



December 24, 2022

Melville United Church

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Melville United Church
December 24, 2022
Christmas Eve – Communion Service

Presiding today - Rev. Lynda Goy-Flint

Welcome

I greet you in the name of the One born among us:
Jesus, our Emmanuel. ✠

We gather in community virtually and in person today, December 24th 2022, for this contemplative communion service. 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 on this Christmas Eve, to celebrate the arrival of the God among us. The word *Christmas* comes from the Old English *Cristes maesse* or “Christ’s mass” referring to the worship service in celebration of Christ’s birth. The colours for Christmas Eve are white and gold—white, which is all colours of light combined, which has traditionally symbolized goodness, innocence and God’s faithfulness. God reflects glory, triumph, wealth, richness and extravagance. Together they symbolize the light of dawn and are colours of celebration.

Announcements

- **Upcoming Services:**
Christmas Day – no service
New Year’s Day – 11am
- **“MID-DAY MUSIC AT MELVILLE” presented and performed by pianist BRAD HALLS**
Our “*Mid-Day Music at Melville*” concerts will take a two-week break over Christmas and New Years, and so there will be no performances on December 28 or January 4. The program returns on Wednesday, January 11, 2023 from 12 noon to 1:00 p.m. at Melville United Church in Fergus, when pianist Brad Halls will present a selection of music by celebrated Oscar and Tony Award winning composer Jule Styne. Enjoy his enduring songs “*Time After Time*”, “*Three Coins in the Fountain*”, “*I’ll Walk Alone*”, “*I’ve Heard that Song Before*”, “*People*” and many more.
- **Mitten Tree** – Tonight you have one last opportunity to decorate our mitten tree 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 from now until January 8/23. Those who have had Angels in the past, can renew your Angel with a minimum donation of \$5, by contacting Patty Duncan. 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 21/22:

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 \(opens in a new tab\)](http://GiftsWithVision.ca) today!**
- **Melville council has commissioned a Halo study in conjunction with the Trinity Centres Foundation.** This study will look to anchor Melville in Centre Wellington and determine our value to the community, as event and program space, volunteer time and effort and community well being. This will serve as a snapshot of the value Melville brings to the community in terms we can share with local governments, charitable organizations and current partners. This will serve as the foundation for further efforts to make Melville a sustainable, energetic, and integral part of Centre Wellington. Please ask a council member if you have any questions.

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.

Call to Worship: *Thom M. Shuman, Lectionary Liturgies: Liturgy w/ communion for December 24, 2022 (Christmas Eve – A)* at <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>, alt.. Used with permission.

With eyes wide open
and our ears on edge,
**we look for shepherds
and listen for the songs of angels.**
In the light of winter's moon,
with the North Star lighting the way,
**we gather outside the door of a mystery,
wondering if we dare go enter.**
With folks and friends we love,
with strangers we have just met,
**we gather, becoming the holy family
for this time and in this place.**

Opening Prayer (in unison): *Thom M. Shuman, Lectionary Liturgies: Liturgy w/ communion for December 24, 2022 (Christmas Eve – A)*, alt. at <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>, alt.. Used with permission.

**Glorious, generous God,
we come before you in awe and mystery.**
Now in the silence,
 whisper of joy which comes
 into every life.
Now in the comfort of carols,
 sing of hope which
 takes away the despair
 which envelops us.
Now in familiar words heard anew,
 speak to us of grace
 which is born into barren lives,
 of peace which is birthed
 in war's shadowed fears.
**Now leaning next to those
who have always been a part of us,
and those from whom we have been apart,**
 remind us of your heart
 which always accepts us,
 always welcomes us.
Now in the love which is ours forever,
 draw us closer to your heart,
 so we can be surprised by wonder,
 swaddled in serenity,
 embraced by tenderness.

**Now touch us once again with Christmas,
as we come to worship this holy night. Amen.**

Hymn: O Come All Ye Faithful VU60

- 1 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, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

- 2 God of God, light of light,
lo, he abhors not the virgin's womb;
very God, begotten, not created:
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

- 3 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, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

- 4 See how the shepherds summoned to his cradle,
leaving their flocks, draw nigh with lowly fear;
we too will thither bend our joyful footsteps;
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

- 5 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, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Call to Reconciliation *Thom M. Shuman, Lectionary Liturgies: Liturgy w/ communion for December 24, 2022 (Christmas Eve – A) at <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>, alt.. Used with permission.*

This is the night we are reminded that God loves to be with us. Yet all too often – by our choices, our words, our silence – we choose not to be with God. Join me as we pray on this holy night to the One who was born to gift us with mercy and hope.

Prayer Seeking Forgiveness and Reconciliation (in unison) *Thom M. Shuman, Lectionary Liturgies: Liturgy w/ communion for December 24, 2022 (Christmas Eve – A) at <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>, alt.. Used with permission.*

**This was going to be the year, God of silent nights,
when we were going to give away more than we spent,
but we didn't.**

This was going to be the season when we spent more time with others,

but we filled our calendars with meetings.

This was going to be the Christmas when we wrote personal letters to friends and family,
but we spent too much energy filling out our to-do lists.

This was going to be a truly holy season,
but it just got to harried and hurried.

Forgive us, Love Gifter,

and draw us closer to the Baby born not into wealth and power,
but into poverty and weakness;

to the One who loves unconditionally and welcomes all;

to the Child who gathers other children to him, to bless them and serve them;

to the One who drew near to us, so we might be drawn to your heart –

Jesus Christ, our Brother, our Saviour.

Silence is kept

Words of Assurance *Thom M. Shuman, Lectionary Liturgies: Liturgy w/ communion for December 24, 2022 (Christmas Eve – A) at <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>, alt.. Used with permission.*

Into the valleys of our death, Jesus comes with life;

into the shadows of our world, Jesus brings light;

into the brokenness of our lives, Jesus brings forgiveness and peace.

Thanks be to God for the gift of the Baby of Bethlehem,

who brings joy and peace to us in these moments of forgiveness

and in all the days to come. Amen.

Hymn: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

VU48

1 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!'

2 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!'

3 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!'

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

Loving God, by the gift of your Spirit,
teach us, like Mary, to treasure your words
and ponder them in our hearts;
through Jesus Christ, your Word made flesh. **Amen.**

Scripture: Isaiah 9:2-7 (*The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Translation*)

A child has been born for us

The people walking in darkness
are seeing a brilliant light—
upon those who dwell in the land of deep shadows
light is shining!
God, you have made the nation greater—
you have brought them abundant joy!
They celebrate in your presence
as with the harvest celebration,
or as warriors celebrate when dividing spoils.
For the yoke that burdened them,
the weight on their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressors—
you have shattered it,
as you did at the defeat of Midian.
For every boot that tramped in battle
every cloak that was dragged through blood,
is now used as fuel for the fire.
For a child is born to us,
an heir is given us,
upon whose shoulders
dominion will rest.
This One shall be called
Wonderful Counsellor, the Strength of God,
Eternal Protector, Champion of Peace.
This dominion, and this peace,

will grow without end,
with David's throne and realm
sustained with justice and fairness,
now and forever.
The zeal of YHWH Omnipotent
will accomplish it!

Ministry of Music "How Quietly" words and music by Joel Raney sung by the Melville United Choir
accompanied by Colleen Weber

Scripture: Luke 2:1-14, (15-20) (*The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Translation*)

Jesus' birth

In those days, Caesar Augustus published a decree
ordering a census of the whole Roman world.
This first census took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.
All the people were instructed to go back to the towns of their birth to register.
And so Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to "the city of David" —
Bethlehem, in Judea, because Joseph was of the house and lineage of David;
he went to register with Mary his espoused wife who was pregnant.

While they were there, the time came for her delivery.
She gave birth to her firstborn, a son;
she put him in a simple cloth wrapped like a receiving blanket,
and laid him in a feeding trough for cattle,
because there was no room for them at the inn.

There were shepherds in the area living in the fields
and keeping night watch by turns over their flock.
The angel of God appeared to the, and the glory of God shone around them;
they were very much afraid.

The angel said to them, "You have nothing to fear!
I come to proclaim good news to you—
news of a great joy to be shared by the whole people.
Today in David's city, a saviour—the Messiah—has been born to you.
Let this be a sign to you: you'll find an infant wrapped in a simple cloth, lying in a manger."

Suddenly, there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying,
"Glory to God in high heaven!
And on earth, peace to those on whom God's favour rests."

When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another,
"Let's go straight to Bethlehem and see this event that God has made known to us."
They hurried and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger;
once they saw this, they reported what they had been told concerning the child.
All who heard about it were astonished at the report given by the shepherds.

Mary treasured all these things and reflected on them in her heart.
The shepherds went away glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen,
just as they had been told.

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

Living God, on this holy night we gather—
to stand with shepherds, amazed at your glory;
to sing with angels, rejoicing in your work;
to wait with Joseph, trusting in your promise;
to sit with Mary, cradling your love.
May the good news of this night inspire us
to tell the world of our great joy:
for to us is born a Saviour,
the Messiah, God-with-us.
Glory and praise to you forever! **Amen.**

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.

Reflection:

There is so much we could talk about on Christmas Eve. There are so many images, in scripture and beyond, brought about by two thousand years of distance from the events that Luke describes in this account of the birth of Jesus. As we think of the variety of cards, ornaments, artists' renderings, nativity sets, there is almost more to take in than the eye or mind can encompass. And the extent and complexity of traditions surrounding Christmas attest to our best efforts to honour all the parts of this story.

But what I want to focus on tonight is very simple, just about the simplest part of the scripture reading we can find: ... "to you." That's it. "To you." The angel says to the very frightened shepherds, who, until this minute were going about their ordinary, smelly, largely unappreciated business of tending the sheep: "Today in David's city, a saviour—the Messiah—has been born **to you**." It's easy to miss, and it's easy in the grand scheme of things to feel fairly unimportant. But a saviour has been born **to you** and the angel proclaims good news **to you**—news of great joy to be shared by the whole people

But, as theologian David Lose argues, it is the most important aspect of the whole Christmas narrative. God has come through the law and the prophets and now comes in person, getting intimately involved with God's broken creation and fallen humanity. And let's face it, after all the shopping and cleaning and cooking and preparing, or even moving beyond this Christmas season, after all the trying to manage in the midst of a pandemic that has come in waves, trying to keep self and family in good health and humour, and just in-tact, trying to get and keep a job, or manage on the fixed income that goes less and less far as the days go on, after all this, God has a gift just for you, and you and you. This gift is the gift of God's self personally to each one of us.

And it is the best good news there is. God is telling us that we are of infinite value and worth. We

are so important to God, that God makes God's self small and oh-so-dependent and vulnerable to convey to us the depth of God's caring and desire to be with **us**. Not all who are caught up with the grand and powerful, but to those who are willing to take a chance and listen with trembling hearts to a **real** angel. And by that I mean not the domesticated sweet and dainty images we have, but a wild, other-worldly and terrifying being who chose the lowest and the least to hear this most important news, making it clear that it truly was news for **all people**.

May we know that God comes down to our level, into the places we would just as soon not go, but where there are those who may have no choice but to be, to show us the depth and breadth and height of God's love, coming to us. It is a miracle and a blessing, and it is our good news, our hope, our peace, our joy and our love this night and every day and night.

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

Joys and Concerns

Offering Invitation *adapted from a prayer by Thom M. Shuman, **Lectionary Liturgies: Liturgy for December 24, 2022 (Christmas Eve - A)** <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>. Used with permission.*

Now, on this night of giftedness,
We remember those who struggle to put food on the table,
to buy a single gift for their child,
to wrap a warm blanket around a grandparent.
We realize how blessed we are
and we share from our abundance.

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)

**May these gifts open others
to the blessings you give this Christmas:
the gift of childlike wonder;
the gift of radiant hope;
the gift of peace
which passes all understanding;
the gift of joy
which knows no bounds.
With these gifts, we bring ourselves, O God,
in response to the greatest gift of all—
the Babe of Bethlehem. Amen.**

Sacrament of Holy Communion

Instructions

- I will invite you to come forward. Please come around the back and up the centre east aisle. You will receive bread, eat that, and then move over to your right to take a cup of grape juice from the tray, drink that and place the empty cup in the tray farther to the right for that. Then return to your seats by moving down the centre west aisle and then, going along the back, return to your seats.

Invitation

The celebration of communion
is always a festival of friends,
a pulling together of our loves and our hopes,
our moments of agony and our glimpses of victory.
It is here, where bread is broken and wine is shared,
that we can most fully be ourselves
and see others for who they truly are:
sons and daughters of the living God.
Here the common things of life—
bread and wine,
memories and dreams—
become holy, touched by God.
Here that which is earthly becomes divine,
and that which is human
becomes more than it has ever dreamed.

Hymn: Still, Still, Still

VU47

OneLicense #A-740237

- 1 Still, still, still: the night is calm and still.
The Christchild in his crib lies sleeping,
angels round him watch are keeping.
Still, still, still: the night is calm and still.
- 2 Sleep, sleep, sleep: sweet Jesus, softly sleep,
while Mary sings and gently holds you,
safely in her arms enfolds you.
Sleep, sleep, sleep: sweet Jesus softly sleep.
- 3 Joy, joy, joy; glad tidings of great joy!
For through God's holy incarnation
Christ is born for our salvation.
Joy, joy, joy; glad tidings of great joy!

Prayer of Thanksgiving *adapted from a prayer by Thom M. Shuman, **Lectioary Liturgies: Liturgy for December 24, 2022 (Christmas Eve - A)** <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>. Used with permission.*

May the God of silent nights be with you!

May the God of herald angels be with you!

Open your hearts to the One born in the little town of Bethlehem.

May Emmanuel come to abide in our hearts.

Join all believers in singing of our joy this night.

May our voices blend with those of the angels and shepherds.

You crept into chaos so long ago,
Star-shaper,
so creation might be born:

...

As we gather with a mixture of tiredness and anticipation,
as we join with the voices around us,
we sing praises to you this Christmas night:

**We will not be afraid,
for great joy is ours this night;
we will look for the signs of your presence,
grace swaddled in hope,
love wrapped around broken hearts.**

Glory to you, God in the highest heavens!

May peace fill the lives of all your children!

Leaving your side, God of holiness,
your Child came to walk with us
through the cold streets of our lives.

...

On this night, when we sing of the baby in the manger,
as the shadow of the cross is cast by the stars,
we proclaim that mystery called incarnation:

**Christ is our light,
and we will join the angels in singing the good news;
Christ is our life,
and we will join the disciples in telling the Story;
Christ is our promise,
and we wait for the joy of his return.**

On the night before Jesus was taken away to his death,

...

God in Community, Holy in One. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer:

We gather these and all our prayers,
and with Jesus,
we pray:

**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.**

Preparation

As we come to this table,
we are reminded that this is not the table
of this community of faith;
nor is it the table of The United Church of Canada,
or any particular denomination.
This is the table of Jesus Christ, the family feast of the whole people of God.
We come to this table, and participate in this meal,
not because anything we have done entitles us to be here,
not because somehow we have earned a place;
this is not the table of the perfect,
but the table of the broken.
All who seek to be nourished and sustained in the journey of faith
and long to live justly and in peace with their neighbour, are welcome here.

Breaking and Distribution of the Elements

As we join together as community
and around this table
may we know that this is:
the body of Christ broken for us:
the blood of Christ shed for us.
May they nourish our bodies for the journey ahead
and quench our thirst for peace and justice.
The gifts of God for the people of God.
Come, for all things are now ready.

Jesus Christ - bread for the journey.
Jesus Christ - the wine of arrival.

Musical during Communion: Christmas Selections played by Linda Mae Ogilvie on flute and Colleen Weber on organ

Prayer after Communion

**Life-giving God,
we give you thanks for the gift of our Saviour's presence
in the simplicity and splendour of this holy meal.
Unite us with all who are fed by the life of Christ
that we may faithfully proclaim the Good News of your love
and that your church may be a rainbow of hope
in an uncertain world;
through Jesus Christ our Redeemer.
Amen.**

Sharing the Light of Christ

Hymn: **Silent Night, Holy Night** VU67

- 1 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.

- 2 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.

- 3 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.

Commissioning and Blessing *David Sparks, Gathering: Advent/Christmas/Epiphany, 2022-2023, p.38. Used with permission.*

We have heard the Christmas story once again. Go from this church with enthusiasm, proclaiming the Good News!

Far from home and vulnerable, Jesus is born to Mary and Joseph.

Good news!

The praising angels are telling us, "Celebrate with joy!"

Good news!

Questing shepherds are reminding us, "Search for the highest good."

Good news!

In the depths of this Christmas night, the light of God's love shines out brightly.

Good news! There is nothing to fear. Go in peace, for Jesus the Christ has been born.

Blessing

The light that enlivens all the world,
the light that darkness cannot overcome,
love's pure light in Jesus Christ,
shine on you and in our world this night. Amen.

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

O Lord, I will sing you a new song today;
with all the earth I will bless your name.
I will smile with the heavens and rejoice with the earth;
with the trees of the forest I will sing for joy,
for you have come to save us. Amen.

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

Though I walk in the shadows, O God,
I will not be afraid—
for I know that the morning will come,
and the great light of your glory
will shine all around me;
through Jesus, the light of the world. Amen.