



UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA MELFORT ETHELTON PASTORAL CHARGE

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Website: www.melfortunitedchurch.com

Worship Time: 10:30 AM

Ministers: All of us

Worship Leader: Pat Neher

Music: Jodi Allen Corbett

Music Director: Mavis Peters

Office Administrator: Denise Todosichuk

Caretaker: Faye Greier

Today's Greeter:

Scripture Reader: Jean Senecal

ORDER OF WORSHIP

December 24, 2020
Christmas Eve, Year B
*A Christmas Eve Service
of Scripture and Song*

WE GATHER AS A COMMUNITY OF GOD'S PEOPLE

As we gather for worship today we acknowledge that the land on which we gather is Treaty 6 Territory. We honour the Cree and Métis people for whom this place has been a homeland for thousands of years. We respect the sacredness of our home and the ground on which we walk and we are grateful to gather here in peace and hope.

ANNOUNCEMENTS, ANNIVERSARIES & CONCERNS:

CALL TO WORSHIP:

We come into this place to make a home for Love. We come to create a structure, to give shelter, to craft a dwelling place for the Incarnation.

God asks, "Have I ever asked for another dwelling place than in my Creation?"

We come into this place to tell the story of a woman who said, "yes"; of a stable and a manger and angels singing before frightened shepherds.

We come to celebrate the birth of the one who would teach us that his life was the beginning of new life for us all. We come to worship the God who asks us all to say yes to carrying that which will bring justice, mercy, and peace into this world.

We come into this place to remember.

We come into this place to re-imagine our place in God's incarnation.

OPENING PRAYER: *(in unison)*

Our souls magnify you, O Gracious Creator!

You call us to act as lenses for your glory;

through us, your glory is made visible;

through us, your works are made manifest.

**For although you are uncontainable, you remain with us,
around us, among us always.**

**Though we are simply mortal beings created by you, you
have blessed us and lifted us, to be more than simple
bodies of clay.**

**We rejoice that you were born in human flesh, that we might
learn to recognize your incarnate love present in our
living bodies.**

**You show us your strength in the resilience and complexity
of your creation;**

**scatter our thoughts when pride tells us we are the only
creatures who reflect your holy image;**

**you call us to resist the idea that all else is given only for us
to use as we desire.**

**(For you remember every piece of Creation and seek after its
care and well-being.**

**The burnt and exhausted fields will be nourished,
the creatures we scarcely notice will be lovingly tended,
the springs of life will flow with abundance to all of this
beloved Creation.**

Help our souls to magnify you, O Merciful Saviour!

**Turn our hearts that we might reflect your love to all that
you have made.**

**Open our eyes that we may see all Creation as one community
made in your love.**

Open our hands to work for the re-imagining of our lives

into your kin-dom, right here on Earth.
Renew us in your covenant, Holy God;
restore us through the love which creates all life, now and
forever. Amen.

HYMN (VU 48) *“Hark the Herald Angels Sing”*

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

(Candles #1, #2, #3 and #4 are lit)

Let's say the names of the candles together:

HOPE, PEACE, JOY, LOVE.

Over the past days and weeks, we have prepared our hearts for Christmas by thinking about these things: hope, peace, joy and love.

We have prepared a lovely resting place for the Christ Child, by acting it out with helpfulness, courage and kindness. Of course, Jesus isn't really born as a baby anymore – that already happened 2,000 year ago – but the spirit of Jesus is born into our hearts over and over and over again.

So tonight we are going to welcome the presence of Jesus here with us. We light the fifth candle – the Christ candle, we call it – *(Christ candle is lit)*.

Let us sit very still for a moment, holding out our hands as if to receive the gift of Jesus.

And now let's all together, softly, say,

“Welcome Jesus.” *(repeated)*.

And now let's put the baby in the manger bed we have made ready!! Remember: Jesus finds a home wherever we make room for him with love and kindness and sharing.

**PRAYER: O God, thank you so much for Jesus!
We open our hearts to him again. Always.
Amen.**

SUNG RESPONSE (VU 7) *"Hope Is a Star"*

PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE:

Holy One, Creator of the Universe, we praise you with humble hearts.

For you created us out of dust, frail creatures in deep need of one another.

Yet into our weakness you breathed your Spirit that your love might dwell within us.

Yet we confess, Merciful God, we become prideful in the image of you which we carry.

We puff ourselves up, and we put our desires ahead of the needs of our neighbours.

Though you took on human form to lead us to eternal life, we seek to contain you within that flesh.

We confess that we have tried to domesticate you, to put you in a comfortable box that we can admire and love without having to listen to what you are calling us to do and be.

Forgive us, God of all.

Forgive us when we are proud, and scatter the thoughts of our hearts.

Forgive us when we put the acquisition of wealth and status ahead of the care of neighbour and Creation. When we do not feed those who hunger, send us away empty.

Forgive us when we set ourselves up as rulers and arbiters over others. May we know our place.

Forgive us when we hear this ancient, beautiful story of your love and do not reflect on how you continue to speak into our lives today.

Forgive us when we do not resist the harm that is being done to Creation.

Forgive us when we lack the courage to re-imagine the world as it is, for in doing so we delay the world that is to come.

Forgive us, God of all, and call us again into renewal of the ancient covenant and the promises of your mercy. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE:

God did not wait until we were ready to call us into participation in the Beloved Community. God knows our weaknesses, has mercy on our transgressions, and looks with compassion upon our fearfulness.

Friends, hear the promises of God: we are loved, we are renewed, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God! **Amen.**

CAROL (VU 9) *“People Look East”*

CHOIR ANTHEM

“Do You Know The Way to Bethlehem”

A SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS

The First Lesson: Isaiah 9:2-7

CAROL (VU 64) *“O Little Town of Bethlehem”*

The Second Lesson: Titus 2:11-14

CAROL (VU 59) *“Joy to the World”*

The Third Lesson: Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)

CAROL (VU 74) *“What Child Is This”*

OUR RESPONSE

OFFERING:

(Please use the offering box at the front/back of the Sanctuary as you exit. Thank you!)

OFFERTORY HYMN (VU 55)

“In the Bleak Midwinter” – **verse 4**

PRAYER OF DEDICATION: *(in unison)*

Creator God,

**we bring our gifts and ourselves, our treasure and our heart.
Bless us, in all that we offer, that our offerings might be used
in your call to us:**

**to be stewards but not owners of that which have been given,
to be places in which you abide but not where you are
constrained.**

**Bless us, that in our giving, we might open ourselves to your
call to seek justice and mercy for all that you have created,
for all that you love. Amen.**

SPECIAL MUSIC: *“O Holy Night”*

Soloist – Graydon Eskowich

YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/y7091h0M6LM>

PRAYERS FOR THE PEOPLE:

Loving God,

throughout history, you have been active in this world,
speaking, guiding, whispering, and nudging us to be
the people you know we can be.

You have spoken through angels, messengers of your grace,
justice, and love.

You have spoken through prophets, the truth-tellers of our
world who call us from self-interest to community, from
human limitation to divine vision.

You have spoken from our own flesh, embodying all that it
means to be human.

From your newborn cry to your final, heartbroken words,
you spoke to us of the abiding love and the enduring
covenant, which have never failed, no matter how often
we have turned away.

You have spoken, Holy God, throughout all generations.
Help us to hear you speaking to us now.

Help us to take the ancient stories of our faith and learn from
them, as Mary did.

Help us to re-imagine the words of prophecy that still speak
truth to our lives, that we might learn to respond to the
enduring truth of your call.

Help us to resist the temptations that have followed humanity since the beginning.

May we set aside the idols of wealth and status, self-interest and self-importance.

May we abandon the conceit that being made in the image of God means that God is just like us.

Help us to re-imagine what it might look like to say yes when we hear your call;

to not focus on what might be hard, but rather on what might be made possible.

Help us to carry you within ourselves.

Help us to embody your holy love so that it is not only our souls that magnify you but our words and our deeds.

Help us to remember that your incarnation continues, as you dwell, not within the buildings we construct, not in church or synagogue or mosque or temple but within the very love of our hearts.

Help us to say, "yes" to you, God of Grace.

Amen.

SENDING FORTH

HYMN (VU 67) *"Silent Night, Holy Night"*

COMMISSIONING & BENEDICTION:

Peace be with you.

Love be in you.

Mercy be among you.

Justice be around you.

Go out into the world

Reflecting God's presence

Resisting fear

Re-imagining your place in the ongoing incarnation of God's holy love.

CHORAL BLESSING (VU 43)

"Go Tell It On The Mountain"

SPECIAL MUSIC:

“It’s Beginning To Look A lot Like Christmas”

- Soloist - Graydon Eskowich

YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/cRtlAygO09A>

PRAYER RESOURCES:

**Seasons of the Spirit – SeasonsFUSION Advent • Christmas • Epiphany 2020–2021; The United Church of Canada Advent • Christmas • Epiphany 2020-2021, Year B, Gathering Resources for Worship Planners. Used with permission.*

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

YouTube Link to this worship service:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JLZ2YD1TaCQ&feature=youtu.be>