

December 18, 2022
Fourth Sunday of Advent

We Gather In Love

Prelude: "Creator of the Stars of Night" Ryan H. Jones Tune: CONDITOR ALME SIDERUM

Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy

Luke 1:46-55

And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant.
Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed,
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name;
indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty.
He has come to the aid of his child Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

When we feel invisible, ineffective

Too small to make a difference

The Holy invites us to be God-Bearers

And we find Love.

Candle is lit.

Hymn "Light the Advent Candle" vs. 4

Light the Advent candle four

Think of Joy forever more

Christ child in a stable born

Gift of love that Christmas morn.

Candle, candle burning bright

Shining in the cold winter night

Candle, candle burning bright

Fill our hearts with Christmas light.

Moment of Silent Reflection

Birthdays, Celebrations, and Life and Work of the Congregation – see last page ...

Call to Worship

Come and magnify the Lord!

Our spirits rejoice in God our Saviour.

Come, know that nothing is impossible with God.

We rejoice in God who chose to become one of us.

Come, celebrate the love given freely to the world,
a love that has filled the hungry with good things.

The Son of the Most High came and lived as one of us.

Jesus will come again because of God's great love for us.

Of his reign there will be no end.

Hymn VU 17 "O Ancient Love"

O ancient love, processing through the ages;

O hidden love, revealed in human form;

O promised love, the dream of seers and sages:

O living Love, within our hearts be born,

O living Love, within our hearts be borne.

O homeless love, that dwells among the stranger;

O lowly love, that knows the mighty's scorn;

O hungry love, that lay within a manger:

O living Love, within our hearts be born,

O living Love, within our hearts be borne.

O gentle love, caressing those in sorrow;

O tender love, that comforts those forlorn;

O hopeful love, that promises tomorrow:

O living Love, within our hearts be born,

O living Love, within our hearts be borne.

O suffering love, that bears our human weakness;

O boundless love, that rises with the morn;

O mighty love, concealed in infant meekness:

O living Love, within our hearts be born,

O living Love, within our hearts be borne.

Opening Prayer (*unison*)

Loving God, our hearts are full because of the very gracious gift given to us – eternal life and hope. In the Child of Mary we see your heart, O God. How can we not offer ourselves to be the vessels of your love here on earth. "Here am I," Mary said. "Here are we," is also our response. Help us to live according to your word and love. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Love Expands

Anthem: "Comfort and Joy" music and lyrics by Pepper Choplin

Dorchester Choir

Responsive Reading: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19 VU 794 *part 1*

God, you have been our refuge in every generation.

Before the mountains were brought forth,
before earth and world were formed,

from age to age everlasting, you are God.

You turn frail humans back to dust, saying:

'Return, you mortals.'

**For a thousand years in your sight are as yesterday,
a day that is past, a watch in the night.**

You sweep them away like a dream,
like grass that is fresh in the morning,

**like grass which in the morning is green,
but in the evening is dried up and withered.**

Scripture: Matthew 1:18-25

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. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. 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. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

"Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,"

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

*The other readings for this week are: **Isaiah 7:10-16; Romans 11:1-7***

Hymn VU 8 "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"

Lo, how a rose e'er blooming from tender stem hath sprung,
of Jesse's lineage coming, as seers of old have sung.
It came a blossom bright,
amid the cold of winter, when half spent was the night.

Isaiah 'twas foretold it, the Rose I have in mind,
with Mary we behold it, the virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright
she bore for us a Saviour when half spent was the night.

Message "What Love? What Love!"

Hymn VU 473 “Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence”

Let all mortal flesh keep silence,
and with awe and reverence stand;
ponder nothing earthly-minded,
for with blessing in his hand,
Christ our God to us approacheth
our full homage to demand.

King of kings, yet born of Mary,
as of old on earth he stood,
Lord of lords, in human vesture,
in the body and the blood,
he will give to all the faithful
his own self for heavenly food.

Rank on rank the host of heaven
spreads its vanguard on the way,
as the Light of light descendeth
from the realms of endless day,
that the powers of hell may vanish
as the darkness clears away.

At his feet the six-winged seraph;
cherubim with sleepless eye
veil their faces to the presence,
as with ceaseless voice they cry,
Hallelujah, hallelujah,
hallelujah, Lord most high!

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

God be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to God.

Let us give thanks to God.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

In the rich dark of winter, God makes an astounding promise:

“I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up.” (Jeremiah 33:15)

In the wilderness, a voice cries out,
longing for the Refiner’s fire, repair, and renewal,
the promised birth (and rebirth) of hope.

Called to bear the weight and fruit of promise,
Mary sings ancient trust—the song of generations—
that God comes to fill the hungry and lift the humble.
She sings that love and truth will meet, that justice and peace will kiss.

In the midst of uncertainty, Jesus assures his disciples:

Just as the tree blooms, so the signs are clear
that the kingdom of God is near.

In the deep of our own winter, we look for them:

bud of hope, branch of peace, sprig of joy, blossom of love.

While around us the snares of fear and conflict lie in wait of infant hope,

you, O Wisdom, O Endless Love, O Radiant Dawn, are there,
keeping vigil with us, in this season of expectation.

We gather at this table, praying that crooked ways be made straight,

that valley's peace be lifted up and mountain's might brought low
so that all God's people might rejoice together, saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is the one that comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest!

We give thanks for the mystery and wonder revealed that first night,

as humble people led by hope gathered in a quiet stable
and were witness to your promise reborn.

We give thanks for the blessing and love Jesus shared

with all whom he met, in food and story.

We remember that, on the night before he was handed over to die,

Jesus broke bread with his friends, blessed it, gave thanks, and said,

"Take, eat. This is my body, which I give for you. When you share it, remember me."

We remember that he took the cup and, giving thanks, said,

"This cup is the new covenant in my blood. When you drink it, remember me."

Revealed in stable, cross, and empty tomb, we give thanks, O God, for your limitless love for all.

With your people of all times and places, we await with hope the fulfillment of your vision for all
creation.

Bless us, O God, and these your gifts.

Encourage us to share your life and love,

which make us, and the gifts we share, truly holy.

Transform us, God, your world, and your church,

especially Korean United Church in Windsor,
and their spiritual leader, Pastor Hee chun Kang

and bless your children:

those who feel alone or afraid...

those who whose souls and homes are broken by violence...

those who will go hungry, thirsty, and cold tonight...

those who long only to hear that they are loved...

those who mourn, especially the friends and family of Paul McMillan,
Jim Simpson, and Teresa Zellas....

those who are ill or dying, awaiting medical intervention or recovering from treatment,
especially Glenda McMillan
and their loved ones, and caregivers,
and those known only in the silence of our own hearts.....

God made known in Jesus Christ,

hear our prayer.

We pray these things, trusting in God's faithfulness revealed:

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Distribution of the Elements

Prayer after Communion

At this table, Christ is the host, welcoming all who hunger.

At our tables, may Christ be our guest this day and always,
that we might welcome hope, peace, joy, and love into our lives,
and become hosts to God's presence and people.

God of Love, guide us to the stables of our world,
where the lonely and longing gather.

Lead us to the mangers of our time,
where hope and renewal are born again.

Make us heralds of your love and joy. Amen.

Adapted from a prayer by the Rev. Andrew O'Neil, St. Paul's United Church, Riverview, NB. © 2018 The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial Share Alike Licence. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.5/ca>

We Go To Share Love With The World

Invitation to Invest in God's Mission

God has a dream of what creation could be like, but to turn this world into God's dream, where there is hope, peace, joy, and love requires much work....much more than any of us individually can do, and so we share our blessings, enabling others to work with us to make God's dream a reality. We offer up our tithes and our offerings; symbols of love for the kingdom of God.

Offering Hymn VU 55 vs. 4 "In the Bleak Midwinter"

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 my heart.

Prayer of Dedication

As we prepare, O God, for the festival of Christ's birth,
help us to give in expectation of his return.
May our gifts be used to prepare the world for Christ's coming,
When all creation shall sing your praise. Amen.

Hymn VU 74 "What Child Is This"

What child is this, who laid to rest,
on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud,
the Babe, the Son of Mary!

Why lies he in such mean estate
where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear; for sinners here
the silent Word is pleading.

This, this is Christ the King,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud,
the Babe, the Son of Mary!

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.

This, this is Christ the King,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud,
the Babe, the Son of Mary!

Commissioning and Benediction

O come, desire behind our greatest needs.

O come, Lover of our souls.

O come, O come, Emmanuel.

Amen.

Response: VU 45 vs. 4 "Joy Is Now in Every Place"

Now and ever may we find
your good news to fill our mind:
peace and love to humankind,
O hear us, bless us, holy Jesus.

Postlude: "O Little Town of Bethlehem" Lewis H. Redner Arr. by Bernadine Johnson

ALL:

May you all have a blessed Christmas,
and may the whole world discover God's love, justice, peace, and joy in 2023. Rev.C.M.P.

UNION

The Christmas Eve service will be live in-person and live-streamed at 7 p.m.

The Christmas Day service will be online only at 9:45 a.m.

December 18th is the last Sunday to make a donation to Union United Church for your 2022 tax receipt.

DORCHESTER:

The Christmas Eve service will be live in-person at 7 p.m., led by the worship committee.

The Christmas Day service will be live in-person at 10 a.m., led by the worship committee.

(Please note that these services will not be streamed online. If you wish to join online, please join the service from Union at 7 p.m. on Christmas Eve, or 9:45 a.m. on Christmas Day.)

December 25th is the last Sunday to make a donation to Dorchester United Church for your 2022 tax receipt.

Lectionary Readings for the next 2 weeks:

(December 25, Christmas Day, Year A)

Isaiah 62:6-12; Psalm 97; Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:(1-7), 8-20

(January 1, First after Christmas, Year A)

Isaiah 63:7-9; Psalm 148; Hebrews 2:10-18; Matthew 2:13-23