



**December 18, 2022**

Melville United Church

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**Melville United Church**  
**December 18, 2022**  
**Fourth Sunday of Advent**

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Presiding today - Rev. Lynda Goy-Flint

### **Welcome**

I greet you in the name of the one whose coming we celebrate and anticipate, Jesus the Christ.

We gather in community today – December 18, 2022 virtually and in person. We will continue to offer both in-person and on-line services with printed copies being distributed to those without internet access who are unable to attend in person. We encourage people to come out to worship in the sanctuary. There is ample room to socially distance, and you are welcome to wear masks or not as is comfortable for you.

We gather in this new Christian year, in the season of Advent, looking inward, pondering, and taking action to bring hope, peace, joy and love to the world as we await the arrival of the babe in the manger and the Second Coming of Christ. The colour for the season is blue, symbolizing hope.

### **Announcements**

- **Christmas Services:**
  - Christmas Eve at 5pm – Family Service**
  - Christmas Eve at 8pm – Communion Service**
  - Christmas Day – no service**
  - New Years Day – 11am**
- We are looking for a **video camera operator** for the Christmas Eve services, 5:00 pm & 8:00 pm. It will not be necessary for a person to look after both services. We offer free training, though it is not a difficult task. Please contact Barry Rawn or the office at [secretary@melvilleunited.com](mailto:secretary@melvilleunited.com), 519-843-1781 ext. 1
- **Church envelopes** are ready to be picked up at the back of the church, if you use them.
- There are a few remaining **Church calendars** for sale for \$7.00 each.
- **“MID-DAY MUSIC AT MELVILLE” presented and performed by pianist BRAD HALLS**  
Come and enjoy a musical respite when “Mid-Day Music at Melville” returns on Wednesday, December 21 from 12 noon to 1:00 p.m. at Melville United Church in Fergus, when pianist Brad Halls will present a selection of Christmas music – both traditional carols and popular seasonal favourites, with some stories of where this wonderful music has come from. We will have some lyric sheets available to encourage you to sing along with some of the selections.
- **Year-to- Date Financial Summary** – please see the report included with your bulletin and prayerfully consider your response.
- **Mitten Tree** – We will once again be placing a Mitten Tree in the sanctuary and ask you to decorate it with mitts, hats, scarves and socks to keep folks in need warm during the winter.
- **Memory Angels:** Our Memory Angels will be displayed in the Sanctuary through Advent and ending January 8/23. Those who have had Angels in the past, can renew your Angel with a minimum donation of \$5, by contacting Lorna Bevcar. Those who are new to this, can have a

handmade paper Angel, with an inscription on the skirt, dedicating this Angel in memory of your loved one, from you, for a minimum donation of \$5. The Angels stay at Melville safely packed away, throughout the year. These Angels bring comfort and meaning to the Melville families throughout Advent, knowing we are remembering our loved ones.

- As more and more people find their dollar shrinking, and having to decide between rent and three meals a day, the demand for food bank assistance rises. We ask you to prayerfully consider if you are able to **support the Food Bank**, either with a donation of food, or financially. Items most needed as of Dec 8/22:

Pasta Sauce	Rice Side Dishes	Pasta Side Dishes	Canned Vegetables
Small Canned Soup	Canned Kidney Beans	Canned Six Bean Blend	Peanut Butter
Chunky Soup (Habitant)	Juice	Juice Boxes	Toilet Paper
Cookies	Canned Salmon		

The Food Bank is well stocked with:

Pasta	Tomato Soup	Canned Chickpeas or Lentils
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- **Save your Used Stamps from Incoming Mail:** The holiday season is coming and you'll be receiving cards, etc.. Cut off your used stamps, leaving a 1/2" border around them and give them to Marlene Tosh or put them in the Stamp Box on the shelf in the Cloak Room, where the Lift is on the main floor of the church. Marlene tidies them up and takes them to the Bible Society, to buy bibles. You can do this year-round!
- **Gifts with Vision: A Giving Catalogue from The United Church of Canada**
  - Give meaningful gifts that make a difference with [Gifts with Vision \(opens in a new tab\)](#)! Each year's gift catalogue gives a glimpse of the breadth of our Mission & Service ministries and programs.
  - *Gifts with Vision* has gift ideas to suit every interest, budget, and person. It's a great way to celebrate special occasions and honour loved ones!
  - The gift catalogue is updated online regularly, and is fully refreshed every fall. It is also distributed in print with *Broadview* magazine, and mailed to each pastoral charge.
  - **To order gifts, be inspired, or learn more, visit [GiftsWithVision.ca \(opens in a new tab\)](https://GiftsWithVision.ca) today!**

I invite you to join us now for a time of worship and contemplation.

**Land Acknowledgement** *Peter Chynoweth, Gathering: Pentecost 1 2022, p.33. Used with permission.*

We acknowledge that this land on which we gather for worship is the traditional land of the people of Petun,

Haudenosaunee, (Hoe-day-no-show-nee)

Anishinabewaki,

Mississaugas of the Credit,

Odawa and

Mississauga nations. We acknowledge that we live on this land as people who have agreed to share the care and use of this land as a result of treaties—the Simcoe Patent-Treaty 4, 1793 and the Haldimand Treaty, 1784—that outline the rights and responsibilities associated with our place in this land. May we be people who remember this with thanksgiving and respect.

**Lighting the Advent Candles** by Wanda Winfield *Gathering: Advent/Christmas/Epiphany 2022-2023 p.69, alt.*  
*Used with permission.*

**The Advent of Love**

*Two purple candles and the pink candle are lit.*

Today is the Advent of love.

As we light this candle, we remember  
all who are feeling lonely  
and distressed at this time of year.

**We live in a world that fears  
the stranger and the strange.**

We light this candle as our commitment  
to love that is expressed in expansivity.

**We are the community that welcome  
unconditionally and generously  
the growth and change that come  
whenever we gather anew  
with all who come together.**

We light this candle for Jesus, the Lover of All.

*The third purple candle is lit.*

**All sing: Hope Is a Star VU7 verse 4**

**OneLicense #A-740237**

Love is a flame that burns in our heart,  
Jesus has come and will never depart.  
When God is a child there's joy in our song.  
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,  
and none shall be afraid.

**Call to Worship:**

God comes as light,  
grace-filled yet baby frail.

**Now may our hearts cradle you,  
our voices sing to you,  
our spirits leap to you,  
and our hearts dance with you.**

**Opening Prayer (in unison):** *Catherine Tovell, Gathering: Advent/Christmas/Epiphany, 2022-2023, p.28, alt. Used with permission.*

**Gracious God, we have gathered in hope,  
sought peace,  
and laughed with joy,  
and now we come to share the great love that you have for us.  
Be with us in our worship and in our witness this week and every week.  
Help us to bring your love to the world,  
especially into broken and forgotten places  
and to people who feel unlovable and unlovely.**

**It is for this that you came to us in Bethlehem  
and for this that you continue to come again this and every year. Amen.**

**Hymn: When Long Before Time**

**VU248**

**OneLicense #A-740237**

- 1 When long before time and the worlds were begun,  
when there was no earth and no sky and no sun,  
and all was deep silence and night reigned supreme,  
and even our Maker had only a dream...
- 2 ...the silence was broken when God sang the Song,  
and light pierced the darkness and rhythm began,  
and with its first birth-cries creation was born,  
and creaturely voices sang praise to the morn.
- 3 The sounds of the creatures were one with their Lord's,  
their harmonies sweet and befitting the Word;  
the Singer was pleased as the earth sang the Song,  
the choir of the creatures re-echoed it long.
- 4 Though, down through the ages, the Song disappeared,  
its harmonies broken and almost unheard,  
the Singer comes to us to sing it again,  
our God-Is-with-Us in the world now as then.
- 5 The Light has returned as it came once before,  
the Song of the Lord is our own song once more;  
so let us all sing with one heart and one voice  
the Song of the Singer in whom we rejoice.

**Call to Reconciliation** *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from **Feasting on the Word® Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year A, Volume 1**. Copyright 2013, alt.*

Assured that God hears our heart-felt desire to turn a new page,  
Let us turn our minds to the truth,  
Acknowledging our sins, short-comings, brokenness and all that stands between us and God, us and  
one another.

**Prayer Seeking Forgiveness and Reconciliation (in unison)** *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from **Feasting on the Word® Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year A, Volume 1**. Copyright 2013.*

**Shepherd of Israel, God of hosts,  
we have turned away from you,  
neglecting the welfare of your creation,  
ignoring the plight of your people,  
trampling on the creatures and the plants you have made,  
taking from Earth what we cannot give back.**

**We have not helped our neighbors in need,  
kept peace within our families,  
or tended the vine you have planted in our own lives.  
Forgive us and lead us to a more gracious life.  
In your compassion, turn us to your way.  
Restore us, O Lord God of hosts;  
let your face shine upon us,  
and we shall be saved. Amen.**

**Words of Assurance** *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from **Feasting on the Word**<sup>®</sup> Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year A Volume 1. Copyright 2013.*

“You are called to belong to Jesus Christ.”

For the sake of the One God promised to send,  
named as God’s Son,  
who died, was raised, and through whom we receive grace,  
God forgives you all your sins.  
You are God’s beloved,  
called to be saints.  
Grace to you and peace.

### **Children’s Ministry: Love and Courage**

**Scripture: “Mary Learns about Her Baby Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 1:26-38” from *The Family Story Bible* by Ralph Milton**

Mary and Joseph lived in a small town called Nazareth. They were planning to marry each other. Late one night, when she was all by herself, Mary felt there was someone with her. She couldn’t see anyone. “Are you an angel?” Mary asked in a tiny voice. Mary had never seen an angel, but somehow, she was sure this must be an angel.

Then the someone spoke to her. “Be happy, Mary! God has chosen you for a wonderful thing. You are going to have a very special baby. You must call this baby Jesus, because he will be God’s chosen one, God’s Messiah.”

“But how can that be?” asked Mary, “I’m not married.”

“God will make this happen in a way that you will find hard to understand,” said the angel. Mary looked puzzled. “Mary,” said the angel, “I will tell you something wonderful that will help you believe me. Remember your cousin Elizabeth?”

“Oh yes,” said Mary.

“Elizabeth is growing old. She and her husband were sad because they didn’t have any children. But Elizabeth is going to have a baby too.”

Mary was glad to hear the good news about her cousin. But she was also afraid for herself. In those days people got angry when women had babies before they were married. She was afraid people would hurt her because she was pregnant. Still, Mary loved God very much.

“Well,” Mary said very slowly, “If that’s what God wants to do, then that is what will happen.”

When Joseph heard about this, he was very worried. “How can Mary have a baby when we aren’t married yet?” he wondered.

Then one night, Joseph had a dream. He dreamed that an angel was telling him, “Don’t worry Joseph. It’s all right. You and Mary go ahead and get married just as you planned.”

So Mary and Joseph got married, and they loved each other very much.

Together, they planned and worked to make a loving home for their special baby.

Mary showed great bravery in being willing to have a baby, even God’s baby, before she was married. Joseph showed great strength in being willing to marry her, even though she was pregnant. They must have loved and trusted each other very much to go ahead with this strange situation. And they must have been very curious about this special baby.

### **Reflection: An Epic Fail?**

I remember, I think, telling you about one epic fail that happened to our family on Christmas Day. Naomi and Allyson’s dad and I were in seminary, probably in about our second or third year, and Christmas preparations, all of them, had been jammed into the days between the end of assignments, around about the 18<sup>th</sup> of December, and Christmas Eve. We had company for Christmas that year: Gordon’s parents had come to stay with us for a few days around the 25<sup>th</sup>. We put up the tree and decorated it, did some baking, some Christmas shopping, and went to church on Christmas Eve. Christmas morning, we opened stockings, had a bite to eat, then opened presents and had a more substantial brunch. After we cleaned up, we lounged around, listening to Christmas music and attempting to learn how to play games on the new Wii that had arrived under the tree in the wee hours of Christmas morning. Gordon’s parents had been invited to Christmas dinner elsewhere, so they reluctantly put down the Wii controllers and headed off to their dinner. And about that moment Gordon and I realized that we had done nothing about Christmas dinner – not just that we hadn’t got it started, but we hadn’t even considered Christmas dinner when we did our planning and shopping after school was done. We had completely missed on that mainstay tradition of the holidays: Christmas dinner. Epic fail!

“Epic fail” might be the response of their community to Mary and Joseph’s behaviour in the months leading up to the census when they had to travel to Bethlehem. Young Mary, who is betrothed to Joseph the carpenter, is going about her days when she is visited by an angel, who announces that she has been chosen by God, for a wonderful thing! She will be the one to bear a child, God’s chosen child, the Messiah. But, of course, Mary and Joseph are not wed, and for Mary to be pregnant, especially without Joseph’s involvement, will be viewed as adultery. The law was very clear about a woman committing adultery. If a man claimed that his wife was adulterous, the penalty was to be stoned to death. And even if the man did not raise an issue, the woman could be shunned from the community by tradition. Despite being aware of the risk she ran, Mary’s love for God decides matters, and she agrees to carry this child of God’s.

Joseph wasn’t there and didn’t find out about Mary’s decision until there was no turning back. Joseph is an honourable man, and can’t imagine going ahead with the marriage, when his betrothed is already pregnant, and he knows it’s not his child. Tradition says he could loudly disavow himself

of this girl, and seek retribution. But he is not interested in that. Instead, he plans to end the engagement quietly, and save Mary from the punishment she could face. But even this gentler take on societal conventions is not what God wishes. God's angel comes to Joseph in a dream and tells him that he should go ahead and wed Mary and care for this child she will bear. Despite his confusion and uncertainty, despite the norms of society that tell him to avenge his wounded pride, Joseph's love for God and Mary decides the matter, and he agrees to marry this girl and have a family with her.

Brave choices: they are not just limited to scripture, to accounts of millennia ago. Choices confront us in the moments of our daily lives. Will we share that oh-so-juicy bit of gossip? Will we speak up about that racist joke? Will we lend our voice in opposition to that proposed law? Will we welcome that stranger into our midst? Our society has many traditions, many expectations, many unwritten "rules" on how we should conduct ourselves. Our choices are sometimes not very popular with those around us, those who expect us to conform to the norms. And sometimes we even wonder at ourselves when we do something that goes against the grain. We might question our sense, our actions flying in the face of self-preservation.

Mary and Joseph couldn't know what the future would hold given the choice that they made. They couldn't know what it would be like to bear and raise God's own begotten son. They couldn't predict having to uproot their family and flee from their home to Egypt; or returning after the death of King Herod. They couldn't know that Jesus, this child, would get so engrossed in learning at the Temple in Jerusalem that he would forget to come along when it was time to head back to Nazareth. And they couldn't know that this baby, when he became a man, would challenge the whole structure of the Roman-ruled society in which they lived, lifting up the down-trodden and making himself very unpopular in the process. They didn't know the pain and the glory which awaited their son, the Saviour of the world.

We may not know the cost of our tradition-defying and norm-defying actions at the time we take them. And the cost may be significant, but there can also be great blessing in those actions too. Standing up for someone else can bring them a sense of solidarity, a sense of compassion and inclusion. Perhaps our action will bring some peace and respite to creation. All of this is blessing for another, and, as relationships form and grow in the course of that action, a blessing for us ourselves. So perhaps not an epic fail!

And our epic fail of a Christmas dinner? We popped a couple of pizzas in the oven and spent the time we would have dedicated to cooking a big meal playing games with our kids, having great fun and drawing closer together as a family—just what we needed in that crazy, busy time!

## **Prayer/Blessing**

### **Hymn: Away in a Manger      VU69**

- 1 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.
- 2 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.

- 3 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.

**Prayer of Illumination** *Laura J. Turnbull, **Gathering: Advent/Christmas/Epiphany 2022-2023**, p.31. Used with permission.*

God of Grace, stir within us a desire to hear the familiar story with new comprehension. Though the details now are commonplace, let them bring fresh insights. If the message you have for us is unique, still make it accessible. Inspire us so that we are tempted to sing, smile, nod, and dance with delight. Let this reflection be filled with your enlivening Spirit. Amen.

**Scripture: Isaiah 7:10-16** *(The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Translation)*

*The sign of Emmanuel*

Once more YHWH spoke to Ahaz and said, “Ask for a sign from YHWH your God; let it be deep as the netherworld, or high as the sky!”  
But Ahaz answered, “I will not ask! I will not put YHWH to a test!”  
Then Isaiah said, “Listen, O House of David! Is it not enough for you to weary those around you, must you also weary my God? Therefore, the Holy One will give you a sign: This young woman will become pregnant and will give birth. You will name the child Immanu-El. This child will be living on curds and honey by the time it knows how to refuse evil and do good. But before that time—before the child knows how to refuse evil and do good—the land of the two rulers you dread will be laid waste.

**Ministry of Music “She Walked in the Summer (The Visit)”** *words and music by Miriam Therese Winter played Suzanne Flewelling*

**Prayer** *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from **Feasting on the Word® Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year A, Volume 1**. Copyright 2013.*

Eternal God of power and grace,  
who comes to us in surprising ways—  
in angel appearances, in defeat of enemies,  
and in resurrection from the dead—  
show us the face of Immanuel in our time.  
Bring us from fear to awe, we pray.

May the words I speak and the reflection that we all share  
find a response that is worthy of you,  
most Just, most Loving, and most Compassionate God. Amen.

**David Sparks, Summerland, B.C.**

In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.  
Amen.

- 1 People, look east. The time is near  
of the crowning of the year.  
Make your house fair as you are able,  
trim the hearth and set the table.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love the guest is on the way.
  
- 2 Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,  
one more seed is planted there:  
give up your strength the seed to nourish,  
that in course the flower may flourish.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love the rose is on the way.
  
- 3 Birds, though you long have ceased to build,  
guard the nest that must be filled;  
even the hour when wings are frozen  
God for fledging time has chosen.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love the bird is on the way.
  
- 4 Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim  
one more light the bowl shall brim,  
shining beyond the frosty weather,  
bright as sun and moon together.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love the star is on the way.
  
- 5 Angels, announce with shouts of mirth  
Christ who brings new life to earth.  
Set every peak and valley humming  
with the word, the Lord is coming.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love the Lord is on the way.

**Joys and Concerns**

- Happy Birthday
  - Norma Martin celebrates 88 years on Wednesday, December 21<sup>st</sup>
  - Cecily Ricketts celebrates 75 years on Thursday, December 22<sup>nd</sup>
  - Doreen Broome celebrates 76 years on Friday, December 23<sup>rd</sup>

## Preparation for Prayer

Let us practice the art of Praying with our Eyes Wide Open, that in seeing the world and those within it we are called to tend we may be *opening the eyes of our hearts to all in need around us* (Lamont Koerner '81 MDiv God Pause for Thursday, September 16, 2021 from Luther Seminary):

**Prayers of the People** *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from **Feasting on the Word**<sup>®</sup> Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year A, Volume 1. Copyright 2013, alt.*

Call: O God who is with us

Response: **hear our prayer.**

As we come to the festival of Jesus' birth,  
let us pray that we hear God's word clearly  
and receive the faith God gives, saying:  
O God, who is with us, hear our prayer.  
*[A time of silence may follow each petition.]*

Holy One, who astonishes us with surprising gifts,  
we pray for your church and for people of faith  
in every language and belief,  
that your wisdom will show us our common life,  
and that all people may rejoice in what you create.  
O God, who is with us, **hear our prayer.**

Giver of the stars and planets,  
creator of rivers and oceans,  
and creatures large and small,  
we pray for wisdom as we live on and with your earth.  
Evoke in us awe for your goodness in these familiar surroundings:  
our hills and valleys, forests and deserts,  
that the powers you have placed here to move through soil and air  
will remind us always of your bounty and your love.  
O God, who is with us, **hear our prayer.**

Power above all powers,  
we pray for the leaders of governments in every nation,  
especially *[name nations of particular concern]*,  
that they may have wisdom to choose  
what serves the common good.  
O God, who is with us, **hear our prayer.**

Lover of all creation,  
we pray for all those we too easily forget:  
those of your children who are poor, or homeless, or in prison;  
those who are sick, or lonely, or frightened;  
all who hunger for faith and hope.

Care for them, that they may be strengthened by joy in your healing.

O God, who is with us, **hear our prayer.**

Holy One, in whose community we thrive,  
we pray for those with whom we share our daily lives:  
our families, friends, and neighbors,  
those with whom we work and play,  
those whose names we do not know who provide for us,  
that we may all be renewed in courage and nurtured in hope.  
O God, who is with us, **hear our prayer.**

Sustainer of your people,  
we give you thanks for members of the body of Christ  
in every age and every place who, by their witness,  
bring us here today.  
Come to us in Christ, O God,  
that we who live in this world by faith  
may see that faith confirmed in the world to come;  
through the risen One who lives and reigns with you  
and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.  
**Amen.**

**Lord's Prayer**      Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kin-dom 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 kin-dom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

### **Blessing of the Memory Angels**

### **Minute for Mission: Your Generosity Supports Life-Changing Arts Programs for Children**



Children record radio programs through CEPALC.  
*Credit: Felix Posada, CEPALC*

We all know what it's like to feel our spirit lift at the first note of music or to sense our minds being pruned open by an enlightening radio or television show. Deep down we know that art changes our lives.

For hundreds of children living in Córdoba, Colombia, arts programs supported through your [Mission & Service](#) gifts teach children about their rights, give them an opportunity to express themselves, and promote peace-making as well as gender justice.

"Providing workshops for children that teach them about their rights empowers them to think critically about themselves and their country. Through media, art, music, and theatre, they learn about important social issues, human rights, and gender equality," says the Latin American Center for Popular Communication (CEPALC).

Children are the most vulnerable group in Colombia. Eighty-four percent of violent acts in Colombia are committed against children. Two and a half million children living there work to sustain their families. Many are forced into dangerous labour. That's why CEPALC designs programs in sectors hardest hit by poverty and violence.

"I told my mom that we had seen some works of Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, and Flora Tristan. I remember that they taught us that we must defend the rights of us women. What I like, in general, is that they taught us that we must make peace," says Amelie, an eight-year-old girl who lives in Bogotá and workshop participant. "Thanks to CEPALC workshops, I'll be a writer, and I will write things so that children will promote and defend peace, following Jesus' examples. I will defend and promote our rights in my stories so that nobody can disrespect us or the rights that we have. When I am an adult, I won't be doing violence against anybody."

### **Offering Invitation**

Because God first loved us,  
we are made to love one another.  
For the sake of the life of the world, let us offer ourselves,  
our time, and our possessions as signs of love.

### **Offering Hymn: In the Bleak Midwinter**

**VU55 v.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 one, I would do my part;  
yet what I can I give him - give my heart.**

**Offering Prayer (in unison)** *Spill the Beans Resources Team, spill the beans: worship and learning resources for all ages, Issue 33, p. 44. Copyright 2019.*

**In a season of giving,  
we give of ourselves  
a symbol of which  
is here on the table.  
May this be the good news,  
not in word**

or print  
but in living relationships,  
subtitles for the world  
that tell those we need  
and those who need us,  
love is among us.  
May we give of ourselves  
to this.  
So be it.  
Amen.

**Hymn: Hark the Glad Sound      VU29**

- 1      Hark, the glad sound! The Saviour comes,  
         the Saviour promised long:  
         let every heart prepare a throne,  
         and every voice a song.
  
- 2      He comes, the prisoners to release  
         in Satan's bondage held;  
         the gates of brass before him burst,  
         the iron fetters yield.
  
- 3      He comes, the broken heart to bind,  
         the bleeding soul to cure,  
         and with the treasures of his grace  
         to bless the humble poor.
  
- 4      Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace,  
         your welcome shall proclaim;  
         and heaven's eternal arches ring  
         with your beloved name.

**Commissioning and Blessing** *Spill the Beans Resources Team, spill the beans: worship and learning resources for all ages, Issue 33, p. 45. Copyright 2019.*

Hush now.  
The waiting is soon,  
the longing great,  
the moment near,  
the promise revealing,  
the baby quickening,  
the starlight gathering,  
but not yet,  
not yet.

Go and whisper the hope of this story  
into the noise of the world  
and come back, soon,  
for the incarnation is near.

## **Blessing**

May the God who leads by a Star,  
show us the direction to Bethlehem;  
Lead us to the place where love is to be born in our lives;  
Give us signs along the road as we make our journey,  
that we may follow in God's way. Amen.

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Giver of light,  
in the light of your Christ I see myself clearly as your child.  
I rise in thankfulness for you are present  
when I sleep and when I am awake.  
I rise to come to you in the hours of joy and in sorrow.  
I rise to live this day in your wisdom,  
without fear, without acrimony,  
but with charity toward those I meet  
and toward myself when I find I am wanting.  
Lead me into your desire for me this day, O Lord.  
Let me know your love is deep and abiding;  
in Jesus' name. Amen.

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Giver of rest and silence,  
in you I take refuge when the shadows deepen  
and the time of sleep has come.  
I thank you for the ventures of this day,  
for friends who helped me and for those who sought my help,  
for the skills you planted in me to hone and use,  
for the strangers whose lives enlarged mine today  
and whose insights enrich my life.  
Keep me safe from harm as I sleep  
and bring me to a new dawn with strength to work and rejoice;  
in Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.