

DOWNTOWN UNITED
A Service of St. Paul's and Wilmot United
Fredericton, N.B.

December 21st, 2022

Longest Night

7pm

PRELUDE: The Snow Lay on the Ground - Laskey

CENTERING MUSIC: In the Bleak Midwinter

WORDS OF WELCOME:

CALL TO WORSHIP: * (Responsive)

This is the season when we gather to celebrate in joy

Yet, we come with grief in our hearts. We long to hold on to the good news that Jesus is coming once again.

The cry of a baby, born on a night long ago, rings through the centuries

That cry is there to remind us of God's presence at our own birth.

Tears of grief echo in our hearts

Tears remind us of God's presence in all things.

So let us worship with grief and joy intertwined as we share our faith.

OPENING PRAYER:

OPENING HYMN: *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus*

VU 2

*Come, thou long-expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free:
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.*

*Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art,
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.*

*Born thy people to deliver;
born a child and yet a king;
born to reign in us for ever;
now thy gracious kingdom bring.*

*By thine own eternal Spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all-sufficient merit
raise us to thy glorious throne.*

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Luke 14:15-23, Matthew 11:28-29, Revelation 21:1-7

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

REFLECTION: Did you see what our God has done and will do?

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE with SUNG RESPONSE: ** O God We Call

VU 411

Ever-present God, where are you?
Our Souls are empty. We ache.
We cry out, but we don't hear or see a response.
Even among the hustle and bustle of this season,
The silence is deafening.

Sung Response:

***O God we call, O God we call,
From deep inside we yearn,
from deep inside we yearn,
From deep inside we yearn for you.***

We humans have ignored your wantings and abused your creation.
The earth is out of balance and so are we.
Our hearts ache with grief, loss, resentment and blame.
Our hearts throb with the pandemic of pain in our world.
We grieve, reduce connection with loved ones
and deaths that have gone unacknowledged.
We struggle to find ground on which to stand:
As Jobs have disappeared and we have become surplus
While medical treatments have been postponed and waitlists grow
When the dollars in our bank don't stretch as far as price increases
And we wonder what will happen next in this uncertain world,
In fear we draw inward, into the shadows and to the edges out of view.
Yet, We desire your healing touch,
To feel close to you and others again,
But we feel abandoned, ignored and angry.

Sung Response:

***O God we call, O God we call,
From deep inside we yearn,
from deep inside we yearn,
From deep inside we yearn for you.***

Sustaining God, in the darkness of this night,
We come together and lift our voice of yearning,
For we trust that your light will rise,
Surely as the sun will crest the horizon in the morning
And just as the night turns into day,
We trust that our mourning will gradually find its way to gratitude and joy.

In the current darkness,
We look to your brilliance and the vitality,
The hope of our souls and earth restored,
And in deep faith;

Sung Response:

*O God we call, O God we call,
From deep inside we yearn,
from deep inside we yearn,
From deep inside we yearn for you.*

“Seek and you will find, knock and it will be answered, ask and you shall be given”
These are promises of your steadfast love and your assurance that this too shall pass.
And so in our yearning we wait for you and call for you. Come O come Emmanuel!

SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:1-7

REFLECTION: Look at how He came!

HYMN: *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear*

VU 44

*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.*

*Still through the cloven skies they come
with peaceful wings unfurled;
and still their heavenly music floats
o'er all the weary world;
above its sad and lowly plains
they bend on hovering wing,
and ever o'er its Babel sounds
the blessed angels sing.*

*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.*

*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.*

CANDLE LIGHTING LITURGY: ***

PRAYER: ***

HYMN: *Silent Night, Holy 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.*

BLESSING: ***

POSTLUDE: Away in a Manger – Laskey

* Adapted from Anne Mathewson Gathering A/C/E 2021/22 pg 35

** Adapted from Jim McKean, Gathering A/C/E 2022/23 pg 33

*** Adapted from Nancy Townley, Ministry Matters, Nov21, 2011