



December 24, 2024

Melville United Church
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Melville United Church

December 24, 2024

Christmas Eve

Presiding today - Rev. Felicia Urbanski

Music Director – Colleen Weber (piano, organ) and Choir members

Prelude

Processional Opening Hymn: O Come, All Ye Faithful VU 60

- 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: R

- 3 Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;
glory to God in the highest: R

- 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; R

- 5 Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory given;
word of the Father, now in flesh appearing: R

Welcome & Land Acknowledgement

Welcome to our Christmas Eve service this evening! We are happy to have your company among us, in person and those of you joining us online. You are most welcome to learn more about Melville United Church from one of our greeters, or any of us here, and consider making this your church home.

We begin by acknowledging that we are gathering today on the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples. We affirm that settler and newcomer peoples have specific responsibilities in the journey of reconciliation with our Indigenous hosts. Let us pray now an Indigenous prayer translated by Chief Yellow Lark of the Lakota Sioux tribe:

“Let me walk in beauty, and make my eyes ever behold the red and purple sunset.
Make my hands respect the things you have made and my ears sharp to hear your voice. Make me wise so that I may understand the things you have taught my people.
Help me to remain calm and strong in the face of all that comes towards me. Let me learn the lessons you have hidden in every leaf and rock.
Help me seek pure thoughts and act with the intention of helping others.

Help me find compassion without empathy overwhelming me.
I seek strength, not to be greater than my brother, but to fight my greatest enemy, myself.
Make me always ready to come to you with clean hands and straight eyes.
So when life fades, as the fading sunset, my spirit may come to you without shame." Amen.

Lighting of the Advent Wreath and Christ Candle:

Our Advent journey is complete as we witness asylum, isolation, and want. Yet the birth of the baby Jesus in humble circumstances opens us to people living on the margins.

We come to remember the story and to live into the transformation it prompts.

We proclaim, like the heavenly chorus, the good news of vulnerability. We come, like the shepherds, filled with wonder at what could be.

We come to perceive the gracious gift of becoming, of potential.

We light the first candle reminding us of the way of hope.

(The first Advent candle is lit.)

We light the second candle reminding us of Christ's path of peace.

(The second Advent candle is lit.)

We light the third candle reminding us of Spirit-filled joy.

(The third Advent candle is lit.)

We light the fourth candle reminding us of God's self-giving love.

(The fourth Advent candle is lit.)

We light this Christ Candle for the arrival of Emmanuel, God-with-us.

Sung Response: A Candle is Burning VU 6 verse 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.**

Let us join as one community of faith in prayer:

Call to Worship (in unison)

We come in worship, to honour and welcome you, O God, in the baby Jesus. In your humility, may we find humility. In your loving, may we give our own love. In your humanity, may we affirm our own humanity. In your coming, may we share your good news with all our aching world. Amen.

Ministry of Music: Away in a Manger *arranged by Walter L. Pelz, sung by the Melville children and choir, violin accompaniment by Felicia Urbanski*

Children's Time: excerpt from "A Charlie Brown Christmas"

<https://youtu.be/CIYECDQk5Vg>

Carol: Hark the Herald Angels Sing VU 48

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! R
- 3 Hail, the heavenborn 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. R

Scripture Readings: Isaiah 9: 2-7 (excerpts)

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 Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onwards and for evermore.

Luke 2: 1-14

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 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 he favours!'

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.

Brief Reflection: Love Came Down

Carol: Go Tell it on the Mountain VU 43

Go, tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and everywhere.
Go, tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born.

- 1 While shepherds kept their watching
 o'er silent flocks by night,
 behold, throughout the heavens
 there shone a holy light. R

- 2 The shepherds feared and trembled
 when lo, above the earth
 rang out the angel chorus
 that hailed our Saviour's birth! R

- 3 Down in a lonely manger
 the humble Christ was born,
 and God sent our salvation
 that blessed Christmas morn. R

Invitation to the Offering

Offertory Hymn: VU 55 (Verse 4 of “In the Bleak Midwinter”)

What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would give a lamb.
If I were a wise man, I would do my part.
Yet what I can I give him – give him my heart.

Offering Prayer

Now, on this night of giftedness, remind us of 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, so we might realize how blessed we are and share from our abundance. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

Christmas Communion Liturgy:

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:
 sheep gathering on hillsides,
 stars glittering in the night skies,
 sea horses frolicking in warm waters.
Silently, you gathered up the dust,
shaping us in your image
as the Spirit breathed life into us.
All the gifts of your heart were for us,
 but we slammed the door of our hearts,
 saying there was no room for you in our lives.
Prophets came time and again,
scattering your clues throughout the Story,
 but we were too busy enjoying
 the sleights of hand done by sin and death.
When you saw we could not
understand the Mystery on our own,
you sent Jesus, to reveal everything to us.

As we gather with children and family and friends,
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.

Born in poverty's shadows,
he is the light which illumines
your heart for us.

Unwrapped from glory's embrace,
he gathers us from all the corners
of our confused choices to make us one with you.

Placed in a rude feeding trough
layered with our fears and doubts,
he breathes in your hopes
and lives your will, until
he is placed in death's cold embrace,
waiting in the silence,
where he breathes in resurrection's breath,
and brings forth life for all who follow.

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.**

Here in the silence and the singing,
with children, carols, and candlelight,
we gather around the Table of joy,
as you pour out your Spirit upon
the most precious gifts of bread and cup.

As we feast upon the bread,
we remember a young pregnant girl,
and would serve those who are expecting,
those who cannot have a child,
those who have lost children.

As we drink from the cup,
we think of a worried father,

and would be with those who assemble toys this night,
as well as those who will work this night
to pay for food and medicine for their families.
As we are surrounded by family and friends,
we would care for
those whose closest companion is loneliness,
those separated from loved ones,
those who hear no music, joy, or hope in their lives.

And when all time and history becomes silence,
we will be gathered with our sisters and brothers
from Bethlehem and Belfast, from Cairo and Calgary,
from Gowanstown and Gaza, from Sydney and Shanghai,
from every corner and moment of every universe,
to join the angel choirs in forever singing your praises
as we dance to the Table of wonder and grace,
God in Community, Holy in One. Amen.

Distribution of Communion Elements

Special Music: What Child is This *arranged by Gary Lanier, flute played by LindaMae Ogilvie*

Prayer after Communion (in unison):

Mighty God, at Christmas, we celebrate Love Incarnate in the gift of the Christ Child. In communion, we celebrate Love Shared in bread broken and juice poured out. May the depth and breadth of your holy gifts fill us and sustain us, so we may reach the heights of true discipleship. In faith we pray. Amen.

Distribution and Lighting of Candles

Please participate as you are able.

We will stand in a large circle around the church sanctuary.

When the flame is offered to you, please receive it with your unlit candle.

Carol: (sung with our lit candles) **Silent Night, Holy Night VU 67 (verses 1-3)**

We remain in our places until the candles are extinguished.

- 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.

Music: O Holy Night by *Adolphe Adam*, violin played by *Felicia Urbanski*

Commissioning and Benediction

Closing Hymn: Joy to the World VU 59

- 1 Joy to the world! the Lord is come:
let earth receive her King!
Let every heart prepare him room,
and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

- 2 Joy to the earth! the Saviour reigns:
let all their songs employ,
while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

- 3 No more let sins and sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground:
he comes to make his blessings flow
far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.

- 4 He rules the earth with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness
and wonders of his love, and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love.

Postlude: Angels We Have Heard on High arranged by *Anna Laura Page*

Welcomers: Barb Gregory, Alison Rainford

Worship Schedule

December 29	1 st Sunday after Christmas	Rev. Jeff Hawkins
January 5	Epiphany Sunday	Rev. Jeff Hawkins
January 12	The Baptism of the Lord	Rev. Felicia Urbanski