

ST PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH
FREDERICTON, N.B.

December 24, 2021 11 PM Christmas Eve Service

GATHERING

PRELUDE

GREETING

I greet you in the name of the One born this night:
Jesus, our Emmanuel.

May the hope, peace, joy, and love of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

We have been waiting and waiting and WAITING!

We have been waiting, but for what?

For hope that shines in the night to lead us on until morning is bright
(*light purple hope candle*)

Look there is the flame of hope!

We have also been waiting for peace to circle the earth, peace with its
promise of safety and worth. (*Light the purple peace candle*)

Look there is the flame of peace!

Then there is joy that comes with the dawn, telling the world
that a Savior is born. (*Light the pink Joy candle*)

Wow, look at the joy flame dance.

Last but not least we have been waiting for love, love that abides within
our own heart, love that God has promised will never depart
(*Light the purple love candle*)

And a flame for love shines so bright.

We have waited and waited for a lot!

O but tonight, tonight is the night! Down at the manger we see a new
light! (*light the white Christ Candle*)

Christ is the light we have been waiting for

Come to the stable and look in the door.

When God is a child there is joy in our song,

The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong

And none shall be afraid.

CALL TO WORSHIP: (responsive)

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 it's backdrop of stars,

**we gather outside the door of a mystery,
wondering if we dare to enter.**

With folks and friends we love,
with strangers we have just met,

**we are summed to the manger,
To become the holy family
for this time and in this place.**

Gather in, gather close
for Christ is coming,
the baby is near.

CHRISTMAS EVE PRAYER

HYMN: *See Amid the Winter Snow*

VU 76

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (In 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 and had our plans upended by
Covid. 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 to
harried and hurried.**

**Forgive us, Love Gifter, 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.**

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.

HEARING GOD'S WORD

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE: *Luke 2:1-20*

REFLECTION: Treasure these things in our heart

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

HYMN: *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

VU64

OFFERING PRAYER

Hymn: *All Poor Ones and Humble*

VU68

COMMUNION

PRAYER OF GREAT THANKSGIVING:

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...

As we gather with children dressed in bathrobes,
as we join with the voices around us,
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 broken hearts.

**Glory to you, God in the highest heavens!
May peace fill the lives of all your children!**

Leaving your side, God of holiness,
you came as a Child to walk with us
through the cold streets of our lives....

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;

Christ is our promise,

and we wait for the joy of his return.

Here in the silence on this night of the singing,
with children, carols, and candlelight,
we gather around the Table of joy...

God in Community, Holy in One. Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

SHARING IN HIS FEAST:

The body of Christ broken for you – **The bread of life**

The blood of Christ poured out for you – **The cup of blessing**

HYMN: *Silent Night*

VU 67

POST COMMUNION PRAYER:

God for whom we waited,

thank you for the Holy Child of Bethlehem

who has fed us with the bread of eternal life:

may his light illumine our hearts

and shine in our words and deeds;

this we pray, through him who is Christ the Lord. Amen

SENDING:

Let us go to be the gift another needs,

**sharing God's blessings of love and grace,
running to tell the Story we heard from the shepherds.**

Let us go to be the comfort which can swaddle others,

**sharing Jesus' compassion with the poor and needy,
welcoming the holiness offered by the most vulnerable we
meet.**

Let us go to enkindle the lives around us,

**sharing the Spirit's peace with all the broken,
learning the language of hope from the children in our midst.**

Let us go now singing boldly of this great Joy to the World

HYMN: *Joy to The World*

VU 59

COMMISSIONING & BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

SCRIPTURE READERS

Narrator – Debbie West
Angel & Shepherd – Rev. Michelle

GREETER

Front Door – Cathy Davis



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Good afternoon and welcome to EVERYONE. May this worship service be a blessing in your day as we continue to worship together each week in-church or by Zoom.

Upcoming December Services:

December 26 – Downtown United Worship at Wilmot at 11am

January 2 – St. Paul's United at 10:30am

If your family has Pastoral Care needs, please contact Rev. Michelle at 506-259-7602 or michellenarmstrong@hotmail.com

A friendly reminder that **the office will be closed** from December 25th to January 3rd but will be **open December 30th from 10am-2pm for end of year donations** to be dropped off.

St. Paul's Contact Information

Office Hours: Monday - Friday; 8:00 – 3p.m.

224 York St., Fredericton, N.B. E3; Tel: 458-1183.

Web-site: www.stpaulsunited.ca; email: stpaulsunited224@gmail.com

Minister

Rev. Michelle Armstrong

Organist

Dr. Sharon Pond

Church Administrator

Meghan Roebuck

Church Custodian

Rusty Blakely

Land Acknowledgement :

We remember that St. Paul's sanctuary and our worship here is on the unceded territory of the Wolastoqey peoples. Long before this building was here, the land was considered sacred and tended to with respect and care. May our faith drive us to seek to be in right relationship with the first peoples of this land.

HYMN WORDS

HYMN: *See Amid the Winter Snow*

VU 76

See amid the winter's snow,
born for us on earth below,
see, the tender Lamb appears,
promised from eternal years.
Hail, thou ever-blessed morn;
hail, redemption's happy dawn;
sing through all Jerusalem,
Christ is born in Bethlehem.

Lo, within a manger lies
God who built the starry skies,
who enthroned in height sublime
sits amid the cherubim. R

Say, ye holy shepherds, say
what your joyful news today;
wherefore have ye left your sheep
on the lonely mountain steep? R

'As we watched at dead of night,
lo, we saw a wondrous light;
angels singing 'Peace on earth'
told us of the Saviour's birth.' R

Sacred infant, all divine,
what a mighty love was thine,
thus to come from highest bliss
down to such a world as this! R

HYMN: *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

VU64

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.

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.

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 meek souls will receive him, still
the dear Christ enters in.

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.

Hymn: *All Poor Ones and Humble*

VU68

All poor ones and humble and all those who stumble,
come hastening, and feel not afraid;
for Jesus, our treasure, with love past all measure,
in lowly poor manger was laid.
Though wise men who found him
laid rich gifts around him,
yet oxen they gave him their hay,
and Jesus in beauty accepted their duty;
contented in manger he lay.
Then haste we to show him the praises we owe him;
our service he ne'er can despise;
whose love still is able to show us that stable,
where softly in manger he lies.

The Christ Child will lead us, the Good Shepherd feed us
and with us abide till his day.
Then hatred he'll banish; then sorrow will vanish,
and death and despair flee away.
And he shall reign ever, and nothing shall sever
from us the great love of our King;
his peace and his pity shall bless his fair city;
his praises we ever shall sing. R

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.

HYMN: *Joy To The World*

VU 59

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.