38</sup> At that moment she came and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

**The Return to Nazareth** <sup>39</sup> When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. <sup>40</sup> The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him.      Hear what the God of wonder is saying to us. **We listen and we respond with joy!**

**Ministry of Music: Child of God** – Dosso      combined Choir

**Reflection on a New Year:**      Rev. Kim

I would like to share with you a short reflection on a New Year inspired by Joyce Rupp’s essay in the book, *Out of the Ordinary*.

The beginning of a New Year always merits some reflection. It is not so much a time of making new resolutions, but rather, space in which to ponder life and review personal growth. A new year is a good opportunity to look at what guides our thoughts and decisions each day, to look at the person we already are and who we want to become. As we review the year, we look for what allows our life to receive greater meaning and what resists it. We ponder how and when hope has sung in our days. We wander through the months recalling who and what gave us strength and where enthusiasm ripened or died on the vine. We look for graced moments that we have totally forgotten, those spaces in our days when we are swept off our controlled feet by the grace of a tender God who says, "Don't forget you are in my heart."

When we review the past year, we often see that there's a part of it filled with familiar melodies, some delightful and others quite jarring. Our insights and awareness touch again and again on some basic patterns and behaviours. When we see them, we sometimes say with a groan, "I've been here before!" However, we have noticed that almost every time we come around the circle, we know it better. We miss more of the off-key notes and disharmony as we get better acquainted with their positions and characteristics, so we feel a sense of hope in spite of the old recurring patterns. Underneath the circle of the past, we can always spot our principles- the foundational themes and values that spur us on to live our dreams and rekindle a positive attitude. Joyce Rupp shares her wonderful thoughts as we look forward: "if I wait to be perfect before I love myself, I will always be unsatisfied and ungrateful. If I wait until all the flaws, chips, and cracks disappear I will be the cup that stands on the shelf and is never used" On New Year's Day, let us rearrange our inner world to make room again for offering little kindness to others. May we renew our life principles of being people of loving kindness, justice, humility and compassion. May we ask God to grace us and be Christ-like to each person we meet in the coming year! Thanks be to God. Amen.

### ***Prayers of the People:***

Rev. Kim (Rev. Andrew McNeill, UCC Resource 2023)

As you have drawn us to your cradle of wondrous love, O God,  
draw us together in this place, that we might  
pray for your people and your world.

Today, we give you thanks for the gift of your child, Jesus Christ,  
who in birth, life, death, and resurrection revealed  
your unending love for all people and opened to us  
the purpose and promise of life together.

We give thanks also for the gifts of this season:  
hope for the vision of justice you promise, even in the midst of despair;  
for peace within and among your people, even in the midst of conflict;  
joy found in reunion and celebration, even amid the challenges of this life;  
and love, with the power to transform and heal all things, even in the midst of brokenness.

We pray for those who still long for these, your gifts, God of Love:  
for those who will spend this season alone or anxious...  
for those who grieve an empty place at the table this year...  
for those who are ill, in body or in spirit...  
for those in hospital and in care...  
for those who endure the terror of conflict and oppression...  
for those who will go hungry this day, and who long for the simplest of creation's gifts...  
for your people and your world, we pray, O God.

Let us listen to the angels' song again, your song of love for this world.  
Move us to return that song in what we say and do,  
that we may be instruments of your hope and peace and joy and love.  
We pray these things in the name of Jesus, who became the Christ,  
and who taught us to pray and sing The Lord's Prayer.

### ***The Lord's Prayer - Voices United #959 (Sung) (Music: David Haas, 1986)***

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,  
your will be done on earth as 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, now and for ever.

**Offering Invitation:**

Rev. Lorrie Lowes

In the gifts of word and song, we hear the story of your gift of life, O God. Here, we offer what we can of ourselves, we who are part of that same story. I now invite you to offer your gifts of time, talents and resources as expressions of your gratitude to God's blessings. You will find the offering plates on the table as you enter the sanctuary. For those visiting from other congregations, we will forward your envelopes to your respective churches. There are many additional ways you can financially support the work of the BCUC— through PAR, by dropping into the office or by e-transfer.

**\*Offertory Hymn: What Child is This? - Voices United #74**

So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh, come, one and all, to own him.

The King of kings salvation brings; let loving hearts enthrone him.

*Refrain:* This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;  
haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary!

**\* Offertory Prayer: (Together)**

**We give these offerings in hope,**

**knowing God can use them to spread love in this world.**

**And with these offerings, we give ourselves;**

**May we live with generous hearts and with open hands. Amen**

**\*Carol: Angels We Have Heard on High – Voices United #38**

*(Kim): The earliest known printed version of “Angels We Have Heard On High” was in an 1842 French song book. Though the source of the song is unknown, it is believed to have originated in 18<sup>th</sup> century France. The carol was first translated into English in 1860 by James Chadwick, a Roman Catholic bishop.*

1 Angels we have heard on high  
sweetly singing o'er the plains,  
and the mountains in reply,  
echoing their joyous strains.

*Refrain:* Gloria in excelsis Deo! 2x

2 Shepherds, why this jubilee?  
Why your joyous strains prolong?  
What the gladsome tidings be  
which inspire your heavenly song? R

3 Come to Bethlehem and see  
Christ whose birth the angels sing;  
come, adore on bended knee  
Christ, the Lord, the newborn King. R

4 See him in a manger laid,  
whom the choirs of angels praise;  
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid,  
while our hearts in love we raise. R

**\*Sending Forth: Irish Christmas Blessing**

May you be blessed:

with the warmth of the season, which is hope,  
the spirit of the season, which is peace,  
the gladness of the season, which is joy,  
and the heart of the season, which is love.

**We will go in hope, in peace, in joy, in love. Amen.**

Rev. Kim Vidal

**\*Sung Blessing: Go Now in Hope (Peace) – Besig** *(adapted)*

Go now in **hope**. Never be afraid. God will go with you in **twenty twenty four** (2024).

Go now in **joy**, steadfast, strong and true. Know God will guide you in all you do.

Go now in love, and show you believe. Reach out to others so all the world can see.

God will be there Spirit from above. Go now in peace, in faith, and in love. Amen.