

The United Church of Canada
Carlisle/Kilbride Pastoral Charge
Christmas Eve
December 24, 2025
5:30pm at Kilbride United Church
8pm at Carlisle United Church

Worship Leader: Rev. M. Gayle MacDonald
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Music Leader: Dr. Heather Olaveson
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Carol Singing: For the first Carol (Joy to the World), those who wish to do so are invited to stand; likewise for the Communion Carol and Silent Night. For the rest of the Service, you may remain seated.

Responses for the Congregation: Those who wish to do so are invited to respond aloud where indicated by **bold** print.

The Offering: If you wish to make an offering, there are offering plates near the entrances as you enter or exit. You may place your offering there. Offerings of \$20 or greater will be issued a tax receipt if you place your offering in an envelope with your name and address. You may also donate on-line by going to our website at <https://carlisleuc.ca/>

Welcome & Acknowledgement of the Land

Lighting of the Advent Wreath:

This, then, is how Love is born:

Like a seed planted in the darkest of soils that rises to meet the sun's warming rays, so love emerges from the deepest places.

**Despite our willing it, and without the force of hand,
may love rise graciously to life.**

This, then, is how Love is born:

As the morning slowly dawns – first a sliver, then a burning horizon – causing the night to fade away, so love transforms our sorrow and fear.

**Into our need, moving against resistance,
may love change things in our lives and in the world.**

This, then, is how Love is born:

As winter's gentle hibernation gives way to the bursting of spring and the delights of summer, so love is woven through every season.

**Amidst our doubts and disappointments, when the sands seem to shift
under our feet, may love be steadfast and present at all times.**

Carol: VU 59 – Joy to the World

Words: Isaac Watts 1719, alt.; Music: attrib. Georg Friedrich Händel 1742

While Isaac Watts wrote the verses of this hymn in 1719, they are traditionally sung to American composer Lowell Mason's 1848 arrangement of a tune he attributed to Handel. This music has been further arranged by Mack Wilberg and is performed by a gloriously large ensemble comprised of Brigham Young University Combined Choirs and Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Dr Brent Wells. Imagine sitting front and centre and having the jubilant sound waves sizzle up your spine!

"Joy to the World" BYU Combined Choirs & BYU Philharmonic Share the Spirit of Christmas

- 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.

Opening Prayer:

Tonight, O God,
the soles of your feet
have touched the earth.

Tonight,
the back street, the forgotten place

have been lit up with significance
far beyond our wildest dreams.
Tonight,
the households of earth
welcome the Child of heaven.
For you have come among us,
you are one of us.
So may our songs rise to surround your awesome mystery
as our knees bend to approach your cradle. Amen.

Invitation to the Offering

Offering Carol: VU 55 (v. 4) – In the Bleak Midwinter

Words: Christina Georgina Rossetti, ca. 1872; Music: Gustav Theodor Holst 1906

Every single beautifully shaped vowel and consonant of Christina Rossetti's Victorian poem can be heard in this stripped-down, a cappella recording by Tenebrae Choir, led by Nigel Short, with all proceeds supporting Cancer Research UK.

In The Bleak Midwinter - Holst - Tenebrae conducted by Nigel Short

4 What can I give him, poor as I am?
 If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
 If I were a wise man, I would do my part;
 Yet what I can I give him – give my heart.

Offering Prayer:

O God, you birth abundant life!
We thank you for the birth we celebrate today.
In response to your great labour of love, we offer our gifts.
As we open ourselves to you,
may your love be born in us this Christmastide.

Special Music:

Kilbride ~ O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (VU 1 (vv.1 & 7))

Carlisle ~ Child of the Poor / What Child Is This performed by the Carlisle Choir

Words and Music: Scott Soper 1994 / Words: William C. Dix 1865; Music: traditional English melody, 16th century

(Reader comes to front)

The Christmas Gospels

Minister: Tonight is a night for storytelling, and there is only one story appropriate for this night: the story of God's love for us, which was and is so great that he was born among us. It is a story told in full in the four Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. But where to begin this very good story – that is the question.

We could begin the story, like John does in his Gospel, with creation.

Reader 1: *John 1:1-5*

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was in the beginning with God.

3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being

4 in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Minister: But most of us are not as mystical nor as given to symbolic speech as John. We want to hear a human story with real people in it doing things we understand.

Minister: Maybe that is why Mark skips the early part of Jesus' life altogether – it's just too difficult to pin down all the details with any certainty – so Mark begins his Gospel about Jesus with the adult Jesus. There are no babies in a manger in Mark's Gospel. He begins his story about Jesus in this way:

Reader 2: *Mark 1:1-3*

1 The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

2 As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way;

3 the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'"

Minister: The first event Mark tells us about is the adult baptism of Jesus by his cousin, John the Baptist. Mark's is the practical Gospel. The teller of the story in Mark is absolutely convinced that Jesus is the long-awaited saviour of his people – but the birth is not as important to him as the actions of Jesus as an adult.

Minister: Now Matthew, on the other hand, is very concerned with Jesus' human beginnings. If Jesus is to be the promised Messiah, then he must fulfill the prophecies. His Jewish ancestry is very important to Matthew. So Matthew starts his Gospel by tracing Jesus' ancestry back to the father of the Jewish faith, Abraham, and traces it through the line of David, which is the house, or tribe if you will, from which the promised Messiah was to be born. And so Matthew begins to tell us about Jesus with these words:

Reader 3: *Matthew 1:1*

1 An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Minister: Matthew continues to trace the ancestry all the way down to Joseph, the

husband of Mary. We won't read the long genealogy here, but the list of ancestors ends with these words:

Reader 3: Matthew 1:15b-17

^{15b} and Matthan the father of Jacob, ¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.^[a]

¹⁷ So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah,^[h] fourteen generations.

¹⁶ . . . and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.

¹⁷ So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah fourteen generations.

Minister: And then Matthew continues:

Reader 3: Matthew 1:18-19

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly.

Minister: It is very important that Joseph is a direct descent of David as the Hebrew scripture prophesies the Messiah will be from the house of David, that is a descendent of King David). For Joseph to raise Jesus as son is enough to ensure that Jesus is of the House of David.

Notice how quickly Matthew moves from Mary and the baby back to Joseph's reaction. In the Hebrew culture of the time, it was usually men who were the central figure of actions or decision, so we should not be surprised that Joseph's response to the situation is of primary importance. Joseph's compassion and faith is also very important. In Matthew it is Joseph who is visited by an angel in a dream.

Reader 3: Matthew 1:20-21:

But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.'

Minister: Like John and Mark, the circumstance of the actual birth is not recorded. Most remember the day our children are born or the day they first come to us if they are adopted in detail. We may even tell the story over and over again to our friends and perhaps to our children. Like the Gospels, the details of that day differ depending on

whether we are the mother, the father, the grandparents, the friends.

I don't know where Luke got the details of this very important birth, or even if they are literally true or the details are simply given to show us who this tiny infant is, and that both the humbleness of his birth and parents, the wonder of the shepherds and the presence of heavenly hosts serve to tell us who this precious baby will grow to be. For the story of the birth we celebrate this night we turn to the Gospel of Luke. Luke begins his Gospel this way:

Reader 4: *Luke 1:1-3a*

*1 Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us,
2 just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word,
3 I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you. . . .*

Minister: In Luke we get a longer and more detailed look at the mother of Jesus, Mary, and some accounting of her actions. We also meet Elizabeth, the mother of John, and her husband, the priest, Zechariah. Luke situates Jesus squarely in the middle of a human family – with Joseph, who is descended from King David, and Mary, who has relatives: Elizabeth and Zechariah and their son, John, as a cousin to Jesus.

Minister: The Mary we see in Luke is aware of what is taking place, is courageous, faithful, and strong. It from the mouth of Luke's Mary that we get the words of the Magnificat, which begins:

Reader 4: *Luke 1:46b-48*

*46 My soul magnifies the Lord,
47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
48 for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;*

(Reader returns to their seat)

Minister: Luke's Mary is aware that the son about to be born to her will be her people's long-awaited Messiah.

Special Music:

Kilbride ~ Mary, Did You Know? performed by Heather Olaveson
arr. Brent Edstrom

Carlisle ~ Mary, Did You Know? performed by Dave Walker
Words and Music: Mark Lowry and Buddy Greene 1991

Minister: And so we are ready now to hear the story that belongs to this night. It is a story of promises fulfilled, of incredible love told with all the wonder and awe and beauty. Let us share again the story of the nativity in word and in song and ponder in our hearts what all this means.

(Slide of Mary and Joseph going to Bethlehem)

Luke 1:1-20

- 1 In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered.
- 2 This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.
- 3 All went to their own towns to be registered.
- 4 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.
- 5 He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.
- 6 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child.
- 7 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 for them in the inn.

(Slide of Jesus in the manger)

Carol: VU 64 (vv. 1 & 3) – O Little Town of Bethlehem

Tim Waurick is a barbershop vocalist who sings tenor with the competition-winning quartet Vocal Spectrum, although in this video he has recorded all four vocal parts himself! Many thanks to Cathy Moulder for introducing me to his music.

O Little Town of Bethlehem

- 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.
- 3 How silently, how silently,
the wondrous Gift is given;
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of His 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.

8 In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

(Slide of Shepherds)

Carol: VU 91 (v. 1) – The First Nowell

This track can be found on the 2018 Christmas album *Songs of Winter* by The Hound + The Fox, a husband-wife duo from Oregon. They perform this carol with Haley Johnsen, an alt pop/Americana artist also from Oregon.

[The First Noel \(feat. Haley Johnsen\) | The Hound + The Fox](#)

1 The first Nowell the angel did say
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
in fields where they lay a-keeping their sheep,
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
born is the King of Israel.

10 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:

11 to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

12 This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."

Carol: VU 69 (v. 1) – Away in a Manger

As in *Voices United*, the Grammy-nominated British a cappella vocal ensemble Voces8 uses William James Kirkpatrick's 1895 tune CRADLE SONG for this hymn, which has been arranged by the group's arranger-in-residence, Jim Clements.

[VOCES8 | Classic FM - Away in a Manger](#)

1 Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

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

(Slide of Angels)

Carol: VU 48 (v. 1) – Hark! the Herald Angels Sing

As their YouTube channel indicates, Home Free is "the world's only all-vocal country band. Everything you hear on [their] channels is made by the human voice, including all those crazy drum sounds made by Adam Rupp."

Home Free - Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

1 Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King,
peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
join the triumph of the skies;
with th' angelic host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"

15 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."

16 So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

17 When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child;
18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.

19 But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

(Slide of Mary with Infant)

Carol: VU 46 (vv. 1 & 3) – Gentle Mary Laid Her Child

Rev. Joseph Simpson Cook's Christmas poem won a 1919 contest sponsored by the weekly newspaper *Christian Guardian*, the official journal of the Methodists of Canada. Rev. Cook's lyrics are often sung to TEMPUS ADEST FLORIDUM, the tune used for "Good King Wenceslas"; however, *Voices United* uses a setting by Alta Lind Cook, the daughter of the author and a lecturer in French Studies at Victoria College, University of Toronto. Her tune is played by pianist Robert Aszmies in this recording. Gentle Mary Laid Her Child #046 Voices United Church of Canada Joseph Cook Alta Lind Cook Christmas

1 Gentle Mary laid her child
lowly in a manger;
there he lay, the undefiled,
to the world a stranger.

Such a babe in such a place,
can he be the Saviour?
Ask the saved of all the race
who have found his favour.

- 3 Gentle Mary laid her child
lowly in a manger;
he is still the undefiled,
but no more a stranger:
Son of God of humble birth,
beautiful the story;
praise his name in all the earth,
hail the King of glory!

(Please stand for the Communion carol)

Communion Carol: VU 36 (v. 1 + new lyrics) – Angels, from the Realms of Glory
(Additional words submitted to Gathering by Bob Stark)

The first verse of James Montgomery's 1816 poem is combined with new verses by Bob Stark to create this Christmas Communion hymn, which is sung to REGENT'S SQUARE, English organist and composer Henry Thomas Smart's best-known hymn tune. The carol is performed by Bel Canto Company and Gate City Voices in an arrangement by Dan Forrest.

Angels from the Realms of Glory; arr. Dan Forrest; performed by Bel Canto Company & Gate City Voices

- 1 Angels, 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.*

All who come with hearts confessing
thus approach his table now.
Let us, with the Saviour's blessing,
in his presence humbly bow. R

May the bread of life enfold us,
may the wine instill the love
of the Christ Child, long foretold us,
now proclaimed from heaven above. R

Christmas Eve Communion (Carlisle)

Invitation to Communion: (from *Fresh Winds of the Spirit* by Lavon Baylor)

Come to the manger where the Christ-child lay,
Wrapped in his swaddling bands, upon the hay,
Hear, as the angels sing their heav'nly song;
Come, let your heart and soul to him belong.

One: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

One: Lift up your hearts;

All: We lift them up to the Lord.

One: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

All: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

One: Many are the promises you have made to your people, O God.

Many are the promises you have kept.

From the time of Abraham and Sarah, you have not robbed the faithful of your presence.

In the dark times of the Israelites in Egypt, you sent a leader to take them from bondage to freedom.

The stories of their faith follow us and teach us from generation to generation.

In their times of defeat and exile, you promised a Messiah – a great leader from the root of Jesse, from the house of David.

In Jesus, your promise is fulfilled.

We rejoice at the birth of the promised servant, your only begotten son, born to Mary.

**All: My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.**

One: With the angels and archangels, with
all the company of heaven and all the saints of every generation, we praise you:

**All: Holy, holy, holy, Lord
God of power and might,
Heav'n and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

One: Blessed are you, gracious God,
creator of heaven and earth;
by your grace are we made
and by your grace are we restored to you
through Christ, Jesus.

The Lord's Prayer

One: The wonder of Christ's birth surrounds us;
the courage and vitality of his living enfold us;
the transforming power of his dying and rising restores us.
Great is his sacrifice and great are the gifts of love given to us.

In praise and thanksgiving we proclaim the mystery of our faith:

All: Christ had died! Christ is risen!

Christ will come again!

One: Holy God, we ask you blessing upon the food set upon this table; and upon your people who have gathered to share it. May our living and giving be a sacrifice worthy of you, and may your spirit fill our hearts to overflowing, that the love you poured out for us might be poured out through us for others. Amen.

One: In the same night that he was betrayed, Jesus took the bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples saying, "Take, eat, this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

One: Likewise, after supper, he took the cup; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to his disciples, saying, "Drink this, all of you, for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you, and for many. Do this in remembrance of me."

(You are invited to come forward for communion. The simple response to the words of the server is AMEN. Those who wish to remain seated for communion, please indicate to the elders and communion will be brought to you in your seat.)

Prayer after Communion: *(in unison)*

All praise to you, O God. Your people have eaten and been filled, have drunk and no longer thirst. We sing thanks and praise to you that Christ who was born of humble birth is born again in the hearts of the faithful. May your Spirit be upon us as we proclaim what we have heard and what we have shared. All glory to you and on earth, may good will abound. Amen.

(Turn off the lights in the sanctuary)

Carol: VU 67 – Silent Night, Holy Night

This gentleman enjoys making uplifting videos with his wife, grandkids, and others; here, "Opa" performs with his granddaughter Noa – I suspect "Oma" is one of the others singing off-camera. It makes me imagine the first performance of "Stille Nacht," which was accompanied by guitar after flooding had damaged the church organ. The carol was first sung on Christmas Eve 1818 at the Nikolauskirche, a village church in present-day Austria. Hope this video inspires more family carol singing tonight.

SILENT NIGHT HOLY NIGHT (NOA & OPA) - YouTube

- 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.

Christmas Blessing:

May this Christmas be, for each of you, a birth of hope and understanding, of compassion and love, of grace and of peace beyond imagining, and of joy so deep it lights your way now and forevermore. May the words "Merry Christmas!" be shouted with joy and exultation as the truth of God's deep love for you dawns in your hearts. Amen . . .

and

Merry Christmas!

Online Postlude: Angels We Have Heard on High

I love how creative this arrangement is for one piano, eight hands, and four voices! It can be found on the 2013 album *A Family Christmas* by The Piano Guys.

[Angels We Have Heard on High - The Piano Guys Create a Christmas Masterpiece](#)

<p><i>We are grateful for our musicians and their wonderful Christmas gift of music, which has made this special service even more so. Thank you to Dave Walker and all the members of the Carlisle Choir.</i></p>
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