

Sunday December 21, 2025  
Fourth Sunday of Advent

**We Gather In God's Presence**

**Prelude:** "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

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

**Lighting the Advent Candle:**

As morning sun separates the horizon, night from day, light from shadows,  
**we assemble to hear the ancient story told again this year,**  
a story of God's love burning brightly  
**into a waiting world;**  
**a spark of new life that unites us with God's love.**

**Hymn:** "Advent Song" Words and Music: Mary Lu Walker, 1975.

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Light the Advent candle, four: Think of joy forevermore;  
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.

**Preparing Our Hearts for Worship**

**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 8** "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming" Words: German 15th century. English translation: Theodore Baker.

Music: German traditional melody. Harmonized by Michael Praetorius.

Words, English Translation, Music, and Harmonization in the Public Domain.

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.

### **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.

**Anthem:** “Silent, Starry Night” (Incorporating Silent Night). Words and music by Anna Laura Page

### **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 55** “In the Bleak Midwinter” Words: Christina Georgina Rossetti ca. 1872.

Music: Gustav Theodor Holst 1906. Words and Music in the Public Domain.

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,  
earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;  
snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,  
in the bleak midwinter, long ago.

Our God, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain;  
heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign;  
in the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed  
the Lord God almighty, Jesus Christ.

Enough for him, whom cherubim worship night and day,  
 a breast full of milk, and a manger full of hay.  
 Enough for him, whom angels fall down before,  
 the ox and ass and camel which adore.

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.

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

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

**Your face, God, shine on us and give us peace.**

Shepherd of Israel, hear us,

**you who lead Joseph like a flock,**

**you who are enthroned amidst the cherubim.**

Shine forth before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh;

**stir up your might, come and save us.**

**Your face, God, shine on us and give us peace.**

God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayer?

**You have fed us with the bread of weeping,**

**and given us tears in plenty to drink.**

You have made a mockery of us to our neighbours,

**and our enemies laugh us to scorn.**

Let your hand rest on the one at your right hand,

on the one you have made strong for yourself.

**Then we will never forsake you;**

**give us life, and we will call on your name.**

**Your face, God, shine on us and give us peace.**

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

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 lectionary readings for this week are: **Isaiah 7:10-16; Romans 1:1-7***

**Sermon:** “Are you listening?”

**Hymn VU 472** “O Jesus, Joy of Loving Hearts” Words: 12th Century, translated by Ray Palmer.

Music: Henry Percy Smith. 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.

**Great Prayer of Thanksgiving** © 2025 Thom M. Shuman. Used with permission.

Come, God, to be with your people!

**Come, God, to be with you!**

Come, Turner of barren hearts into seas of overflowing wonder!

**Come, Longing of our empty lives!**

Come, Listener to the songs of all creation!

**Come, Receiver of our joyful hearts and hopes!**

Come, Dreamer of creation, for by your Word you spoke, calling sheep to roam hillsides, crafting trees to touch the clouds, filling sea beds with teeming life. Come, Face shining with grace, for with your Spirit you shaped us to be your people, signs of your hope, even when we listen to sin’s hollow voices. Come, Listener to our hearts, for by the prophets, you never abandoned us to sin or would let death separate us from you, even sending your Beloved to save us. As we seek not to put you to the test, as we would not weary those around us, we offer our thanksgiving to you:

**Come, God whose holiness shatters the stillness.**

**We join all creation in praising you: Hosanna in the highest!**

**Come, Blessed of God’s love for us.**

**Hosanna in the highest!**

Come, Spirit of holiness, as we celebrate the One who has come to be with us. Come, Restorer of our empty hearts, and rebuild our ruined souls shattered by stress. Come, Good News for our longing ears, and speak to us of God's love and hope in us. Come, Life-giver, destroying sin's death grip over us forever, as you lead us into resurrection. Preparing to celebrate the birth of hope, making ready to welcome the gift of your heart, we cry out the mystery we know as faith:

**Come, Sufferer on our behalf.**

**Come, Resurrection's bright hope.**

**Come, Promise keeper of our future.**

Come, Bestower of grace, pouring out your Spirit on the gifts of this Table and your children gathered here. Come, Baker of hope, mixing our tears with the flour of your hope, so the bread of life might fill all people with joy this day. Come, Cradle of our hearts, so we as we drink the cup of grace bitterness may become benevolence, cynicism may transform into compassion, fear may be recast into faithfulness. Then come, Keeper of all time, when we least expect you, to gather us with our sisters and brothers of every place and from every time, to joyfully feast with you in all eternity, God in Community, Holy in One. In the meantime, hear our prayers for our brothers and sisters around the world, especially the people of Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and the Peoples Republic of China; for those mourning a loss, especially the family and friends of Jack Wilson; those who ill or dying, awaiting medical intervention or recovering from same, especially Barb, Butch, Cindy, Gloria, Jeffery, Julie, Maxine, Rob, and their loved ones, and caregivers, and those known only in the silence of our hearts.....

We gather all our prayers and lift them up to you, in the name of your son, born that Christmas night so long ago. Amen.

### **Distribution of the Elements**

#### **Prayer after Communion**

**We give thanks for the blessing of bread and wine. May they nourish us as your people. Grant us your grace and peace this Christmas as we continue to celebrate the birth of Christ. May we continue to live out your dream for all humanity, spoken to us in the prayer of Jesus:**

**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, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

### **We Respond To God's Grace**

#### **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.

**Offertory Hymn:** to the tune *Hymn to Joy* by Ludwig van Beethoven, 1824; adapt. Edward Hodges, 1864.  
Music and Adaptation in the Public Domain. Words: Unknown.

Joyful, joyful, Lord we bring you gifts that you can use today.  
Take them, bless them, may your kingdom spread to all the world, we pray.  
We are here: our time, our talents, we would dedicate as well.  
May we show Christ's love within us, by our lives our faith to tell.

### **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 48** "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing" Words: Charles Wesley. Music: Felix Mendelssohn,  
Adaptation: William Hayman Cummings.  
Words, Music, and Adaptation in the Public Domain.

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 host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"  
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

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

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.  
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

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Come, let us go with God to bring healing to the world.

**Come, let us bring family to the lonely,  
comfort to those who grieve.**

Come, let us go with Jesus to all are forgotten.

**Come, let us carry justice to the oppressed,  
to feed those who hunger in body and soul.**

Come, let us go with the faithful Spirit.

**Come, let us speak the gospel with our lips,  
let us share grace with our lives.**

**Sung Response:** “Advent Amen” Words and Music: Lisa Waites. Words and Music © 2018 Lisa Waites.  
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Go now with hope, for Jesus will be coming soon.  
Go now with peace, that God alone can give;  
Go now with Joy, to share with all the prophet’s news.  
Go now with love, God’s faithful love to live;  
Amen, Amen, Hallelujah, Amen.

**Postlude:** “Joy To The World” Lowell Mason Based on G. F. Handel *Antioch* Arr. Jason Sandborn

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Sox in a Box.** We are collecting socks, mittens, hats, scarves, and other warm items for the homeless again this year. The box is at the foot of the Christmas tree in the sanctuary.

**Gifts with Vision.** Trying to find the perfect gift for the person who has everything? Have you looked at the 2025 edition of Gifts with Vision? There are many ways to support those in need in Canada and around the world. And, gifts are considered charitable donations. Pamphlets are available on the table just outside the front of the sanctuary (across from the elevator), or visit [www.giftswithvision.ca](http://www.giftswithvision.ca)

**Ark Aid Mission** has launched the HOLIDAY BIG GIVE. They have challenged the community, faith and otherwise, to raise \$500,000 to fund 10,000 more days of safe rest, food, and other essentials. For more information, go to [www.holidaybiggive.ca](http://www.holidaybiggive.ca) or contact [paula@arkaidmission.ca](mailto:paula@arkaidmission.ca)

**Organ Recital Series: From Buxheim to Bach** The final recital in a series of four recitals will take place at Metropolitan United Church (London) at 12:15 p.m., followed by a light lunch at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 27. A freewill offering will be received.

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## **Lectionary Readings:**

Wednesday, December 24, Christmas Eve  
Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)

Thursday, December 25, Christmas Day  
Isaiah 62:6-12; Psalm 97; Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:(1-7), 8-20

Sunday, December 28, First Sunday after Christmas  
Isaiah 63:7-9; Psalm 148; Hebrews 2:10-18; Matthew 2:13-23

Thursday, January 1, New Year’s Day  
Ecclesiastes 3:1-13; Psalm 8; Revelation 21:1-6a; Matthew 25:31-46

Sunday, January 4, Second Sunday after Christmas  
Jeremiah 31:7-14; Psalm 147:12-20; Ephesians 1:3-14; John 1:(1-9), 10-18

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

Sunday, January 11, Baptism of Jesus  
Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 29; Acts 10:34-43; Matthew 3:13-17