



**December 24, 2025**

**Melville United Church**

300 St. Andrew Street West, Fergus, ON N1M 1N9

Mailing address: PO Box 41, Fergus, ON N1M2W7

519-843-1781

**Team Ministry**

Minister of Pastoral Care

Faith Formation & Youth

Ministry of Music Team

Office Administrator

Custodian

Chair of Church Council

Chair of Pastoral Care & Prayer Chain Captain

Office hours

E-Mail

Web Site

Rev. Marion Loree 519-835-8605

Ann Ward

Suzanne Flewelling, Colleen Weber

Lynda Rivet

Suzanne Flewelling

Lara Johnston

Alison Rainford 519-843-3841

9:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m. T., Th. & F.

[secretary@melvilleunited.com](mailto:secretary@melvilleunited.com)

[www.melvilleunited.com](http://www.melvilleunited.com)

**Melville United Church  
Wednesday December 24, 2025**

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

**Prelude — Hallelujah** by Leonard Cohen (arr. Yuval Salomon)

**Welcome**

**Opening Hymn — O Come, All Ye Faithful** VU 60, verses 1, 3, 5

1. O come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,  
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.

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.

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.

**Land Acknowledgement**

**Call to Worship**

An ancient story, a holy story:

**God's presence comes where we would never think to look for it:**

Among us, as one of us—born vulnerable to all that life holds.

**We open our hearts to make space for the holy to be born again in us.**

Hear the heavenly Glorias and feel the brush of angels' wings.

Feel the hope that shines in the darkest places.

**"For unto us a child has been born."**

**Prayer of Approach**

Holy God, we gather once again to hear the ancient stories—of a time when a lowly stable was transformed into a holy place...when heaven touched earth in the cry of a newborn child...when angels sang a lullaby on a still, silent night. Faithfully, we come carrying with us our greatest hopes, our deepest longings, our hearts filled with wonder and praise. Amen.

**Lighting of the Advent Wreath and Christ Candle** (Mary Lloyd, Melissa Lloyd and Annie Denny)

One: Tonight is the night for which we have been watching and waiting, preparing and longing.

Two: We light again the candles of hope, peace, joy and love.

*(light the three purple and one pink candle)*

Three: The circle of our wreath is now complete,

One: Tonight, we celebrate the birth of Jesus.

*(light the white candle)*

Two: As this white candle is the centre of the wreath so in Christ can our lives be centred, focused and turned towards God.

Three: Let us pray:

**All: As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, may our hearts find peace in you. Amen.**

### **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.

**Solo — Were You There on that Christmas Night?** *music and lyrics by Natalie Sleeth. Performed by Melanie Steenburgh and Colleen Weber.*

### **Children's Time – The Legend of Dominick the Donkey**

#### **Hymn — Still, Still, Still VU 47, verses 1 & 2**

1. Still, still, still: the night is calm and still.

The Christ-child 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.

#### **Introduction to the Story**

The fire burns bright tonight,  
Frost whispers, the sky is eager with stars.  
Listen...once more the story is being told.

But who is doing the telling?

Is it prophets speaking with foresight? Or gospel writers with hindsight?  
Astrologers speaking in riddles? Or shepherds celebrating with violins?

Is it angels cleaving the clouds with unnerving presence...

With God's words sung but not spoken and, like snowflakes, complex and unique?

The story has been written over and over again  
With the patient rhythm of a pen,  
Or painted on a tapestry, or on chapel wall,  
Or carved on wood,

Or acted out on stage, or with laughter in the market place,  
Or read from a book while people sat in the glow of candlelight.

The fire burns bright tonight,  
Frost whispers, the sky is eager with stars,  
Listen...once more the story is being told...  
The story that needs to be told—God down to earth...  
God with us...Emmanuel.

### **Scripture Story – readers Barb Gregory and Susan Barth**

#### **Part 1**

**Barb:** Many centuries ago, in the land of Judah, there lived a prophet named Isaiah. His people were in despair but Isaiah spoke to them of better times to come. "The Royal line of David is like a tree that has been cut down," he told them, "but just as new branches sprout from a stump, so God will bring a new king from among David's descendants."  
Many years passed, and every generation waited for this new king to come.

**Susan:** Finally, in the area of Galilee, a most unusual thing happened. In the town of Nazareth there lived a carpenter named Joseph. He was a descendent of King David and was engaged to be married to a young woman named Mary.

**Barb:** One day the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, and said, "Peace be with you! The Lord has greatly blessed you!" Mary was frightened, but Gabriel reassured her, saying, "Do not be afraid. God has been gracious to you. You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God. The Lord God will make him a king, just as his ancestor David was, and his kingdom will never end!"

**Susan:** Mary was hesitant to believe Gabriel's message, so the angel continued, "Remember your cousin Elizabeth. It is said that she cannot have children, but she herself is now six months pregnant, even though she is very old. For there is nothing that God cannot do." So Mary hurried to her cousin's home to see whether or not this was true.

**Barb:** The angel was right! Elizabeth was going to have a baby too! Elizabeth was overjoyed for Mary and told her, "You are the most blessed of all women, and blessed is the child you will bear!" At this point, Mary finally believed the angel's message, and her mind swirled with the thoughts of preparing for the arrival of her child!

#### **Hymn — Hark the Herald Angels Sing VU 48, verses 1, 2**

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 hosts proclaim: "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"  
(refrain) 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 the Virgin's womb:

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail the incarnate deity,  
Pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel. (*refrain*)

### **Scripture Story – Part 2**

**Susan:** The months passed quickly. The time for Mary to give birth was drawing nearer every day. Mary and Joseph were trying to get everything ready for the baby's arrival when the news came that the Emperor Augustus had ordered a census to be taken throughout the Roman Empire. Everyone had to return to their own home towns to be counted.

**Barb:** So Mary and Joseph had to make the long and tiring journey to Bethlehem. They were very weary when they arrived, but the town was crowded with travellers who were all looking for places to stay. After being turned away at many doors, a kind innkeeper took pity on Mary and Joseph, and offered them the use of his stable, for there was no room for them in his inn. Mary and Joseph were grateful for a quiet place to rest for the night.

### **Hymn — O Little Town of Bethlehem VU 64, verses 1,4**

1. O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by,  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light,  
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

4. O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray,  
Cast out our sin, and enter in; be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel.

### **Scripture Story – Part 3**

**Susan:** Mary and Joseph laid their blankets down in the hay and made themselves a resting space, surrounded by the innkeeper's animals. They were hoping to get some rest, but late that night Mary's baby was born. With Joseph at her side, she wrapped him in pieces of cloth and laid him in a manger. They named him Jesus, just as the angel had told them to do.

**Barb:** In the hills that night, some shepherds were keeping their flocks of sheep. Then an angel told them to go to Bethlehem and find the newborn child in a stable. The sky was bright with starlight as the shepherds hurried to Bethlehem. They quickly found the stable the angels had told them about. When the shepherds told Mary and Joseph they had been directed there by angels, they invited them in to see their newborn son.

**Susan:** The shepherds knelt quietly beside the manger and bowed to show their respect. When they left, the shepherds were filled with excitement over all they had seen. As they returned to the hills and their flocks, they sang and danced along the way, giving thanks to God in celebration of this miracle.

### **Hymn — There's a Star in the East VU 70**

1. There's a star in the East on Christmas morn;  
Rise up, shepherd, and follow;

It will lead to the place where the Christ was born;  
Rise up, shepherd, and follow.  
(*refrain*) Follow, follow; rise up, shepherd, and follow.  
Follow the Star of Bethlehem; rise up, shepherd, and follow.

2. If you take good heed to the angel's words;  
Rise up, shepherd, and follow;  
You'll forget your flocks, you'll forget your herds;  
Rise up, shepherd, and follow. (*refrain*)

### **Meditation — Christmas Can Make a Difference**

In the opening frame of an old Peanuts cartoon, Lucy is saying to Linus: "You have to give me a Christmas present, Linus. It says so in the Bible!"

Linus responds, "You're bluffing! The Bible says nothing about giving Christmas presents!"  
Lucy: "Look, Linus. You have to give your sister a Christmas present! It's the Christmas rule!  
You can't ignore the Christmas rule!"  
Linus: "I can do anything I want! You hit me...so I've decided not to give you anything for Christmas!"

A little while later, Lucy exclaims excitedly, "Aha! I found it! I found the word 'sister' in the Bible!" So she runs to Linus with the Bible. "There it is, Linus! See! Right there! There's the word 'sister!' Right there in the Bible!"

Linus: "So?"  
Lucy: "So that proves you have to give me a Christmas present!"  
Linus: "O good grief! So you found the word 'sister' in the Bible. That doesn't prove anything."  
Lucy: "Oh yes it does! It proves that I know more about the Bible than you thought I did."  
Linus: "I see. Did you find it in the Old Testament or the New Testament?"  
Lucy: "The what?"  
Linus: "Aha! See!"

The final frame...Lucy clenching her teeth: "I may have to hit him again!"

Well, I'm not sure how to settle that dispute between Lucy and Linus, but the cartoon is analogous to the whole Christmas event. In a time that is supposed to be soft and gentle there exists this dispute between brothers and sisters. In a time that is supposed to be filled with peace, joy and love, there is discord among peoples and nations.

From the biblical story, on the one hand we have the songs of the angels announcing the birth of Jesus. On the other hand we are reminded that everyone was not happy with this birth. For this child would come to be seen as a threat to the stability of both the political and the religious establishments of the day.

At one and the same time—peace and conflict, good and evil, light and dark. All intertwined.

And is it not the same in our world as we celebrate the Christmas season this year? There are beautiful, wonderful things happening all around us...but also around us are horrific wars, and conflicts among people that make no sense.

At one and the same time—peace and conflict, good and evil, light and dark. All intertwined.

Still there's always a little light that shines even in the darkest of times. We see it where once sworn enemies reach out and stop their fighting. We see it where people are kind to one another. We see it wherever people seek to live together, and support one another, in peace and harmony and common humanity.

And that's the central message of the Christmas season: Peace on earth among all people.

We are all part of this one planet called earth and we have a choice—to either concentrate on the things that divide us, or recognize our common humanity and concentrate on the things that unite us.

When we do the latter then Christmas can make a difference. So, in the end, it all boils down to you and me. You and I alone cannot solve all the problems of the world. But we can do our bit, in our way, in our little sphere of influence, to make a difference. To take the message and the meaning of Christmas and make it happen as the central core of our lives. It's up to us.

Let me close with a personal story shared with me by a minister acquaintance. It's a reminder of the difference people can make when the Christmas spirit is enacted.

The second Christmas when I was on my own with my two young children, I was attending Divinity School and working a field placement in a local church. I was leading a Mom and Tot group and we had decided to sponsor a family for Christmas by providing a Christmas hamper for a family in need.

It was all going great until the week we were to gather together and fill the hamper for delivery that day. There must have been a flu going around or something but none of the other Mom's showed up. So I ended up filling the hamper myself, by purchasing things from what limited money I had at my disposal, and then delivering it to the family we were sponsoring.

That left me in a pickle myself. I had spent my grocery money for the week on the hamper and realized it would be a tight or next-to-impossible struggle for me until the end of the month and my next cheque.

I was pondering my dilemma as I drove home with a friend from our hamper delivery. I arrived at my own front door to find bags of groceries and Christmas gifts for the children and me left for us. It was unbelievable. I just sat on the step and wept I was so overwhelmed.

Seems to me this is an example of the old saying that what goes around comes around. Armed with the spirit of Christmas, you can make a difference. We can make a difference! And it's through us—you and me—that Christmas can make a difference.



## **Hymn — The Virgin Mary Had A Baby Boy VU 73, vv. 1,2,3**

1. The virgin Mary had a baby boy,  
The Virgin Mary had a baby boy,  
The Virgin Mary had a baby boy,  
And they say that His name is Jesus.

*(refrain)* He come from the glory,  
He come from the glorious kingdom.  
He come from the glory,  
He come from the glorious kingdom.  
Oh yes, believer! Oh yes, believer!  
He come from the glory,  
He come from the glorious kingdom.

2. The angels sang when the baby born,  
The angels sang when the baby born,  
The angels sang when the baby born,  
And they say that his name is Jesus. *(refrain)*

3. The shepherds came where the baby born,  
The shepherds came where the baby born,  
The shepherds came where the baby born,  
And they say that His name is Jesus. *(refrain)*

## **Christmas Eve Communion**

### **The Invitation to the Table**

Lift up your hearts!

**We lift them up to our God!**

Let us give thanks to God!

**It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

### **The Consecration of the Elements**

This evening communion will be received by intinction.

While communion is being served, Linda-Mae Ogilvie and Colleen Weber will play a flute and piano arrangement of "Away in a Manger" (*music by James R. Murray, arr. Gary Lanier*)

### **Our Christmas Eve Prayer Litany**

We have worshipped together on this holy night. May this time we have spent lead us to the heart of the season, which is peace.

**We have felt peace in the safety of this house of worship. May we be mindful of those who do not know the same peace.**

We remember those caught in circumstances over which they have no control.

**We remember those who live in a constant state of unrest, because of war in their nation, or oppression by their leaders.**

We remember those without a room in the economic inn of our society, those whose jobs are sacrificed so that others don't have to pay for their services, those who have to decide between paying the rent or feeding their family.



**We pray for those whose lives are unsettled by illness, by grief, by things that loom larger than life itself—that they might find peace, and comfort, and hope.**

Like the mother and father in the Christmas story, may we find something of joy and blessing even in the midst of hardship and trial.

**Like the busy, stressed-out innkeeper, may we find ways to be of help to others.**

Like the watchful beasts in the stable, may we be silent witnesses to the unfathomable glory and beauty of life.

**Like the shepherds on the Galilean hillside, may we know that we need never be afraid.**

Like the journeying magi, may we always have the courage to follow our stars.

**Like the angels who sang from the heavens, may we sing of peace to a troubled world.**

May this season of goodwill nudge us, and all around us, toward God's finest ideals for us and our world.

**And may the wonder that is Christmas live within us this night and always.**

In faith, O God, in your abiding and sustaining presence, we offer these Christmas prayers...

**And we offer them in the name of the Christmas child, Jesus, who is among us as we pray together...**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

#### **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, 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.

**Solo — I Wonder as I Wander** *adapted and arranged by John Jacob Niles and Lewis Henry Horton. Performed Melanie Steenburgh and Colleen Weber*

### **Commissioning & Benediction**

As we leave this place and continue with all of our Christmas celebrations with families and friends...

**May the blessings of life be upon us, and upon all people.**

May the memories we gather give us hope for the future.

**May the grace of God and the peace of this community be with us until we meet again.**

### **Departing Hymn — Joy to the World VU 59, verses 1, 2**

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.

**Postlude — As Lately We Watched**

**Worship Schedule**

December 28 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas	Rev. Tom Watson
January 4 <sup>th</sup>	Epiphany Sunday	Rev. Jeff Hawkins
January 11 <sup>th</sup>	The Baptism of the Lord	Rev. Tom Watson
January 18 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany	Rev. Linda Butler