

Christmas Eve 2020

Welcome:

Welcome to this service of Tecumseh United Church. We wish you a very special Merry Christmas as we bring you a service that is very different this year. With no in-house worship this Christmas Eve you may be watching this at a different time than you usually would have been to church. We may be sharing it with entirely different group of people on your own virtual network of family and friends. We hope however you are seeing this you know that it is brought to you from the heart to the heart. If you usually attended our early service on Christmas Eve then this service may seem a little more adult and if you usually take in the later service on Christmas eve your only real change will be the end where we would normally finish our service with the lighting of candles and the singing of Silent Night be decided we needed to shout it out for our neighbours to hear this year so we will finish with the familiar Joy To The World. From all of us here at the church we wish you the very best of the holiday season and we pray we will see you in person in the new year. God bless, stay safe and enjoy the service.

Anthem "Carol of the Star"

*A star, a shining star, led wise men on their way
to find that Bethlehem town where lay a holy babe.
Venite adoremus Dominum, Venite adoremus, Dominum.
A star, a guiding star, led angels from above.
to seek a tiny babe, surround Him with their love.
Venite adoremus Dominum, Venite adoremus, Dominum.
A star, a mighty star, did shine over all the earth.
to welcome Him with joy, proclaim His wondrous birth.
Venite adoremus, Dominum, Venite adoremus, Dominum.*

Lighting of the Candles on Christmas Eve:

O come all ye faithful and come all ye doubtful:
We are here to feel the warmth of hope and to look to the sky for help.

As we light the candle of sky, we remember the light that shines this night is a light that nothing can overcome. We pray at this time for all who are discouraged, who are facing illness, whether in themselves or of loves ones. We look to the sky and pray in hope.

(Light first candle)

O come all ye peaceful and come all ye stressed out:
We are here to feel the glow of peace moved by the wind of the spirit.

As we light the candle of wind, we take a deep breath in and out and remember the meaning of Christmas. We breathe out and let go of the busyness of shopping, cleaning, cooking, and baking. We breathe in the peace of the Christ child coming to us on the wind.

(Light the 2nd candle)

O come all ye joyous and come all ye grieving:
We are here to feel a blaze or even just a flicker of joy while we are on this earth.

As we light this candle, we remember all the blessings of this time, the memories and traditions we treasure and recreate each year- the feasting, the sharing, the laughter. We also pray for all who struggle with sadness during this season; we pray for all who have lost loved ones and are grieving;

we pray for fractured family relationships and friendships that are often mourned at this time of year. We pray for wholeness and joy on this planet earth.

(Light the 3rd candle)

O come all ye righteous and come all ye who have messed up:
We come to encounter the love that is the light of the world and found in the water and the wine.

As we light the candle of love, we offer this love to ourselves and to each other as it flows like a never-ending stream. Through the grace of God, let us lean into forgiveness, recognizing that we are all imperfect, but that God loves us just as we are. Let us also commit to sharing this love with friends, family, strangers, and even those we consider enemies.

(Light the 4th candle)

O come all ye contented and come all ye searching for more:
We are here to open ourselves to the presence of God.

As we light the Christ candle, we offer our hearts, minds, and spirits to the holy mystery that is at the heart of Christmas: a lowly birth, a child who is the Son of God, a foreshadowing of everlasting life, and a message of God's love for humanity.

(Light the Christ Candle)

Let us pray:

Loving God you are Holy Mystery, we come to you today, in this season of long nights, seeking the bright flame of your hope for our own healing and for the healing of the world. As we look toward the candles of sky, wind, earth and water may we find hope, peace, joy and love, the candles that surround the Christ candle, we silently pray to you, surrendering our hopes and fears and allowing your light to shine into us. Loving God help us to surrender our burdens and celebrate with joy. Amen.

Hymn # 60 "O Come All Ye Faithful" (verses 1,4,5)

*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.*

*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.*

*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 Worship:

Candles are lit. Christmas music is being played. Even though we are unable to gather excitement is in the air! The awe of the holy eve is upon us. We are seeking the Christ child. May his birth be mystery and delight as we tenderly approach this place of wonder and majesty.

Anthem “The Wondrous Story”

*On a dark cold winter night, great with child and weary,
Mary found a place of light in a stable lowly.
There to her was born a son sent to be our saviour,
wrapped so warm in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.
In the dark, cold hills around, shepherds watching lonely.
Then they heard a heavenly sound, angels singing “GLORY.”
Bringing tidings of great joy, shepherds hastened to see,
bright star shining on the place humble yet so holy.
On this dark cold winter night come we tired and weary.
Seeking too a place of light, in this world so dreary.
Now we raise our voices high, sing together “GLORY!”
Praise again the newborn child, tell the wondrous story.*

Opening Prayer:

O God our Creator, our hope, and our life, for all that you give us, for all that you are, we bring you our praise. A life of gratitude is our gift to you for coming to us as a human child, for pouring into the world your hope, your peace, your joy, and your love. As those who came to worship and adore the newborn babe in Mary’s arms, we now worship you- the light of the world! Come to us anew and fill our hearts with love. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Luke 2: 1-20:

The Birth of Jesus

2 In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. **2** This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. **3** All went to their own towns to be registered. **4** 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. **5** He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. **6** While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. **7** 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.

The Shepherds and the Angels

8 In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. **9** Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. **10** 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: **11** to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah,[Ⓜ] the Lord. **12** This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” **13** And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host,[Ⓜ] praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”¹⁴

¹⁵ 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.” ¹⁶ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Meditation

Anthem “Would I miss the Miracle”

*If angels filled the skies tonight, would I hear them sing?
Would tomorrow find me saying it was all a dream?
Would I leave my bed and go outside to hear their song?
Would I go on sleeping until the morning dawned?
Would I miss the miracle? Would I see the King?
or would my life be so consumed with ordinary things?
Would I miss the wonder, the hope that Christmas brings?
Would I miss the miracle? Would I see the King?
If a stranger knocked upon my door tonight in deepest need,
in my life would there be room for anyone but me?
Would I hear the voice of God within a baby’s cry?
Would I open up my heart and welcome Him inside?
Would I miss the miracle? Would I see the King?
Or would my life be so consumed with ordinary things?
Would I miss the wonder the hope that Christmas brings?
Would I miss the miracle? Would I see the King? Would I miss the miracle? Would I see the King?*

Communion:

Communion at the Christmas Eve service is always one of my favourite communions. It is one of the really special times to focus on who Jesus was and what his ministry would become. It is one of the times to focus not just on a familiar ritual but on the birth of the One we remember.

This year as we have approached the birth of the Christ child we have done so with a much stronger yearning for the hope, peace, joy and love this birth brings. The bread this year speaks to the deeper need for nourishment in these days of loneliness and isolation. The bread speaks to the deepest hunger of our hearts to be together; the bread conveys the searching, merciful, wooing love of God.

The wine quenches something deeper than our physical thirst. We search for ways to cope, to find meaning, to belong and we thirst for something to take away the dryness of these deserts we are living in. This wine is the love poured out, God’s love, Jesus’ life poured out, generously giving – forgiveness, healing love, overflowing into our lives and shown by the many sacrifices made by front line workers, nurses, doctors, cleaning staff and all who have cared for our sick in this year of illness.

The manger sits in the glow of the cross. We might wonder what Mary said as she held Jesus in the dark, damp stable, after the pain and the bleeding and crying. Might she have thought, “This is my body, this is my blood?”

And we remember Jesus on the night he was arrested, gathered with his most intimate friends, his bubble, breaking bread and saying, "This is my body broken for you."

And we wonder what Mary thought when she held him for the last time in the dark rain on a hilltop, after the pain and the bleeding and the dying. Did she think, "This is my body, this is my blood?"

The familiar words, "wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger because there was not room in the inn somehow anticipates the time when they wrapped his body and laid him in a tomb. There was no room in the inn. Today there is no room in the ICU, no loved ones around in death, like Jesus alone on the cross with only God coming to us again and again, feeding our hearts and spirits, nourishing us with grace and love and forgiveness.

It is because of this that we remember that Jesus took bread and broke it and gave it to his friends saying, "take, eat for this is my body broken for you, whenever you do this remember me."

And after the meal had ended he took the cup and gave thanks to God and said, "this is the cup of blessing poured out for you and for all, whenever you do this remember me."

Let us Pray, Loving God we take these symbols of bread and wine and make them a sign of your steadfast love for us. May we be ever mindful of this love and welcome you into our hearts, now and always. Amen.

As we end our worship this evening or whenever you are watching may you know that you have not been to church you are the church! May God richly bless you and keep you safe this joyful Christmas time. Amen.

Hymn # 59 "Joy to the World"

*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.*

*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.*

*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.*

*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.*

