

**ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH**  
**December 24, 2021 – Christmas Eve**

Welcome to Worship

Join us for a Zoom Virtual Coffee Time at 7:00 p.m.  
Email [sketchingalong4@gmail.com](mailto:sketchingalong4@gmail.com) to get the Zoom link.

**Prelude**

**Hymn: VU 59 *Joy to the World*, vv. 1, 2, & 4**

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.

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.

**Welcome & Announcements**

Welcome to this place on this night of wonder and hope, the night we celebrate the holy birth at St. Andrew's United Church in Sudbury Ontario.

Online we are still church, don't doubt that. This will be a worship filled with story and the music we long to share, as well as reflections on the Christmas Story from the child's perspective.

I invite you also to find a candle in your house, whether one you light with a flame or one of those high-tech LED candles. Keep it handy for the close of this worship.

Thank you to our musicians, Ralph, Deb, and Kevin McIntosh, and Leslie and Anne Pile. Thank you also to our Advent Candle Lighters, Colin and Betty Clark, and our scripture reader, Alison Warner-Smith. And thank you to Thomas Kozak, Rebekah Speedie, and their children Kenneth and Maggie for our children's thoughts about Christmas.

So let us breathe... and wait expectantly with those journeying parents-to-be Mary and Joseph

**Inviting Holy Light**

We light this candle to signal God's dream of peace and goodwill across the earth – and our part in it. We lean into that work of peacemaking on this special night. We love getting gifts, but I think we like giving too. Maybe we ARE the gifts! We make peace with every word and action. May the flame of God's eternal light find a welcome in every spirit this night. *[Dave lights candle...pause for silence]*

**Nurturing Safe Space**

Here, you and me, all of us together an online community in Christ, seek to be safe space where everyone feels welcome, where absolutely everyone can contribute – regardless of age, gender, cultural background, or gender identity. Absolutely everyone is welcome!

**Acknowledging Traditional Territory**

On this holy evening, we give thanks for the land on which we worship. These lands have been cared for and inhabited by many First Nations people from time immemorial to the present. We acknowledge the Atikemeksheng Anishnawbek and Wahnapiatae First Nation who, along with

Métis people, have called this territory “home”. We give thanks for the current and historic contributions these and other Indigenous peoples continue to make, and we pray that we may live in peace and friendship, honouring the treaties, seeking justice and walking together in the spirit of reconciliation. Amen.

### **Call to Worship & Christmas Eve Candle Lighting (Colin & Betty Clark)**

1. We come to sing a new song of something that happened long ago and is still happening today.

**God’s love living in the flesh of a child, and in us.**

2. Tonight we wander back through time; we wonder if there is enough love to welcome hope again today.

**Tonight, let’s make a joyful noise, for God’s love was born then, and God’s love is born again and again in you and me.**

1. For all that we didn’t know we were waiting for,  
**we light this candle of waiting in Hope.**

*[First candle is lit.]*

2. For the acceptance we now feel that things in our world are not as they should be; that we need to be part of changing it,

**we light this candle of accepting and working for Peace.**

*[Second candle is lit.]*

1. For this journey we have shared together in Advent, and continue now to see the child born in a manger,

**we light this candle of Joy as we journey.**

*[Third candle is lit.]*

2. For the work of allowing birth to happen in and around us; it is sometimes difficult and messy, birth.

**We light this candle of Love and Birth.**

*[Fourth candle is lit.]*

1. For the good news of great joy for all people,

2. for the peace across our whole Earth that is promised in this tiny bundle,

1. for Earth rejoicing,

2. for the heavens proclaiming this wonderful glory,

1. for the loving kindness and new possibility we hear in a newborn cry.

2. for Love that shines the way for all to follow, and the wonder we feel whenever we see holy love at work,

**we light this candle.**

*[The Christ candle is lit.]*

### **Hymn: VU 7 Hope is a Star, vs. 4 (Love)**

4. Love is a flame that burns in our heart,  
Jesus has come and will never depart.

When God is a child there’s joy in our song.

The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,  
and none shall be afraid.

## Prayer

Let us pray:

Come, O Christ Child, be born again to us tonight.

Fling open the doors, bring light and love into our lives, especially the lives of those who feel alone, face health issues, feel afraid. Ignite the hearts of all with hope.

Wander into our lives this night, with our doubts and fears about situations that are unfair, remind us that with you, nothing is impossible. Bring that hope to a world that years for change but can't bear to believe it is possible.

Come, O Christ Child, be born to us tonight. Together let us prayer as Jesus taught...

## The Prayer Jesus Taught

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kin-dom 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 kin-dom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

## Hymn: VU 7 *Hope is a Star*, vs. 2 (Peace)

2. Peace is a ribbon that circles the earth,  
giving a promise of safety and worth.

When God is a child there's joy in our song.  
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,  
and none shall be afraid.

## Scripture: Isaiah 9, assorted verses from NIV (Alison Warner-Smith)

*A reading from Isaiah, chapter 9. This passage speaks of a nation in darkness finding light. We remember that there is wonder found in darkness, and light can bring with it problems. But we in our times can imagine a boat in a stormy sea seeing the light cast by a lighthouse offering help.*

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;  
on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.  
He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom,  
establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness  
from that time on and forever.

## Hymn: VU 7 *Hope is a Star*, vs. 1 (Hope)

1. Hope is a star that shines in the night,  
leading us on till the morning is bright.

When God is a child there's joy in our song.  
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,  
and none shall be afraid.

## Time up Front (Video – “Christmas According to Kids”)

*Christmas According to Kids” video courtesy of Southland Christian Church. This video is not used for monetary purposes. You can find them at: [www.facebook.com/southlandchristian/](http://www.facebook.com/southlandchristian/)*

**Hymn: VU 7 *Hope is a Star, vs. 3 (Joy)***

3. Joy is a song that welcomes the dawn,  
telling the world that the Saviour is born.

When God is a child there's joy in our song.  
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,  
and none shall be afraid.

**Scripture: Luke 2:1-7**

*The journey to Bethlehem begins ...*

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

So, Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

**Hymn: VU 43 *Go, Tell it on the Mountain, vs. 3, Refrain***

3. Down in a lowly manger  
the humble Christ was born,  
and God sent our salvation  
that blessed Christmas morn.

Go, tell it on the mountain,  
over the hills and everywhere.  
Go, tell it on the mountain  
that Jesus Christ is born.

**A Moment of Child-Like Wonder (Video)**

*(Tom Kozak, Rebekah Speedie, and children Kenneth and Maggie)*

*What would you have said if Joseph and Mary had come to your house, wanting a place for Mary to give birth to her baby?*

**Scripture: Luke 2:8-16**

*The angels appear to shepherds...*

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So, they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

### **Hymn: VU 43 Go, Tell It on the Mountain, vv. 1 & 2, and Refrain**

1. While shepherds kept their watching  
o'er silent flocks by night,  
behold, throughout the heavens  
there shone a holy light.

2. The shepherds feared and trembled  
when lo, above the earth  
rang out the angel chorus  
that hailed our Saviour's birth!

Go, tell it on the mountain,  
over the hills and everywhere.

Go, tell it on the mountain  
that Jesus Christ is born.

### **A Moment of Child-Like Wonder (Video)**

*What do you think the angels looked like to the shepherds?*

*How would you react if you saw a whole bunch of angels?*

### **Scripture: Luke 2:16-20**

The shepherds visit baby Jesus. Everyone goes, "Wow!"

When [the shepherds] had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

### **A Moment of Child-Like Wonder (Video)**

*If you saw the baby Jesus born and laying in the feeding trough for animals, what would you do?*

### **Hymn: VU 73 The Virgin Mary had a Baby Boy**

1. The virgin Mary had a baby boy,  
the virgin Mary had a baby boy,  
the virgin Mary had a baby boy,  
and they say that his name is Jesus.

He come from the glory, (*clap, clap*)  
he come from the glorious kingdom.

He come from the glory, (*clap, clap*)  
he come from the glorious kingdom.

Oh, yes! believer! Oh, yes! believer!

He come from the glory, (*clap, clap*)  
he come from the glorious kingdom.

2. The angels sang when the baby was born,  
the angels sang when the baby was born,  
the angels sang when the baby was born,  
and they say that his name is Jesus.

He come from the glory, (*clap, clap*)  
he come from the glorious kingdom.

He come from the glory, (*clap, clap*)  
he come from the glorious kingdom.

Oh, yes! believer! Oh, yes! believer!  
He come from the glory, (*clap, clap*)  
he come from the glorious kingdom.

3. The shepherds came where the baby was born,  
the shepherds came where the baby was born,  
the shepherds came where the baby was born,  
and they say that his name is Jesus.

He come from the glory, (*clap, clap*)  
he come from the glorious kingdom.  
He come from the glory, (*clap, clap*)  
he come from the glorious kingdom.  
Oh, yes! believer! Oh, yes! believer!  
He come from the glory, (*clap, clap*)  
he come from the glorious kingdom.

### **Reflection and Gratitude**

A couple of things to share that we can be thankful about. First, the St. Andrew's Place Board of Directors, comprised of mostly members of this congregation, gave a Christmas dinner to every resident in this building who wanted one. It was delivered to their doors, to let them know that we – all of us at St. Andrew's – love them. Also, the Reaching Out team led by Sylvia Carscadden and volunteers, have been distributing all the gift cards you purchased to two downtown schools that we partnered with and Better Beginnings Better Futures. Your generosity has helped many families to enjoy a brighter Christmas this year. Thank you!!

Thank you for your generosity that builds community, helps people to grow spiritually, and transforms lives. Thank you. If you haven't had a chance to contribute yet, but you want to, go to our website and click on the "Donate" button. Or send an email to Alison in the office so that you can get our weekly email newsletter.

### **Prayers of the Community**

God of the calming dark, the crisp air and snow. God, we see you in the twinkling of stars that remind us that your universe is beautiful. This evening is filled with Story, the old story told in fresh ways, speaking to young and old hearts alike.

For many of us, the story has been heard numerous times, and floods our lives with warmth and love. For others, this Christmas story is new and surprising. We see all around us the symbols of miracle and birth. The colours of the season and symbols in our apartments and homes, evergreen trees, angels, coloured lights, the music and message of this night – may we take a moment in silence to look around us, to be aware of wonder. May we find Christ within that wonder.

There is joy and peace in our world, but there is definitely turmoil too. In Palestine and Israel, in Syria, in 2/3 of our world living with so little, hungry for food and justice – we pray for your healing Love to bring Peace and Hope. Far away, but we also pray for peace, shalom, in our homes and families, neighbourhoods. Protect all those who are in harm's way; all those who live lives of anguish, poverty, oppression. We pray for all who struggle to believe that in you, Creator, nothing is impossible.

In this silent moment we pray for people and situations near and far that weigh on our hearts...  
*[silence]*

May the light of the stars which sparkled in those dark skies, again illuminate our lives, guiding, healing, leading us to you, God. As we gather in this time and place, hearing the story of the birth,

remind us again that you are born continually in our lives. This we pray with open hearts and minds... Amen.

### **Commissioning**

Beloved of Christ, all of us, may we feel the mystery this Eve, the mystery of how our Creator comes to us in surprising ways, even as a baby in a manger.

May we ponder all the things we have heard in our hearts like Mary – so we keep a sense of wonder as we journey from here. May we be so amazed like the shepherds at what we have seen and heard – so much so, that we are forever changed. May our eyes and hearts, ears and actually our whole selves, be open to wonder tonight, and every day.

Merry Christmas everyone.

I invite you now to light your candle and to sing with us Silent Night as we let our little lights shine in hope, humility, and love.

### **Hymn: VU 67 *Silent Night***

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, loves pure light  
radiant beams from thy holy face,  
with the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

### **Postlude**

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**Prayers and Responses**, unless otherwise noted, as well as the paraphrase of the Luke reading, come from *Seasons of the Spirit, Fusion*. Advent Year C. ©2021 Wood Lake Books Inc.

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