



December 8, 2024

Melville United Church

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Melville United Church
Sunday, December 8, 2024

Presiding: Rev. Tom Watson
Ministry of Music: Colleen Weber

Prelude

Welcome

Good morning! Welcome to worship at Melville United Church. How wonderful to be together—both in person here in the sanctuary and online.

Announcements

Land Acknowledgement

Let us take time to acknowledge the peoples who have lived on and stewarded these lands since time immemorial.

God, help us to be thankful, and to become better neighbours and stewards that we might continue to honour these lands.

Lighting the Advent Candle (Advent II)

Our Advent journey continues our time of waiting. As we wait, we prepare ourselves and our world for the Prince of Peace.

We come to embrace the contrasts of light and of dark, creating the balance of life lived in diversity.

In the lively dance of perspective and practice, communion and connection is forged. In the building of relationship and in the sharing of story, we come to know one another as we listen for bonds of peace.

We come to strengthen all our relations.

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

(The first Advent candle is lit.)

We light our second candle to signify Christ's path of peace in a broken world.

(The second Advent candle is lit.)

Sung Response: "A Candle is Burning" verse 2 (VU 6)

A candle is burning, a candle of peace,
A candle to signal that conflict must cease,
For Jesus is coming to show us the way,
A message of peace humbly laid in the hay.

Let us join as one community of faith in prayer:

We come to worship as those created in your image of self-giving love, O God. Teach us your steps of harmony and of wholeness—the rhythms of connection and of interdependence sustained through beauty. As you bless us with peace rooted in our shared vulnerability, may we invite others to trust us as companions along the way of transformation. Amen.

Reflection

Wouldn't it be exciting to be an angel...

And swing on rainbows...

Winging around in a flurry of stardust...

Taking messages from God.

Wouldn't it be exciting to announce to the world...

That a child will be born in Bethlehem...

And all the world would fall to its knees in a whisper of peace.

Hymn — Hark! The Herald Angels Sing VU 48 (verse 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!"

Children's Play—"A Child Is Born"

The Children's Poem

I'd like to be an Angel in the Christmas play this year.
I said so at the tryouts but nobody seemed to hear.
I tugged on Mother's shirtsleeve as I squeezed her hand real tight:
"Please tell them that I want to be an angel Christmas night."
I said a prayer to Jesus saying if it was okay
I'd like to be an Angel in the children's Christmas play.

Now here's what Jesus told me, softly in my ear:
I need a lot of children to present the play each year.
The angels are important for they tell of Jesus birth.
They bring the news from heaven to the people down on Earth.
But every part's important if my story's to be told,
Just the way it happened long ago in the days of old.

So whether you're an angel, or a wiseman from the East,
the Mother at the manger, or a shepherd tending beasts,
By helping tell the story, playing any part with style,
To me you'll be an angel with a halo and a smile.

Song — Rocking Carol

Little Jesus, sweetly sleep, do not stir; we will lend a coat of fur;
We will rock you, rock you. We will rock you, rock you, rock you;
See the fur to keep you warm, snugly 'round your tiny form.
Mary's little baby sleep, sweetly sleep,
Sleep in comfort slumber deep;
We will rock you, rock you, rock you,
We will rock you, rock you, rock you;
We will do all that we say, this and always every day.

NARRATION

On a magical night long ago, in the little Town of Bethlehem, there was a stable where animals were sheltered. Suddenly a light from heaven more glorious than the light of the sun filled the

sky. Angels of the Lord appeared, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth peace and goodwill to all."

Song — Angels We Have Heard on High

Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains
And the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strains.

Gloria, in excelsis Deo.

Gloria, in excelsis Deo.

NARRATION

There were Shepherds in the fields near Bethlehem keeping watch over their flocks, when suddenly an Angel of the Lord appeared among them. They were terrified, but the Angel reassured them, "Don't be afraid. I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people."

Song — Shepherds, Shake Off Your Drowsy Sleep

Shepherds, shake off your drowsy sleep, rise and leave your silly sheep; Angels from Heaven
loud are singing, tidings of great joy are bringing. Shepherds! The chorus come and swell,
Sing noel, O sing Noel.

NARRATION

The Shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened," and they hurried to the village and found Mary, Joseph and the baby in the manger. Now, in ancient days there were great kings called Magi who studied the stars. One night these Magi saw a new star, an unusually bright one. What could this mean? They decided that it must have been sent to announce the birth of a great King.

Song — We Three Kings of Orient Are

We three kings of Orient are;

Bearing gifts we traverse afar,

Field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star.

O star of wonder, star of night,

Star with royal beauty bright,

Westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.

NARRATION

And the Star they had seen in the East guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. They entered the house and saw the child with his Mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. On that blessed night in that lowly stable a child was born.

Song — Go Tell It on the Mountain

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

Down in a lowly manger, our humble Christ was born,
And God sent out salvation that blessed Christmas morn.

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

Presentation of White Gifts

Meditation — "A Baby's Hug"

This morning's play that Ann and the children presented was entitled "A Child is Born" and it leaves us thinking about the essence of Christmas, and why Jesus came among us.

The following story comes from an anonymous author. It surely represents the spirit of Christmas. It's a mother telling the story.

We were the only family with children in the restaurant. I sat my baby son Erik in a high chair and noticed that everyone was quietly sitting and talking.

Suddenly, Erik squealed with glee and said, "Hi." He pounded his fat baby hands on the high chair tray. His eyes were crinkled in laughter and his mouth was bared in a toothless grin, as he wriggled and giggled with merriment.

I looked around and saw the source of his merriment. It was a man whose pants were baggy, and his toes poked out of worn-out would-be shoes. His shirt was dirty and his hair was uncombed and unwashed. His whiskers were too short to be called a beard and the veins in his nose were so varicose that his nose looked like a road map.

We were too far from him to smell, but I was sure he smelled. His hands waved and flapped on loose wrists. "Hi there, baby! Hi there, big boy! I see ya, buster," the man said to Erik.

My husband and I exchanged looks, "What do we do?"
Erik continued to laugh and answer, "Hi."

Everyone in the restaurant noticed and looked at us and then at the man. The old geezer was creating a nuisance with my beautiful baby. Our meal came and the man began shouting from across the room, "Do ya patty cake? Do ya know peek-a-boo? Hey, look, he knows peek-a-boo!"

Nobody thought the old man was cute. He obviously had had too much to drink.

My husband and I were embarrassed. We ate in silence. But not our baby boy Erik. He was running through his repertoire for the admiring skid-row bum, who in turn, reciprocated with his cute comments.

We finally got through the meal and headed for the door. My husband went to pay the check and told me to meet him in the parking lot. The old man sat poised between me and the door.

"Lord, just let me out of here before he speaks to me or Erik," I prayed.

As I drew closer to the man, I turned my back trying to sidestep him. As I did, Erik leaned over my arm, reached with both arms in a baby's 'pick-me-up' position. Before I could stop him, Erik had propelled himself from my arms into the arms of that old man.

Suddenly, a very smelly, old man and a very young baby demonstrated their love and kinship. Erik—in an act of total trust, love, and submission—laid his tiny head upon the man's ragged shoulder. The man's eyes closed, and I saw tears hover beneath his lashes. His aged hands full of grime, pain, and hard labor, cradled my baby's bottom and stroked his back.

No two beings have ever loved so deeply for so short a time. I stood awestruck. The old man rocked and cradled Erik in his arms and his eyes opened and set squarely on mine. He said in a firm commanding voice, "You take care of this baby."

Somehow I managed, "I will," from a throat that contained a stone.

He pried Erik from his chest—lovingly and longingly—as though he were in pain. I received my baby, and the man said, "God bless you, ma'am, you've given me my Christmas gift."

I said nothing more than a muttered thanks. With Erik in my arms, I ran for the car. My husband was wondering why I was crying and holding Erik so tightly, and why I was saying, "My God, my God, forgive me."

I had just witnessed Jesus' love shown through the innocence of a tiny child who saw no sin, who made no judgment...a child who saw a soul while his mother saw only a ragged suit of clothes.

I was a Christian who was blind, holding a child who was not. I felt as if God was asking, "Are you willing to share your son for a moment?" when God shared this baby Jesus for all eternity.

The ragged old man, unwittingly, had reminded me, "To enter the Kingdom of God, we must become as little children."

Sometimes, it takes a child to remind us of what is really important. We must always remember who we are, where we came from and, most importantly, how we feel about others. The clothes on your back, or the car that you drive, or the house that you live in does not define you at all; it is how you treat other people that identifies who you are.

It is better to be liked for the "true you", than to be loved for who people think you are.

Prayers Of the People and The Prayer of Jesus

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns

- **Anniversaries**
 - Ruth & Gary Sproule celebrate on Dec. 9th

Offering Invitation

Offering Hymn: Praise God from whom all Blessings Flow VU 541

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures high and low;
Give thanks to God in love made known,
Creator, Word and Spirit One.

Offering Prayer

Minute for Mission

Hymn — Go Now in Peace

Go now in peace. Never be afraid.
God will go with you each hour ev'ry day.
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true.
Know God will guide you in all you do.
Go now in love, and show you believe.
Reach out to others so all the world can see.
God will be there watching from above.
Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.
Amen, Amen, Amen.

Postlude

Welcomers: Doreen and Larry Broome

Counters: Mary Lloyd, Norm Porritt

Worship Schedule

December 15	3 rd Sunday of Advent	Rev. Tom Watson
December 22	4 th Sunday of Advent	Rev. Felicia Urbanski
December 29	1 st Sunday after Christmas	Rev. Jeff Hawkins
January 5	Epiphany Sunday	Rev. Jeff Hawkins