



*Celebrating
175 Years*



December. 24, 2020

Melville United Church

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December 24, 2020

Christmas Eve

Presiding today - Rev. Marion Loree

We acknowledge with respect the history, spirituality and culture of the Indigenous peoples with whom Treaty 4 - also known as the Haldimand Tract - was signed and the territory wherein our church resides, and we acknowledge our responsibilities as treaty members.

Welcome

My name is Marion Loree and I am the minister here at Melville United Church in Fergus, Ontario. And I welcome one and all to our Christmas Eve Service. This year we are meeting only on-line because of the Covid-19 restrictions in our area. Christmas this year is different for all of us and I hope that, if you are spending it alone, or with only one or two others, this time of sharing in the age-old Christmas story will bring some peace and joy to your heart.

Lighting of the Advent Candle *(If you are watching this on-line or reading it from a page I invite you to take a moment to light a candle, centre yourself and prepare to enter in to a time of worship and prayer. As you light your candle repeat the following words)*

Our Advent journey is complete, the waiting is over.

Tonight is Christmas Eve.

For the last four Sundays we have been lighting the candles on our Advent wreath as we have waited for this very night. The night we celebrate the birth of Jesus.

We lit the first candle to remind us of the way of HOPE. *(1st candle is lit)* .

We lit the second candle to remind us of the path of PEACE. *(2nd candle is lit)*

We lit the third candle to remind us of spirit-filled JOY. *(3rd candle is lit)*.

We lit the fourth candle to remind us that God's LOVE is ever with us. *(4th candle is lit)*

We live in a world longing for God, the God who will be our guide when the path is unclear. The God who will be our courage when we are scared of what comes next. The God who will be our wisdom when we don't know which way to turn. The God who will be with us now and always.

Knowing the need for God in our own lives and in this heartbroken world, we light this candle as a symbol that God is with us as love born in Jesus this night. *(The Christ candle is lit)*.

Hymn: A Candle is Burning

VU 6 (vs 5)

We honour 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:

We who have walked in darkness have seen a great light.

We who have lived in a land of deep darkness - on us a light is shining.

For a child has been born for us, an infant given to us.

He is called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace.

O come, all you faithful! Come and worship your God.

Hymn: O Come, All Ye Faithful*VU 60** (vs 1,3,5)

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
 O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem:
 come and behold him, born the King of angels;
 O come, let us adore him.....

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
 sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;
 glory to God in the highest:
 O come, let us adore him....

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;
 Jesus, to thee be glory given;
 word of the Father, now in flesh appearing:
 O come, let us adore him...

Opening Prayer:

Amazing God, with hearts and minds and the depth of our being, we offer our praise.
 We sing with joy and gratitude for the gifts of peace, hope, joy, love
 and for the Christ - light and life for all.

O God, put a new song in our hearts, a song of justice and of mercy.
 Put a new vision in our sight, a vision of harmony and of peace.
 Put a new sound in our ears, the sound of creation's majesty.
 Put a new ground under our feet, the ground of a sustainable world.
 Put a new heaven within our reach, a heaven both here and coming. Amen.

Words of Affirmation:

Let us rejoice as the psalmist does, 'Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice' for God comes to restore goodness and truth to this world.
 Thanks be to God! Amen.

Ministry of Music: O Little Town of Bethlehem - Linda Mae Ogilvie & Colleen Weber

Message: The Give Away -by Ray Buckley
 (due to copyright laws, we can't print the words for you)

Hymn: 'Twas In the Moon of Wintertime**VU 71**

'Twas in the moon of wintertime,
 when all the birds had fled,
 that mighty Gitchi Manitou
 sent angel choirs instead;
 before their light the stars grew dim,
 and wandering hunters heard the hymn:
 Jesus your King is born,
 Jesus is born, in excelsis gloria.

Within a lodge of broken bark
 the tender babe was found,
 a ragged robe of rabbit skin
 enwrapped his beauty round;
 but as the hunter braves drew nigh,
 the angel song rang loud and high:
 Jesus your King is born,
 Jesus is born, in excelsis gloria.

The earliest moon of wintertime
 is not so round and fair
 as was the ring of glory on
 the helpless infant there.
 The chiefs from far before him knelt
 with gifts of fox and beaver pelt.
 Jesus your King is born,
 Jesus is born, in excelsis gloria.

O children of the forest free,
 the angel song is true,
 the holy child of earth and heaven
 is born today for you.
 Come, kneel before the radiant boy,
 who brings you beauty, peace, and joy:
 Jesus your King is born,
 Jesus is born, in excelsis gloria.

First Reading: Isaiah 9:2, 6.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness - on them light has shined. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Protector, Prince of Peace.

Hymn: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel VU 1 (vs 1,7)
 O come, O come, Emmanuel,
 and ransom captive Israel
 that mourns in lowly exile here
 until the Son of God appear.
 Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, desire of nations, bind
 all peoples in one heart and mind,
 O bid our sad division cease,
 and be for us the Prince of Peace.
 Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Second Reading: Luke 2:1-5

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 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.

Hymn: Once in Royal David's City

VU 62 (vs 1,2)

Once in royal David's city
 stood a lowly cattle shed,
 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.

Third Reading: Luke 2:6-7

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.

Hymn: Away In A Manger

VU 69

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
 the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
 The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
 the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
 but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
 I love you, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky,
 and stay by my side until morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask you to stay
 close by me for ever, and love me, I pray.
 Bless all the dear children in your tender care,
 and fit us for heaven, to live with you there.

Fourth Reading: Luke 2:8-14

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 Saviour, 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 God favours!"

Hymn: Angels from the Realms of Glory

VU 36 (vs 1,2,)

Angels, from the realms of glory,
wing your flight o'er all the earth;
ye who sang creation's story,
now proclaim Messiah's birth:
 come and worship, come and worship,
 worship Christ, the newborn King.

Shepherds in the field abiding,
watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing,
yonder shines the infant Light:
 come and worship, come and worship,
 worship Christ, the newborn King

Fifth Reading: Luke 2:15-20

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.

Ministry of Music: Angels We Have Heard on High

Colleen Weber

Preparation for Prayer:

As we prepare our hearts and minds to enter into a time of prayer I invite you to sit comfortably and quietly for a moment. Breathe deeply a few times paying particular attention to your

breath as it moves in through your nostrils and fills your lungs. Picture your breath as a light entering your body and filling it with love and relaxation. Then when you exhale imagine the breath taking all your tensions and worries with it as it leaves your body. Do this a few times until you feel relaxed then move on into the prayer time.

Our Christmas Prayers:

Your grace appears today, Great Mystery, to bring hope, peace, joy and love to us all. We pray tonight for all of us who participate in the human story. We pray for all of us who have our being in creation.

We pray for the leaders of this world, may they be guided by God's will and not their own power.

We pray for the citizens of the nations of this earth, may we be guided by equality and common good.

We pray for parents. May they be guided by humility, responsibility, and patience.

We pray for the children. May they be guided by love, trust, and possibility.

We pray for the homeless and unprotected. May they be guided by a sense of possibility and know the kindness of strangers.

We pray for the innkeepers, workers, and shelter-makers and givers, may they be guided by a sense of gratitude and hospitality.

We pray for the plants and animals that share this planet with us. May they know healing, care and protection of their natural habitat.

We pray for the air, water and the environment that sustains us all. May the pollution and destruction stop.

We pray for the messengers of God. May they be guided by wonder and inspiration.

We pray for those who work for justice and speak for the voiceless ones in our world. May they be encouraged and strengthened to continue.

We pray for all in whom Christ's love is born today. May we treasure and ponder what we have seen and heard here tonight. May we take to heart the story of love that we celebrate together.

We offer these and all of our prayers in the name of the one whose birth we remember tonight - Jesus the Christ - and who taught us to pray together saying... Our Father...

Lord's Prayer:

Our Father who art in heaven,
 hallowed be thy name,
 thy kindom 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 kindom, the power, and the glory
 forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn: Silent 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, loves pure light
 radiant beams from thy holy face,
 with the dawn of redeeming grace,
 Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,
 Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

Sending Forth:

Go now into this wondrous night
 taking with you the hope, peace, joy and love
 that is offered to you by a God who knows no boundaries and no limits.
 Go now to see the face of God everywhere -
 in the baby, in the child, in the teen,
 in the young adult, in the middle, in the elder.
 Go now to bring the kindness and love of God to everyone you meet.
 Amen!

Postlude: A Hallelujah Christmas

-solo- Rev. Marion Loree