

The Glebe-St. James United Church

Christmas Eve

December 24, 2025

** Please stand in body or spirit*

Gathered by God

PREPARING OUR HEARTS FOR WORSHIP

Still, Still, Still

Noel Nouvelet

Shepherd's Cradle Song

David Paxton

Dale Wood

Arthur Somervell, arr. Alec Rowley

WELCOME & LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Pam Fitch

In the name of the Holy Mystery,
who is Wholly Love,
we welcome you to God's House.

My name is Pam Fitch and I am past chair of the church council and a member of the choir.

We're so glad you're here tonight. Whether you're a first-time guest or a longtime member, whether you are joining us in person or online, we hope you feel at home. This is a place of faith, love, and community. Glebe-St. James is an Affirming Community of Faith in the United Church of Canada. We are committed to creating a safe and inclusive environment where people of all ages, backgrounds, and identities feel loved and supported. Thank you for being here.

If you're watching online, tonight's worship service bulletin can be found on the GSJ website, along with a link to this week's announcements and a "donate" button to make your offering. If you are here in person, you can share your offering in the service, either in the collection plate, by e-transfer or through our website - the QR code, found on the back of the pews, will take you to the website.

As we gather to celebrate this Christmas season, we acknowledge that we are on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabeg people, who have been the stewards of this land since time immemorial. We are grateful for this land, for the life it sustains, and for the rich cultures that have cared for it. May our Christmas spirit of peace, generosity, and hope inspire us to honour the Anishinabeg and commit to true reconciliation, ensuring we protect and care for this land and each other, now and for all generations to come.

CALL TO WORSHIP

On this holy night, we come,
dazzled and awe-struck,
ready to sing alongside the angels.

On this holy night, we come,
eager and hopeful,
ready to journey alongside the shepherds.

On this holy night, we come,
quietly and tenderly,
ready to worship alongside Mary.

On this holy night, we come,
singing, trusting, believing, proclaiming:
good news is louder than fear.
Let us worship our good news, with-us God.

LIGHTING OF THE WREATH

In a fearful world, where do you see the presence of love?

We see God's fingerprints all around us. We see God in the beauty of the stars. We see God in the love of this community. We see God in the dreams we hold for a better world.

You are right. Even in a fearful world, God is here. God is all around us. On this holy night, we light the Christ Candle as a reminder of this good news. May this flicker of light help us to remember that even in a fearful world, God's love is all around us.

Light candles

Thank be to God for a love like that! Amen.

HYMN A Candle Is Burning (Tune: *Away in the Manger*)

VU 6

**We honour Messiah with Christ-candle's flame,
our Christmas Eve candles glad tidings proclaim.
O come, all you faithful, rejoice in this night,
as God comes among us, the Christian's true light.**

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Parent,
we gather today with grateful hearts to celebrate the birth of your Son, Jesus Christ. In the stillness and wonder of this holy season, we remember the miracle of Emmanuel—God with us. Thank you for the gift of love wrapped in humility, hope born in a manger, and light that shines into our world's darkness.

As we worship today, prepare our hearts and minds. May our songs bring you glory, our prayers draw us closer to you, and your Word renew our faith.

Fill this place with your peace and joy. Help us to receive again the good news of great joy for all people, and to carry that joy into our homes and communities.

We dedicate this service to you and ask that everything we do may honour Christ our Saviour. In his precious name we pray, amen.

***HYMN** O Come All Ye Faithful

VU 60

- 1 O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem:
come and behold him, born the King of angels;
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.**
- 2 God of God, light of light,
lo, he abhors not the virgin's womb;
very God, begotten, not created:
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.**
- 3 Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;
glory to God in the highest:
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.**
- 4 See how the shepherds summoned to his cradle,
leaving their flocks, draw nigh with lowly fear;
we too will thither bend our joyful footsteps;
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.**

**5 Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory given;
word of the Father, now in flesh appearing:
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.**

CALL TO HEALING

Family of faith, on the night of Jesus' birth, a crowd of angels appeared before a group of ragtag shepherds to tell them the good news.

The angels *could* have gone to Herod's house.

The angels *could* have sung in the city square.

The angels *could* have found the most important, faithful, and powerful to share the good news, but instead they told a group of low-status shepherds.

The angels' message clear:

This is the *good news of great joy* for all people. The good news of this night is for you too – no matter who you are, what you've done or left undone. The angels are singing for you. So join in the Prayer for Healing. Join me in drawing closer to God who has already drawn close to us. Let us pray.

PRAYER FOR HEALING

**God of angel choruses,
you hand the stars in the sky,
but we do not see them.**

**You fill the night with angelic song,
but we do not hear it.**

**You send shepherds to tell the good news,
but we do not believe them.**

**You bring love into the world,
but we do not seek it.**

**Quiet the fear in us that works to rationalize, minimize, and distract
from the good news you put forth into the world.
Turn our hearts back to your song.
With hope we pray, amen.**

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S LOVE

Family of faith, when the angels arrive in the field that night, the shepherds were afraid. But the angels said:

**"Do not be afraid.
I am bringing you good news of great joy for *all* people."**

This good news:

**Love freely given,
grace radically extended,
welcome always offered,
belonging never restricted.**

Friends, we are seen, loved, welcomed,
forgiven, called, and sent to serve.
Thanks be to God for a love like that.

GIFT OF MUSIC Echo Carol

Old French Carol Tune, arr. Dr. Alfred Whitehead

*While the shepherds watched, nor slept,
On the hills near Bethlem;
O'er their flocks they vigil kept
On the hills near Bethlem:*

*"Gloria" the angels sang,
"In Excelsis Deo";
And the echo rang
As the angels sang,
Angels sang,
Echo rang:
"In Excelsis Deo,
In Excelsis Deo."*

*Then the shepherds, in amaze,
As they went to Bethlem,
Sang anew the angels' praise,
As they went to Bethlem.*

*"Gloria" the angels sang,
"In Excelsis Deo";
And the echo rang
As the angels sang,
Angels sang,
Echo rang:
"In Excelsis Deo,
In Excelsis Deo."*

*Breathless they did Mary seek,
And the Babe at Bethlem;
Mary mild and Infant meek
In the Inn at Bethlem.*

*"Gloria" the angels sang,
"In Excelsis Deo";
And the echo rang
As the angels sang,
Angels sang,
Echo rang:
"In Excelsis Deo,
In Excelsis Deo."*

*And to us the Angels sing,
As of old at Bethlem.
Let us hear the echoes ring,
As of old at Bethlem.*

*"Gloria" the angels sing,
"In Excelsis Deo";
And the echoes ring
As the angels sing,
Angels sing,
Echoes ring!
"In Excelsis Deo,
In Excelsis Deo."*

SIGN OF PEACE

This evening we are celebrating the birth of the prince of peace,
he came to end division, to teach us to care for our neighbours...
it is in this spirit of peace that I say...

Friends, the peace of Christ be with you!
And also with you.

HYMN Angels We Have Heard On High

VU 38

**Angels we have heard on high
sweetly singing o'er the plains,
and the mountains in reply,
echoing their joyous strains.**

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

**Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
which inspire your heavenly song?**

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Listening for Wisdom

PRAYER FOR INSIGHT

God of yesterday, today and tomorrow,
We long to catch a glimpse of your Spirit.
We cup our ears to hear the sound of the angel chorus.
We turn our eyes toward the sky to see if we can find your star.
We lean forward in our seat to see if we can feel your presence in our midst.
We long to catch a glimpse of your Spirit, O God.
So on this quiet night, on this holy night, on this joyful night,
 reveal yourself to us once more.
Speak to us through the music and the children.
Speak to us through starlight and candlelight.
Speak to us through these ancient words once again.

We long to catch a glimpse of you. Amen.

GOSPEL Luke 2:1-20

Marilyn Hamilton

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syrias. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room.

Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favours!"

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them, and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

This is God's wisdom from our ancestors in faith.

GIFT OF MUSIC Mary Sings A Lullaby

David Lantz III

*Mary sings a lullaby
to the Babe asleep.
Mary sings a lullaby
heard by gentle sheep.*

*All Bethlehem is sleeping
as in a manger stall.
Mary sings her lullaby
to the Lord of all.*

*Mary sings a lullaby
to the little Child.
Mary sings a lullaby
to the undefiled.*

*All Bethlehem is sleeping
as in a manger stall.
Mary sings her lullaby
to the Lord of all.*

*Mary sings a lullaby
to the holy one.
Mary sings a lullaby
as she holds God's Son.*

*All Bethlehem is sleeping
as in a manger stall.
Mary sings her lullaby
to the Lord of all.*

*Lay thee down now and rest,
May thy slumber be blest.*

REFLECTION

Rev. Dr. Teresa Burnett-Cole

The announcement has been made and the news delivered. Today God has come to us as a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger. (Luke 2:1-20) Emmanuel. God is with us.

The angel calls this good news of great joy for all people. Not just for the shepherds but for all people. That means you and me too. It doesn't matter who you are, why you are here, what you do or do not believe, what has or has not happened in your life, or what you've done and left undone. This good news of great joy is for you, me, and all people.

It's the same announcement every year. We heard it last year, the year before that, and the one before that. It never changes. It's the same announcement every year.

For a lot of years, I used to come to this night wanting to say something new, original, and profound. But the longer I live and the more of life I experience, the more I come to this night just wanting to hear the same old good news, the same old announcement. I come to this night wanting to look into the manger of my life and find the child wrapped in bands of cloth lying there.

I want to be reminded that Christmas is still true and still happening. I want to hear the same old story again for the first time. And it's not because I think the story has changed since last year. It's because my world and life have changed over the last year. It's because I have changed over the last year. I suppose that's true for you too.

So with every intention of telling you what you already know let me just say this: "A child has been born for us." (Isaiah 9:6) He is "wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." (Luke 2:12)

His manger, however, is not in Bethlehem. We are the manger in which the child is born. After all, what good is it to us if he is laid in a manger in Bethlehem if he is not also laid in the manger of our lives?

What can this child possibly do for us? What can this little one, who cannot yet talk, walk, or take care of himself, offer us?

Start with the manger of your life. What's the good news of great joy you need tonight? What is the manger you bring with you tonight?

- Are you walking in darkness? This child is the Light of the World.
- Are you full of confusion or self-doubt? This child is the Wonderful Counselor.
- Do you feel overwhelmed and powerless? This child is the Mighty God.
- Are you living with guilt or regret? This child is the Merciful One.
- Do you hunger? This child is the Bread of Life.
- Do you thirst? This child is the Cup of Salvation.
- Is there violence in your life and world? This child is the Prince of Peace.
- Is your life fragile or unstable? This child is the Chief Cornerstone.
- Are you lost? This child is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.
- Do you feel disconnected or untethered? This child is the True Vine.
- Are you afraid, vulnerable, or insecure? This child is the Good Shepherd.
- Do you need hope? This child is the Alpha and the Omega.
- Are you dealing with death and loss? This child is Resurrection and Life.

Whatever the manger of your life might be tonight, it is the place in which this child is laid. There are no empty mangers. Tonight the manger of your life has been filled and joined heaven to earth and earth to heaven.

If you are wondering if this child's birth can really change your life, let me ask you this. Did the birth of your child change your life and re-create your world? Did your birth change your parents' lives and re-create their world? Yeah, in more ways than we can count.

Let's not underestimate this child's power. Christmas promises that we will not leave here unchanged. It might take us a while to recognize and live into this change, but the promise is trustworthy and true. That promise is as real as a baby's cry.

Merry Christmas! And this new year? Tend to the child laid in your manger.

Responding in Thanksgiving

GIFT OF MUSIC Do You Hear What I Hear?

Noel Regney & Gloria Shayne
arr. Harry Simone

*Said the night wind to the little lamb,
"Do you see what I see?
Way up in the sky, little lamb.
Do you see what I see?
A star, a star, dancing in the night,
With a tail as big as a kite."*

*Said the little lamb to the shepherd boy,
"Do you hear what I hear?
Ringing through the sky, shepherd boy,
Do you hear what I hear?
A song, a song, high above the tree,
With a voice as big as the sea."*

*Said the shepherd boy to the mighty king,
"Do you know what I know?
In your palace warm, mighty king,
Do you know what I know?
A Child, a Child shivers in the cold,
Let us bring Him silver and gold."*

*Said the king to the people everywhere,
"Listen to what I say:
Pray for peace, people everywhere!
Listen to what I say:
The Child, the Child, sleeping in the night,
He will bring us goodness and light."*

INVITATION TO GIVE

During this season, we are focused on gifts – the gifts we find for others, the gifts we receive under our tree, the gifts of love and caring that are shared among strangers for the good of all, and the gift of the baby Jesus. Let us think about the ways that we ourselves share gifts of time, money, prayer, and commitment as we seek to enable the ministries that are important to us and support the partnerships that allow us to share in God's purposes beyond the walls of this church.

***OFFERING HYMN What Child Is This?**

VU 74

**What child is this, who laid to rest,
on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
while shepherds watch are keeping?**

**This, this is Christ the King,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud,
the Babe, the Son of Mary!!**

***OFFERING PRAYER**

Gracious and Loving God,
on this holy night, we remember the greatest gift ever given—your Son, Jesus Christ.

Out of your boundless love, you gave light to the world and hope to all people.
As we now bring our offerings, we do so with thankful hearts.

Receive these gifts as signs of our gratitude, our trust, and our desire to serve you.
Bless what is given, and use it to share your love, bring hope to the weary, and proclaim the good news of Christ's birth.

May our giving reflect the joy of this night and the generosity you have shown us.
We dedicate these gifts, and our lives, to you,
In the name of Jesus, the Light of the World.
Amen.

GIFT OF MUSIC O Holy Night
 Julia Barry, soprano

Adolphe Adam, arr. John Rutter

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Holy One,
Tonight is a night for good news.
Tonight is a night for candles in the window and joyful music in the air.
Tonight is a night for families around the table, and children too excited to sleep.
Tonight is a night for Christmas carolling and storytelling.
Tonight is a night for *good* news.

And we are so grateful for that.
We are so grateful for the good-news moments you sprinkle throughout our days.
However, we also pray for those, both inside and outside this room, who struggle to hear the good news over the sound of their fear.
For despite the joy of this evening:

We are well aware that we live in a world with plenty of reasons to be afraid.
We are afraid of the divisions that rack our country.
We are afraid of messing up our relationships or losing the ones we love.
We are afraid of climate change and of saying the wrong thing...

We are afraid that war will never end and cycles of violence will never cease...
We're afraid of the staggering cost of the church roof repair...
We are afraid of the changes to church life on the horizon...
We are afraid of the spectre of ill health – both mental and physical...
We are afraid for our families, our loved ones, our friends...
We are afraid of so many unspoken "What ifs" ...

And if we're honest, that fear can cling to us.
So tonight, with-us God, we ask for your presence among us.
So just like the shepherds on that first Christmas,
May we hear the voice of angels.
May you fill our hearts with a holy hope.
And may we know, deep in our bones, that your good news *is* louder than fear.

And until the day when every reason to be afraid has been washed away,
We ask that you would continue to inspire courage, conviction, and hope in us.
Point our hearts toward sources of joy.
Remind us of the good news of this night, and may we always hold onto some portion of
the wonder, the mystery, and the joy found here.

With hope, we lift our voices together to pray to pray the words your son taught us to pray.
Saying...

PRAYER OF JESUS

**Our Mother and 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 who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power,
and the glory, forever and ever.**

Sent by the Spirit

***HYMN** Joy to the World

VU 59

- 1 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.**
- 2 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.**

- 3 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.**
- 4 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.**

***SENDING FORTH**

In a fearful world,
May you look for God's spirit.
May you reach for each other's hands.
may you choose courage whenever you can.
And in all things, may you remember
That good news is louder than fear.
In the name of the one who calls,
The one who sends,
And the one who journeys with –
Go, friends, go in peace. Amen.

BENEDICTION Silent Night

VU 67

- 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.**
- 2 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.**

- 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.

End of Worship - Beginning of Service



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