

Sunday December 22, 2024  
Fourth Sunday of Advent

**We Gather In God's Presence**

**Prelude:** "Advent Prayer" Allen Pote

**Birthdays, Celebrations, and Life and Work of the Congregation**

**Lighting the Advent Candle** Written by Jean Hamilton. Used with permission.

Well, it's Christmas weekend,

And this is the payoff

The end of the year and we're into the playoffs!

For this is the Sunday

When love is the theme!

So what do you make of it?

What is your dream?

**I know about love,**

**I know all about it**

**The singers all sing it,**

**The shouters all shout it.**

**Everyone's shopping**

**Wanting to try it**

**Everyone's hopping**

**To find it or buy it.**

**Just buy the right presents,**

**Just drive the right car,**

**And love will be yours,**

**It's right there in the stars.**

I think that's a problem,

I think that's all wrong,

If that is the story

You heard in a song.

It's not about money,

It's not about shopping,

It's not about buying,

It's not about hopping.

Don't have to be pretty,

Don't have to be clever,

Don't have to be anything different whatever.

To love everybody, both neighbour and stranger,

This is the gift of the Child in the manger.

**That sounds really cool, I think that I get it.**

**Let's light a candle so we don't forget it. (*light candle.*)**

**Hymn MV 134** "There Was a Child in Galilee (Dreaming Mary)" Words and Music: Janet Gadeski, 2005.  
 Words and Music © 2005 Janet Gadeski, The United Church of Canada Foundation.  
 Arrangement © 2006 Patricia Wright. OneLicense.net A620168

There was a child in Galilee who wandered wild along the sea.  
 A holy child, alone was she, and they called her Dreaming Mary.

And she dreamed, rejoicing in her saviour;  
 she dreamed of justice for the poor.  
 She dreamed that kings oppressed no more  
 when she dreamed, that Dreaming Mary.

One holy day an angel came with voice of wind and eyes of flame.  
 He promised blessed would be her name when he spoke to Dreaming Mary.  
 Then she spoke, rejoicing in her saviour.  
 She spoke of justice for the poor.  
 She spoke that kings oppressed no more  
 when she spoke, that Dreaming Mary.

And did she dream about a son? And did he speak, the angel one?  
 We only know God's will was done in the son of Dreaming Mary.  
 Then she prayed, rejoicing in her saviour.  
 She taught him justice for the poor.  
 She taught that kings oppressed no more  
 when she taught, that Dreaming Mary.

Then Jesus grew in Galilee, they wandered wild along the sea.  
 Now he calls to you and me to dream with Dreaming Mary.  
 And we dream, rejoicing in our saviour.  
 We dream of justice for the poor.  
 We dream that kings oppressed no more  
 when we dream with Dreaming Mary.

**Opening Prayer** (*unison*) Written by **Nora Vedress**, *Calvary U.C., Prince Albert, Sask.* Used with permission.

This may be the hardest gift to receive, Holy God. To accept your unconditional never-failing love means we must open ourselves fully to your presence. It means we must see that even in our imperfection we are blessed, and wanted, and touched by your grace. As all four candles shine this morning, we know we are close to the end of our waiting time, but we pray that we not rush to the end. Help us pause here and feel the depth of your love. Let us attempt to know just how cherished we are. Help us feel the warmth of your presence as we allow your light to shine upon us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**Ministry of Music:** "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" arr. by Marshall McDonald & Steven Sharp Nelson.  
 adapted by Jon Schmidt. Cello: Lucine Petrosyan

### **A New Creed VU 918**

We are not alone,  
we live in God's world.

We believe in God:  
who has created and is creating,  
who has come in Jesus,  
the Word made flesh,  
to reconcile and make new,  
who works in us and others  
by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:  
to celebrate God's presence,  
to live with respect in Creation,  
to love and serve others,  
to seek justice and resist evil,  
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,  
our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death,  
God is with us.

We are not alone.

Thanks be to God.

### **Hymn VU 12 "She Walked in the Summer"** Words and Music: Miriam Therese Winter, 1968.

Words and Music © 1968, 1987 Medical Mission Sisters, Permission Dept., 92 Sherman St., Hartford, CY 06105 USA  
Accompaniment © 1995 Nan Thompson.

She walked in the summer through the heat on the hill.  
She hurried as one who went with a will.  
She danced in the sunlight when the day was done.  
Her heart knew no evening who carried the sun.

– Fresh as a flower at the first ray of dawn,  
she came to her cousin whose morning was gone.  
There leaped a little child in the ancient womb,  
and there leaped a little hope in every ancient tomb.

– Hail, little sister, who heralds the spring.  
– Hail, brave mother, of whom prophets sing.  
– Hail to the moment beneath your breast.  
May all generations call you blessed.

When you walk in the summer through the heat on the hill,  
when you're wound with the wind and one with Her will,  
be brave with the burden you are blessed to bear,  
for it's Christ that you carry everywhere, everywhere, everywhere.

**We Open Ourselves to Receive God's Blessings**

**Responsive Reading: Luke 1:47-55 Song of Mary VU 898**

**To God I lift my soul in praise; in God my saviour I rejoice.**

My soul proclaims God's greatness.

**My spirit rejoices in God my saviour.**

For you have looked with favour on your lowly servant.

**From this day all generations will call me blessed.**

You have done great things for me, O Most Mighty.

**Hallowed be your Name!**

You have mercy on those who fear you,

**From one generation to another.**

**To God I lift my soul in praise; in God my saviour I rejoice.**

You took action with a strong arm.

**You scattered the proud in their conceit.**

You pulled the mighty from their thrones.

**You raised the lowly.**

You filled the hungry with good things.

**You sent the rich away empty.**

You come to the aid of your servant, Israel,

**for you remembered your promise of mercy,**

**to our ancestors, Abraham and Sarah,**

**and to their children in every age.**

**To God I lift my soul in praise; in God my saviour I rejoice.**

**Scripture: Micah 5:2-5a The Ruler from Bethlehem**

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,

who are one of the little clans of Judah,

from you shall come forth for me

one who is to rule in Israel,

whose origin is from of old,

from ancient days.

Therefore he shall give them up until the time

when she who is in labor has brought forth;

then the rest of his kindred shall return

to the people of Israel.

And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord,

in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.

And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great

to the ends of the earth,

and he shall be the one of peace.

*The other readings for this week are: **Micah 5:2-5a; Psalm 80:1-7 (alt.); Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45, (46-55)***

**Meditation:** "Love"

**Hymn VU 472** “O Jesus, Joy of Loving Hearts” Words: 12<sup>th</sup> C. Translated by Ray Palmer, 1858.

Music: Henry Percy Smith, 1874. Words and Music in the Public Domain

O Jesus, joy of loving hearts,  
the fount of life, the light of all  
from every bliss that earth imparts  
we turn, unfilled, to hear your call.

Your truth unchanged has ever stood;  
you plead with all to call on you,  
to those who seek you, you are good,  
to those who find you, life is new.

We taste your ever living bread,  
and long to feast upon you still;  
we drink of you, the fountainhead,  
our thirsting souls from you we fill.

O Jesus, ever with us stay;  
make all our moments calm and bright;  
chase the bleak night of sin away,  
shed o'er the world your holy light.

### **The Sacrament of Holy Communion**

#### **The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving**

Glory to God in the highest!

**And on earth, peace to all!**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them up to God.**

Let us give thanks to God.

**It is good to give God thanks and praise.**

Blessed are you, gracious God, Creator of light, Giver of all life, Source of love. Your song of wisdom rang out before the world began; your ancient love still touches us and stirs within us. Even when we turn away from you, you keep faith with us. You send your messengers to prepare the way through the wilderness of our living, to guide us in the path of wholeness, to call us to repent. In Mary, woman of your promise, you showed us courage and faith; in the fullness of time, you sent us your greatest gift, Jesus, the Christ, our prince of peace and herald of hope. So it is that we join in the Advent prayer of all your people, “O come, Emmanuel.” And as we wait and watch for your coming, we proclaim your goodness:

**Holy, holy, holy God,**

**Power of life and love!**

**Heaven and earth are full of your glory!**

**Hosanna through the ages!**

**Blest is the One who comes to bring your justice to the world!**

Let us remember together that vision of God’s reign shown to us in Jesus at table:

**he shared food with followers and friends,**

with saints and sinners,

**with crowds of thousands on the hillside,**

and a few friends in an upper room.

**On the night before he died, he had supper with his companions.**

He took a loaf of bread, and after giving thanks, he broke it, and gave it to them, saying:

**“Take, eat. When you do this, remember me.”**

Then, he took a cup, and after giving thanks, he passed it among them, saying”

**“Drink this. When you do this, remember me.”**

Through this loaf and cup, Jesus lives within us.

**In word and deed, Jesus lives among us.**

God of majesty, with reverent hearts we name you also God of self-giving love.

We give thanks, blessing above blessing, for Jesus Christ, son of Mary, Word of life.

**We remember Jesus, faithful friend and living hope:**

**attesting truth before the powers;**

**seeking the forgotten and abused;**

**setting the prodigal and the righteous at the one feast of forgiveness.**

**We remember Jesus, risen and eternal One, Christ who comes to meet us.**

**Christ’s death, O God, we proclaim.**

**Christ’s resurrection we declare.**

**Christ’s coming we await.**

Send your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts. Make us one with Christ in his self-giving, that through us, he may: bind up the broken-hearted, comfort the mourners, open the eyes of the blind, and proclaim liberty to the captives – until justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness life an overflowing stream.

Remember your church, O God, redeemed by Christ and strengthened by the Holy Spirit. Reveal its unity, guard its faith, preserve its peace, empower its witness. We pray especially for Littlewood United Church, and their spiritual leader, the Rev. Sue Browning.

Remember all your people and those who seek your truth, especially we remember the people of Japan, North Korea, and South Korea.

Remember all who have died, and support their loved ones who mourn their deaths. Especially we remember the family and friends of Bill Latham and Shirley Day.

Remember all who are ill or dying, awaiting treatment or recovering from medical intervention, especially we remember Christa, Kurt, and all those known in the silence of our hearts...

In union with all the saints we praise you and give glory to you.

Blessed be the Ancient of Days!

Blessed be the Beloved!

Blessed be the Comforter!

All this we pray saying,

**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;**

**and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,**

**forever and ever. Amen.**

**Distribution of the Elements**

**Prayer following communion**

Eternal and gracious One, though we live in a world of need,

**here we have tasted your goodness and hungered for a world more just.**

Though afflicted by brokenness and division,

**here we have heard your call to be a people of healing community.**

Though daily we touch our limits,

**here we have received the fullness of your grace.**

Send us forth, O God,

**in faith, in hope, and in love. Amen.**

**We Respond To God's Grace**

**Invitation to Invest in God's Mission**

Friends, this is difficult. Hearing the words of Mary, too often we believe we are the chosen ones; we believe we are the ones God raises up and fills and protects. However, in a global context, we are the rich, the proud, and the powerful. Yet there is good news for us, too. When you choose to generously share all that God has given you—to feed and house, to comfort and heal, to seek justice and resist evil—you turn to ally yourselves with the love of God that you have found. Let us share our gifts, then, that all may know God's love. Our tithes and offerings will be received.

**Offertory Hymn** "Bless Our Hands" *to tune Good King Wencaslas*

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Bless our hands to do your work, bless the gifts we're bearing.

May your love and grace be known in the way we're sharing.

Peace and hope and joy and love – these are gifts worth giving.

These be ours to pass along when in Christ we're living.

**Prayer of Dedication**

Written by Gord Dunbar. **Gathering**, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany 2024/2025, page 33.

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On this Sunday when the Advent candle of love spreads the warmth of your love, God who is love, we offer these gifts for your purpose in the world. Bless them as signs of our love for neighbours worldwide. Bless us as a sign of your love cultivated within our hearts, beating to the cadence of right relation within all Creation. Amen.

**Hymn VU 46** "Gentle Mary Laid Her Child" *to the tune Good King Wenceslas*

Words: Joseph Simpson Cook, 1919.

Words and Music in the Public Domain.

Gentle Mary laid her child lowly in a manger;

there he lay, the undefiled, to the world a stranger.

Such a babe in such a place, can he be the Saviour?

Ask the saved of all the race who have found his favour.

Angels sang about his birth, wise men sought and found him;

heaven's star shone brightly forth, glory all around him.

Shepherds saw the wondrous sight, heard the angels singing;

all the plains were lit that night, all the hills were ringing.

Gentle Mary laid her child lowly in a manger;  
he is still the undefiled, but no more a stranger.  
Son of God of humble birth, beautiful the story;  
praise his name in all the earth; hail the King of glory.

### **Commissioning**

Love incarnate, come with all due haste.  
Come be born again in our hearts and our lives.  
Come be born anew in our hate-filled world.

**O come, O come, Emmanuel. Amen.**

**Response: MV 220** “Hope Shines as the Solitary Star” Words: Catherine Faith MacLean.

Music: Janet Bauman Tissandier. Words © Catherine Faith MacLean.

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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.

**Postlude:** “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming” Geitliche Kirchengesang arr. Bernadine Johnson

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Looking for the perfect Christmas gift for the person who has everything? Don’t forget about **Gifts with Vision!** Order online at [giftswithvision.ca](http://giftswithvision.ca)

**Christmas Eve.** *We will be celebrating at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, December 24.*

**Worship Around the Breakfast Table:** On Sunday, December 29 we will gather in the hall for a potluck breakfast and worship. Let’s plan to gather at 9:30 a.m. for breakfast, and then start worship about 10:00 a.m.

## **LECTIONARY READINGS:**

December 24 – Christmas Eve

Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)

December 25 – Christmas Day

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

December 29 – First after Christmas

1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52

January 5 – Second after Christmas

Jeremiah 31:7-14; Psalm 147:12-20; Ephesians 1:3-14; John 1:(1-9), 10-18

January 6 – Epiphany

Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14; Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12