

PARKDALE UNITED CHURCH

building connections – living faith – acting for justice

Christmas Eve Video Service December 24, 2020 Calgary, Alberta

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

PRELUDE

CHRIST CANDLE

WELCOME

PRAYER

God, our Creator, the One who comes in your name comes again with grace and power, with forgiveness and strength, with truth and imagination, with gentleness and love. May the Coming One enter the hearts of those who wait with quiet expectation for all that is good and holy and just. Amen.

HYMN O Come, O Come, Immanuel

*O come, dear child of Mary, free
your people from despair and apathy;
forge justice for the poor and the meek,
grant safety for the young ones and the weak.
Rejoice, rejoice! Take heart and do not fear,
God's chosen one, Immanuel, draws near.*

Barbara K. Lundblad

Used with permission, OneLicense.net #A716718

A PROPHET'S VISION Isaiah 11: 1 – 10

As a new branch grows from deep roots, so a new sovereign will arise from David's descendants.

*And the Spirit of God shall rest upon this branch,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and reverence,
the Spirit of joy in serving the Lord.*

The Chosen one will not judge by appearance or hearsay but will judge the poor fairly and defend the rights of the helpless. The One who comes will rule the people with justice and integrity.

Wolves and sheep will live together in peace, leopards will lie down with young goats, calves and lions will feed together and a little child shall lead them.

In God's holy place there will be nothing harmful or destructive, for all the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God.

On that day, a child shall be the sign to all people that the one for whom they yearn is now present.

God is with us!

Immanuel!

HYMN O Little Town of Bethlehem VU 64 verse 1

*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*

John Terpstra

Used with permission, OneLicense.net #A716718

READING The Little Towns of Bethlehem

HYMN 'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime VU 71 verse 4
*O children of the forest free, the angel song is true;
the holy child of earth and heaven is born today for you.
Come, kneel before the radiant boy, who
brings you beauty, peace, and joy:
Jesus your King is born, Jesus is born, in excelsis gloria.*

Words, Jean de Breufeuf; Music French Folksong
Used with permission, OneLicense.net #A716718

THE CHRISTMAS STORY Luke 2: 1 – 20

CHRISTMAS EVE REFLECTIONS The Candle

Faith communities all over the world, from various traditions, regularly light candles, a reminder of God's presence. People of faith and hope, living in the light of God's grace and goodness.

In thinking of the Candle as a symbol, and what it might suggest for our faith living, I was struck by three images. First, the Candle as a Guiding Light. In dark times, night times, difficult times, uncertain times, we need and rely upon light illuminating a way. A light shining healing and hope. A glow of direction, possibility, and strength. In the Exodus story, the people lived in dark times and journeyed in a wilderness. God guided them, a pillar of fire in the night. This year, 2020, has been an unanticipated, wild journey. Serious fault lines in our values and world have been revealed. We have seen more clearly places of despair, behaviours and attitudes that diminish and destroy. Sometimes, the depths of the darkness almost felt overwhelming. Yet, we kept lighting candles in faith and with hope. We kept praying we would find ways to overcome, to act with love, and create peace. We kept trusting a Guiding Light to be with us every day and help us find a way.

A second image, the Candle as a Warming Light. This year new phrases have redefined how we live and move in the world. We continue to adapt to changing health protocols, including how to physically distance and socially isolate. We wear mandatory face masks, have limited in-person contact, and vigorously sanitize. We have felt the chill of fear, loss, and loneliness. We have welcomed warm caring connections with friends and family. We have moved into slower more measured routines, and delighted in nature, exercise, and life-giving activities. Our hearts have warmed with compassion as neighbours in need were supported. We have been more generous and intentional with kindness, patience, and respect. When the news was cold and discouraging, warm words of encouragement have sounded. Warm weather has nourished. Warm relationships, with those close and at a distance, have sustained. In every chill, there has been a Warming Light. In this season, we celebrate a Warming Light in our world.

Finally, a third image, the Candle as an Inner Light. In Christmas, we celebrate the birth of Jesus and recommit to that Inner Light that shone so brightly in him. In how he lived, what he said and what he did. We see his compassion for those in need. We hear his call for forgiveness, justice, and love. We feel his passion for God and being God's life in the world. Perhaps most instructive for us in this season is to also note those times when Jesus was uncertain, weary, discouraged, or afraid. In those times, we often see Jesus pause in prayer, take time to discern what was needed, and how best to proceed. Out of those times, we see Jesus emerge centered and confident, resilient, and strengthened. The Inner Light that lived in Jesus was not just a personal experience. It was a light that gave hope and purpose to his friends and to strangers. It is that same an Inner Light that continues to empower individuals and communities. To resist evil, to restore the broken and fearful, to care for the poor and suffering, and to build up compassion, justice, and peace. Strengthened by an Inner Light, faith and hope grow. Life is lived with meaning and purpose.

From the Gospel of John we hear, "What has come into being in Jesus was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." In this Christmas season, we thank God for being a Guiding Light, a Warming Light, an Inner Light, giving life and life abundant. Amen.

MUSICAL REFLECTION

OUR CHRISTMAS FAITH

On this Christmas Eve in the year 2020, in response to the word sung and read and spoken, we pray together a celebration of our faith...

The Word was made flesh and lived among us,

full of grace and truth, he lived among us.

When the glory of a sunset makes worshippers of people, when common places become holy ground, when there is room for all, when there is respect and understanding for each one,

the word is made flesh and lives among us.

In attentive silence to another's story, in the first steps taken in forgiveness, in a disguise able to be left aside,

the word is made flesh and lives among us.

In good bread on the table, in the loving embrace of a friend, in tears of anger for homeless people,

the word is made flesh and lives among us.

In a secret shared with confidence, in a child listened to with respect, in care that does not draw back from shame,

the word is made flesh and lives among us.

In help given in times of tragedy and disaster, in those who never give up working for peace, justice and well-being for all, in the vision of a world where all God's people live as one,

the word is made flesh and lives among us.

When the Word is made flesh and lives among us,

evil has no power.

(Based on a prayer by Kathy Galloway)

HYMN Silent Night, Holy Night VU 67 verses 1

*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.*

Words, Joseph Mohr; Music, Franz Xavier Gruberd
Used with permission, OneLicense.net #A716718

BENEDICTION PRAYER

O God, we commit our lives anew to the true Spirit of Christmas.

Fill our lives with grace and goodness.

May our laughter be genuine, our joy real and our celebrations filled with meaning.

Lead us to a new life in Christ, so that when the morning breaks and earth's shadows flee, the song of the angels will be ours.

HYMN Silent Night, Holy Night VU 67 verse 3

*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.*

Words, Joseph Mohr; Music, Franz Xavier Gruberd
Used with permission, OneLicense.net #A716718

POSTLUDE

**And, If You Have Time
This Christmas...**

Mend a quarrel, seek out a friend,
dismiss suspicion and replace it with trust,
write a love letter, share a treasure,
give a soft answer, encourage children and young people,
make visible your loyalty in word and deed,
keep the promise, find the time,
forgo a grudge, let go of bitterness, forgive an enemy,
listen carefully, apologize if you are or were wrong,
try to understand, resist envy,
examine your demands on others, think of someone else,
be appreciative, compassionate, respectful,
be kind, be gentle, be good,
laugh a little, and laugh a little more,
deserve confidence, decry complacency,
take up arms against injustice, malice, mean-spiritedness, prejudice,
express your gratitude, say a prayer,
welcome a stranger, gladden the heart of a child,
take pleasure in the beauty, mystery and wonder of creation,
speak your love, speak it again,
and speak it still once again!

Welcome to Parkdale United Church and our Christmas Eve service.
We pray your Christmas will be filled with joy and peace,
and the New Year with hope and love.

MINISTER

Rev. Murray Laverty D.Min.

READERS

Beth Balshaw and Chet Marlett

ORGANIST/PIANIST

Michael Coburn

WORSHIP SCREENS, VIDEO RECORDING

Jim and Beth Balshaw

Words for all hymns reprinted with permission, OneLicence.net #A716718

Parkdale United Church
2919 – 8 Avenue NW Calgary Alberta T2N 1C8
Phone 403-283-3301 Email parkdaleuc@telus.net
Website www.parkdaleunitedcalgary.net