

First United Church, Mount Pearl Pastoral Charge  
Christmas Eve 7 pm Service - 2024

**Praise Medley:** The Little Drummer Boy, C-H-R-I-S-T-M-A-S,  
Angels Sing Hosanna

**Greeting and Announcements**

**Introit:** A Candle Is Burning **VU 6 vs 5**

**Call to Worship:**

With eyes wide open and our ears on edge,  
**we look for shepherds and listen for the songs of  
angels:**

In the light of winter's moon, with twinkling stars guiding the way,  
**we gather outside the door of a mystery, wondering if we  
dare go enter.**

With folks and friends we love, with strangers we have just met,  
**we gather, becoming the holy family for this time and in  
this place.**

**LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH**

**READERS:** (The Tuck Family)

What do you do when an angel interrupts your day?

You stop.

What do you do when an angel speaks?

You listen.

A multitude of angels interrupted the quiet Bethlehem night.

People stopped. People listened.

The angels had a message for the world.

"A baby is born who will change the world."

But the people said, "How can a baby change the world?"

The angel said, "Pay attention to this child. He will show you God's  
way."

Remembering Zechariah and Elizabeth, we light this candle of  
Possibility.

**ALL: In the circle of God's light, all things are possible.**

*(Light one blue candle)*

**READERS:**

Remembering Mary, we light this candle of Risk.

**ALL: In the circle of God's light, we dare to risk.**

*(Light a second blue candle)*

**READERS:**

Remembering the shepherds, we light this candle of Joy.

**ALL: In the circle of God's light, we live with joy.**

*(Light a pink candle)*

**READERS:**

Remembering Joseph, we light this candle of Courage.

**ALL: In the circle of God's light, we live with courage.**

*(Light a third blue candle)*

**READERS:**

Remembering Jesus, we light this candle of the Way of Jesus.

**ALL: In the circle of God's light, we live the Way of Jesus.**

*(Light the white candle)*

**SUNG RESPONSE:**

(unison)

**Angel, from the realms of glory,  
wing your flight o'er all the earth;  
ye who sang creation's story,  
now proclaim Messiah's birth:  
come and worship, come and worship,  
worship Christ, the new-born King.**

**Prayer of Approach:**

Now in the silence,

**whisper of joy which comes into every life.**

Now in the comfort of carols,

**sing of hope which takes away the despair which envelops  
us.**

Now in familiar words heard anew,

**speak to us of grace which is born into barren lives, of  
peace which is birthed in war's shadowed fears.**

Now leaning next to those who have always been a part of us, and  
those from whom we have been apart,

**remind us of your heart which always accepts us, always  
welcomes us.**

Now in the love which is ours forever,

**draw us closer to your heart, so we can be surprised by  
wonder, swaddled in serenity, embraced by tenderness.**

Now touch us once again with Christmas, Holy One, as we worship  
together this sacred night.

**Hymn:** O Come, All Ye Faithful **VU 60**

**Prayer of Confession:** (unison)

**This was going to be the year, God of silent nights, when we  
were going to give away more than we spent, but we didn't.**

**This was going to be the season when we spent more time with others, but we filled our calendars with meetings. This was going to be the Christmas when we wrote personal letters to friends and family, but spent too much energy filling out our to-do lists. This was going to be a truly holy season, but it just got too harried and hurried. Forgive us, God, and draw us closer to the Baby born not into wealth and power, but into poverty and weakness; to the One who loves unconditionally and welcomes all; to the Child who gathers other children to him, to bless them and serve them; to the One who drew near to us, so we might be drawn to your heart – Jesus Christ, our Brother, our Lord. (Silent reflection)**

**Assurance of Pardon:**

Into the valleys of our death, Jesus comes with life; into the shadows of our world, Jesus brings light; into the brokenness of our lives, Jesus brings forgiveness and peace.

**Thanks be to God for the gift of the Baby of Bethlehem, who brings joy and peace to us in these moments of forgiveness and in all the days to come. Amen.**

**A Declaration of Faith at Christmas** (see insert)

**Hymn:** O Little Town of Bethlehem **VU 64**

**Offertory Hymn:** All Poor Ones and Humble **VU 68** (refrain)

**Offertory Prayer:** (unison)

**Now, on this night of giftedness, remind us of those who struggle to put food on the table, to buy a single gift for their child, to wrap a warm blanket around a grandparent, so we might realize how blessed we are and share from our abundance. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.**

**Scripture Readings:** Hebrew Scriptures: Isaiah 9:2-7  
Psalm 96 **on page 816 of VU**  
Epistle Lesson: Titus 2:11-14  
Gospel Lesson: Luke 2:1-20

**Ministry of Music**

**Meditation**

**Hymn:** Silent Night, Holy Night **VU 67**

**The Sacrament of Holy Communion** (see insert)

**Hymn:** Joy to the World **VU 59**

**Commission and Benediction**

## A Declaration of Faith at Christmas

I believe in Jesus, and in the beauty of the Gospel that began in Bethlehem.

I believe in him whose spirit glorified a little town;  
of whose coming only shepherds and Magi saw the sign,  
and for whom the crowded inn could find no room.

I believe in him whom kings of earth ignored  
and the proud could never understand;  
whose paths were among the common people;  
whose welcome came from people of hungry hearts.

I believe in him who proclaimed the love of God to be invincible;

whose cradle was a mother's arms;  
whose home in Nazareth had love for its only wealth;  
who looked at others and made them see what his love saw in them;  
who by his love brought sinners back to purity  
and lifted human weakness up to meet the strength of God.

I confess my everlasting need of God;  
the need for forgiveness for greed and selfishness,  
the need of life for empty souls,  
the need of love for hearts grown cold.

I acknowledge the glory of all that is like Christ;  
the steadfastness of friends,  
the blessedness of homes,  
the beauty of compassion,  
the miracle of many hearts made kind at Christmas,  
the course of those who dare to resist all passion, hate  
and war.

I believe that only by love expressed shall the earth be purified.  
I acknowledge in Christ, a faith that looks beyond our present evil,

and I pray that this redemption may begin in us now.

**Christ is our promise,  
and we wait for the joy of his return.**

### **The Sacrament of Holy Communion**

May the God of silent nights be with you!

**May the God of herald angels be with you!**

Open your hearts to the One born in the little town of Bethlehem.

**May Emmanuel come to abide in our hearts.**

Join all believers in singing of our joy this night.

**May our voices blend with those of the angels and  
shepherds.**

You crept into chaos so long ago, so creation might be born: sheep gathering on hillsides, stars glittering in the night skies, sea horses frolicking in warm waters. Silently, you gathered up the dust, shaping us in your image as the Spirit breathed life into us. All the gifts of your heart were for us, but we slammed the door of our hearts, saying there was no room for you in our lives. Prophets came time and again, scattering your clues throughout the Story, but we were too busy enjoying the sleights of hand done by sin and death. When you saw we could not understand the Mystery on our own, you sent Jesus to reveal everything to us. We join with the voices around us as we sing praises to you this Christmas night;

**We will not be afraid, for great joy is ours this night;  
we will look for the signs of your presence,  
grace swaddled in hope, love wrapped around our hearts.**

Glory to you, God in the highest heavens! May peace fill the lives of all your children! Leaving your side, God of holiness, your Child came to walk with us through the cold streets of our lives. Born in poverty's shadows, he is the light which illumines your heart for us. Unwrapped from glory's embrace, he gathers us from all the corners of our confused choices to make us one with you. Placed in a rude feeding trough layered with our fears and doubts, he breathes in your hopes and lives your will, until he is placed in death's cold embrace, waiting in the silence, where he breathes in resurrection's breath, and brings forth life for all who follow. On this night, when we sing of the baby in the manger, as the shadow of the cross is cast by the stars, we proclaim that mystery called incarnation:

**Christ is our light, and we will join the angels in singing  
the good news:**

**Christ is our life, and we will join the disciples in telling the  
Story;**

Here in the silence and the singing, with carols and candlelight, we gather around the table of joy, as you pour out your Spirit upon the most precious gifts of bread and cup. As we feast upon the bread, we remember a young pregnant girl and would serve those who are expecting, those who cannot have a child, those who have lost children. As we drink from the cup, we think of a worried father and would be with those who assemble toys this night, as well as those who will work this night to pay for food and medicine for their families. As we are surrounded by family and friends, we would care for those whose closest companion is loneliness, those separated from loved ones, those who hear no music, joy or hope in their lives. And when all time and history becomes silence, we will be gathered with our sisters and brothers from every corner and moment of every universe, to join the angel choirs in forever singing your praises as we dance to the Table of wonder and grace.

We pray together as Jesus taught:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy  
Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our  
trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us. And  
lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine  
is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.  
Amen.**

**Prayer after Communion:** (unison)

**Life-giving God, may we, who share Christ's body, live his  
risen life;**

**We, who drink his cup, bring new life to others;**

**We, whom the Spirit lights, give light to the world.**

**Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us,**

**So that we and all your children shall be free,**

**And all creation will live to praise your name. Amen.**