

Trinity-Grace United Church  
CHRISTMAS EVE  
December 24, 2023 – 5pm

Prelude

Welcome

**Introit** (soloist) : “Once in Royal David’s City”

Once in royal David's city  
    stood a lowly cattle shed,  
where a mother laid her baby  
    in a manger for his bed.  
Mary was that mother mild,  
Jesus Christ her little child.

He came unto earth from heaven  
    who, with God, is over all,  
and his shelter was a stable,  
    and his cradle was a stall.  
There among the poor and lowly  
lived on earth our Saviour holy.

**Gathering and Candle-lighting**

LEADER:

Friends, I bring you good news of great joy,  
which is for all the people:  
Unto us is born this night a Saviour,  
who is Christ the Lord.

**ALL:**

**Glory to God in the highest,  
And on earth, peace and goodwill to all!**

*(Christ candle is lit)*

LEADER:

As the glory of heaven embraces the earth;  
our lives are stilled in trembling hope:  
Like the wise ones we come to worship.  
Like the shepherds we come to see and be included.  
And like believers through the ages,  
we come to give thanks that God is not distant,  
but enters our world in love.

**ALL:**

**O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.**

**Carol:** "O Come, All Ye Faithful"

VU 60 (verses 1,3,4,5)

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;

*Refrain:*

*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: *(Refrain)*
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; *(Refrain)*
5. Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning!  
Jesu to thee be glory giv'n;  
Word of our God, now in flesh appearing; *(Refrain)*

**Prayer** (Leader)

Emmanuel, God with us,  
We praise you for your presence  
with and within all your creation.  
The shining stars sing your praise which echoes in the depth of space.

The smallest snowflake and a baby's tiny fingers  
reflect your intricate love for the details of each and every life.

In Jesus Christ, you were born among us,  
one of a kind, yet one with a kind,  
to show us how your great love can be lived out  
in human lives, day by day.

Inspire us this night with your loving Spirit,  
so that our celebrations of love made flesh in Jesus  
will share the presence of your love with those who need it most.  
So may we live the praise we offer to you,  
Emmanuel, God with us, now and evermore.

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading:** Luke 1: 26-37

**Reflection#1:** "Mary, Nazareth Girl"

Ann Weems

**Carol:** "What Child is This"

VU 74 (verses 1 & 2)

1. What child is this, who laid to rest,  
on Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet  
while shepherds watch are keeping?

*Refrain:*

*This, this is Christ the King,  
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;  
haste, haste to bring him laud,  
the Babe, the Son of Mary!*

- 2 Why lies he in such mean estate  
where ox and ass are feeding?  
Dear ones, draw near, for God's world here  
the silent Word is pleading. (*Refrain*)

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading:** Luke 2: 1-7

**Reflection #2:** "Choosing God"

Ruth Burgess

**Carol:** "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

VU 64 (verses 1,2,3)

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.

2 For Christ is born of Mary;  
and gathered all above,  
while mortals sleep, the angels keep  
their watch of wondering love.  
O morning stars, together  
proclaim the holy birth,  
and praises sing to God the King,  
and peace to all on earth.

3 How silently, how silently  
the wondrous gift is given!  
So God imparts to human hearts  
the blessed gift of heaven.  
No ear may hear his coming;  
but in this world of sin,  
where willing souls receive him, still  
the dear Christ enters in.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Reading:** Luke 2: 8-14

**Reflection #3:** “Wouldn’t It Be Grand To Be An Angel?”

Ann Weems

**Carol:** “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear”

VU 44 (verses 1, 3 4)

1 It came upon the midnight clear,  
that glorious song of old,  
from angels bending near the earth  
to touch their harps of gold,  
'Peace on the earth, good will to all,  
from heaven's all-gracious King!'

The world in solemn stillness lay  
to hear the angels sing.

3 Yet with the woes of sin and strife  
the world has suffered long;  
beneath the angel strain have rolled  
two thousand years of wrong;  
and warring humankind hears not  
the love song which they bring.  
O hush the noise, and cease your strife,  
to hear the angels sing.

4 For, lo! the days are hastening on,  
by prophets seen of old,  
when with the ever-circling years  
shall come the time foretold,  
when peace shall over all the earth  
its ancient splendours fling,  
and the whole world send back the song  
which now the angels sing.

[4<sup>th</sup> Reading:](#) Luke 2: 15-20

[Reflection #4:](#) “Unexpected”

Ann Weems

[Christmas Message:](#) “What Can Be”

The Rev. Sandra Nixon

[Anthem:](#) “O Holy Night”

*\*(The offering is brought forward)*

[Offering Prayer](#) (Leader)

Loving God,  
as we celebrate the gift of your child Jesus,  
born among us to show the world  
the way of compassion and love,  
we offer ourselves and our gifts  
in praise for all we have seen and heard.  
Bless these gifts,  
that they may help to shine forth  
your love and light into a weary world.

This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

### Prayers of Gratitude & Concern

Holy one,  
on this night we hear in song and story of your promise fulfilled:  
A child is born - Emmanuel, God-with-us.

In this season of Christmas,  
we give you thanks that your love took flesh in the Christ child  
and that his story still fills us with wonder.  
With all the to-ing and fro-ing between family and friends this season,  
we remember Mary and Joseph and their journey  
in the midst of another busy time.  
Watch over all who travel at this time of year,  
for happy reasons or in the face of difficulties.  
Give courage especially to those who are fleeing desperate situations  
in the face of war or conflict.  
May they find your peace in the midst of their journeys.

Loving God,  
as we remember the innkeeper who found space for Mary and Joseph,  
we are grateful for the spaces we call home,  
whether simple or sophisticated –  
and for all the places and communities where we feel  
a sense of belonging and connection.  
We pray tonight for all who are homeless,  
or who are in tenuous living situations.  
We pray for those who seek a welcome in strange places.

God of care and compassion,  
as we remember the shepherds watching over their flocks,  
we give you thanks for those who watch over us this night.  
We pray for all those who must work on holidays,  
tending the well-being of others.  
And as we think of Jesus the good shepherd,  
we pray for those in need of healing in mind, body or spirit.  
Grant them your peace and surround with your love in the care and support  
of family, friends and caregivers.

As we remember tonight also the angels and their message of peace and goodwill, we are grateful for peace and order in our communities. We pray for all those who work to establish and maintain true peace in troubled places and troubled lives. We pray for the leaders of the nations, that they may be guided to decisions which promote peace and equity for all.

Finally, as we remember the Magi and the gifts they brought to honour the Christ Child, we thank you for the generosity that overflows at this time of year. May it touch the lives that need it most. May each of us find ways to offer what we can in the year ahead.

Hear these prayers and all the silent prayers of our hearts, O God, and cradle them in your holy wisdom. As the song of the angels and the light of your love breaks into our lives and our world, may hope sing in the quiet of our hearts. May the message of Christmas ring through the heavens and stir all humanity in mutual care for each other and for your good creation. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

### Sharing the Light (One/All)

In the beginning, when all was very dark,  
**God said, "Let there be light", and there was light and life.**

And when humanity was weary and exhausted,  
Lost in the shadows of our own fear and anxiety,  
**The holy one, God's Word, came as a light in Jesus Christ.**

"In Jesus, the brilliance of God's word illuminated the world, and the shadows of sin and evil could not stifle it." (John 1: 6-8)  
**Tonight and always, Christ the word, Christ the light is with us.**

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.

### Blessing (Leader)

Friends, we have heard the story, passed down through the ages,  
Still able to captivate us and bring hope in our time.  
The light is with us, and within us,  
And the darkness will never put it out.

As you go into your Christmas celebrations,  
go with the blessing of the child of Bethlehem.

May his peace,  
which lightens the soul with faith,  
lifts the spirit with hope,  
and infuses the world with love,  
be yours tonight and always.

### Postlude