



West River United Church

Rev. Barbara J. Cairns

Andrea Rogers

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and all members of West River United Church

Christmas Eve Service

Holy Communion

December 24, 2020, 9:00 p.m.

Welcome**

On Jesus' birthday, the angels appeared to the shepherds, proclaiming: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace and goodwill to all" As we celebrate his holy birth, let us proclaim glory to God as we share the peace of Christ with those around us.

The Christ Candle *

One Light in the darkness, angels in the heavens, a star in the sky, the goodness of God's presence. This is a night of glorious appearances, a night of hope, peace, joy, and love. (four advent candles are lit.)

All: We give thanks and praise as we light the Christ candle. (Christ candle is lit.)

♪ 'A Candle is Burning' VU 6 vs. 1 & 5

A candle is burning, a flame warm and bright,
A candle of hope in December's dark night.
While angels sing blessings from heaven's starry sky,
Our hearts we prepare now for Jesus is nigh.

We honor 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 Worship*

One: People of God: we gather, in worship, to prepare ourselves to hear the song of the angels, to go in heart and mind to Bethlehem.

All: On this Christmas Eve we gather in the spirit to see the loving-kindness of our God, the baby living in a manger.

One: Let us give thanks and praise to God.

All: We rejoice and give thanks for the hope of new life born in us tonight.

Prayer of Approach and The Lord's Prayer (*unison*)

O God of angel song, shepherd surprise, stable warmth, and birthing cry: dawn in our darkness, sing through our silence, surprise us with wonder and joy this holy season. O come to us, Emmanuel.

Together we pray the words that Christ has given us 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, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

♪ 'Once in Royal David's City' VU 62- vs 1 & 2

Once in royal David's city
stood a lowly cattleshed,
where a mother laid her baby
in a manger for his bed.
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little child.

He came down to earth from heaven,

who, with God, is over all,
and his shelter was a stable,
and his cradle was a stall.
There among the poor and lowly
lived on earth our Saviour holy.

Scripture Luke 2:1-20 (NRSV)

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. 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. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 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.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 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: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

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.” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these

words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Sermon

Invitation to the Offering**

Come now and kneel before the Christ child. Bring all that you are and all that you have. Offer your gifts in wonder and surprise and awe. Offer your gifts in joy and delight.

Presentation of Ourselves and Our Gifts to God

♪ 'In the Bleak Midwinter' – VU 55 vs 4

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.

Offertory Prayer **(*unison*)

All: Generous and loving God, Your gift to us in Christ Jesus still draws us to manger and opens our hearts with wonder. Bless our gifts in his name, so that they may draw others to Your love, to find the blessing we have discovered in the One born for us. Amen

Celebration Of Holy Communion ***

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.

God of all times and places, we gather at your table of grace to recall your vision of hope for all people and for your world. Through Abraham and Sarah, you revealed your promise in the surprise of a child. Through your prophets, you called your people to make way for peace and justice.

In Jesus, you revealed your way of forgiveness and love. Through the ever-circling year, Your Word discloses to us again and anew Your promise for the restoration of all creation. As we gather to share this sign of hope and fulfillment, we remember

Jesus, the child born into obscurity, amid fear and uncertainty. We remember the fragility of that revelation, as well as the hope he stirred and imagination he inspired. We remember Jesus, the One who blazed a new and risky path of extravagant generosity and of passionate concern: temple-shaker, world-maker, rule-breaker, risk-taker; the author and finisher of our faith.

We remember Jesus' self-giving love and the offer of himself for others, even those who gave him over to death.

On that night, in the midst of great confusion and fear, Jesus broke bread with friends, saying, "This is my body, which I give for you and for all. When you do this, remember me."

With a blessing, he took the cup and offered it to them saying:

"This cup is God's covenant which is given for all. When you drink this, remember me.

Come to us, life-giving Spirit of God.

Bless us, these gifts, and what we do here, so that we might say will be in love for Your people and for Your world. Amen.

Prayers of the People **(*unison*)**

God of hope, of silent prayers and urgent cries, we pray for Your world and its people: for those who will spend this Christmas alone; for those who will not enjoy a meal; 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 Eve we pray for the people of world and for refugees who have nowhere to lay their heads, for those who find themselves in strange lands. We pray for those suffering because of COVID-19. Watch over and protect them, loving God, and guide us in the ways of mercy and reconciliation. Open our hearts, that we might receive You and hear Your voice, so that we may share the gift of Your love, Your vision, and Your grace for all people everywhere. In the Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Prayer After Communion (*unison*)

God of shepherds and kings, You gather us by the light of the star of promise. You lead us not only to hope for the future, but to trust in your presence and renewal of life in every time and place. Guide us this night, by the light of that same star. Lead us to the mangers of this world, where uncertainty is met with the renewal life and the transformation of this world is most deeply felt in love, one with another. Be with us on this most wondrous of nights, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Benediction **

Go now in wonder.

Go to bring joy to those who can find no joy, hope to a world steeped in realism.
Go with the songs of angels in your ears, and the love of God in your hearts.
Go and spread the word.
The babe of Bethlehem is born for all

♫ 'Silent Night, Holy Night' VU 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,
sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night! Holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight:
glories stream from heaven afar,
heavenly hosts sing Hallelujah,
Christ the Saviour is born, 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,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

Postlude

* *The Whole People of God.*

** *Ministry Matters, December, December 2020*

*** *Rev. Andrew O'Neil, St. Paul's United Church, Riverview, NB*

**** *United Church of Canada Advent Unwrapped. 2016.*

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