

Cochrane Street United Church

81 Cochrane Street ♦ St. John's, NL ♦ A1C 3L7



Christmas Eve Communion 9:00 PM

Minister: Rev. Miriam Bowlby, B.A. (Hons) M.Div

Minister Emeritus: Rev. Eric Hillier

Minister of Music: Patricia Young

Director of Music: Evan Smith

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GATHERING AS GOD'S PEOPLE

*please stand as you are able

PRELUDE:

Carol of the Bells – Will Parsons
Jolly Old St. Nicholas – Allanah Briggs
Deck the Halls – Carrie Parsons

*SUNG INTROIT VU#60: O COME ALL YE FAITHFUL

- 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.
- 5 Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory given;
word of the Father, now in flesh appearing: R

*WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

*PASSING OF THE PEACE:

Let our hospitality towards each other reflect God's love.
The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us greet one another with the peace of Christ.

REFLECTIVE MUSIC VU #64 vs 1 &4: 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.
- 4 O holy child of Bethlehem,
descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin, and enter in;
be born in us today.

We hear the Christmas angels
the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
our Lord Emmanuel.

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

A boy has been born for us;
A child has been given to us.
And his name shall be called

**Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God,
Eternal Father, the Prince of Peace.**

Once we were no people;
Now we are God's people.

Once we walked in darkness;
Now we have seen a great light.

***PRAYER OF APPROACH**

**May the God of the stable
help us to see the wonder of Christmas:
the wonder of children who can hardly wait,
the wonder of Mary and Joseph who feel
the power of God's love,
the wonder of the shepherds who hear the Good News,
the wonder of Magi who kneel and offer their gifts,
the wonder of the ages
that God would come in such a simple birth. Amen.**

***HYMN: #59: Joy to the World**

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES

Written by Sarah Are – Sanctified Art

READERS: Allanah, Carrie, Jaxon & Will

Light Three Purple Candles & 1 Pink Candle

Reader A: The life of faith is often a dance—two steps forward and one step back.

Reader B: A child is born—

Reader A: Two steps forward.

Reader B: We fall in love—

Reader A: Two steps forward.

Reader B: Love falls apart—

Reader A: One step back.

Reader B: We finally get sober—

Reader A: Two steps forward.

Reader B: We are affirmed in our sense of call—

Reader A: Two steps forward.

Reader B: Tragedy and hatred strike again—

Reader A: One step back.

Reader B: In this crazy thing called life, it can often feel as if we are dancing alone—but that could not be further from the truth. Through the ups and the downs, we are held by the Creator, led by the Spirit, and surrounded by the love of Christ.

Reader A: With every step we take toward God, God has already drawn toward us. No matter how far we might roam—no matter where we might go—God’s love is forever near.

Reader B: So tonight we light the Christ candle as a reminder that so many years ago, a child was born—and that child was love, and that love is here today.

Light Christ Candle

Prayer:

Tonight, the Word of God was made flesh, and dwells among us. Thanks be to God for a love like that, a love forever in pursuit of you and me. Two steps forward. No steps back. Amen.

Hymn: Hope Is a Star vs. 5

Jesus is born, alive on this night,
sharing his love ‘till all darkness 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.

(words by Miriam Bowlby)

CHILDREN'S TIME

***HYMN # 76: See Amid the Winter's Snow**

OFFERING INVITATION & OFFERTORY VOLUNTARY

***OFFERTORY HYMN: In the Bleak Midwinter #55 vs. 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

OFFERTORY PRAYER

GOD'S WORD FOR US TODAY

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION:

Holy Spirit,

Open our hearts to the story of your love.

Open our minds to new ways of knowing you.

Open our doors to who all you would welcome. Amen

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 2:1 - 20

The Word of the Lord – Thanks be to God.

SERMON: Rev. Miriam and Oliver Dingwell

SOLO: WILLIAM THE ANGEL by Rob Mathes

Soloist: Evan Smith

***HYMN # 69: Away in a Manger**

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table

God has always been in the habit of taking ordinary things and turning them into extraordinary testaments of God's love.

First it was a teenage girl who became God's mother, and a manger that became God's bed.

Then there were shepherds in the field who became the first believers, and stars in the sky that became the first church steeples.

God has always been in the business of taking ordinary things and making them extraordinary reminders of God's love.

Tonight, we come to this ordinary table with ordinary bread and cup, trusting that God will be here, for God has always been here.

So come.

Come with your heart on your sleeve.

Come with your hopes and your fears,
your dreams and your prayers.

Come with your doubt and your anger, your joy and your faith.

Come—bringing all of who you are.

For God was there in the beginning of creation. God was there that silent night so many years ago, and God is here with us now.

You are in the presence of a love that knows no limits and cannot help but to draw near. So come. This meal is for you.

The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

God of starry nights—

You are the God of the impossible.

You are the God of new life in the midst of Roman imperialism.

You are the God of stars in the darkest sky.

You are the God of love in the midst of our greatest fear.

You sent your son into this world to teach us what impossible love looks like—

Love without limits,

love without hesitation,

love without holding back.

And the whole world is better for it.

Tonight we come to this table, craving a reminder of that love,
singing the song of the angels:

Sung Response: (#38VU)

Gloria, in excelsis deo!

Gloria, in excelsis deo!

On this Christmas night,

we remember Christ's birth, but also his death.

We remember that on the night before he died,

Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after giving thanks to you,

he broke it, and gave it to those who sat with him, saying:

"Take and eat.

This is my body, given for you.

Whenever you do this, remember me."

In the same way he took the cup, saying:

"Drink this.

This is the cup of the new covenant.

Whenever you do this, remember me."

Great is the mystery of faith:

We remember that death cannot kill the love of God.

Christ was born on this night,

Christ died, and Christ lives again.

**We know that you,
O God, continue to be born unto us each day.**

As we break this ordinary bread and pour out this ordinary cup, remind us of Mary who treasured the ordinary moments—the smell of hay and the look of that sleeping baby—in her heart. Help us to do the same, for your beauty and fingerprints are everywhere.

As we gather around the table as a community, remind us of the people who showed up at that manger scene—the magi and the shepherds—and may we remember that all are welcome at your table, regardless of class, age, race, gender, orientation, size, or status.

As we lift our voices together in prayer and in song, remind us of the many people who said “No” to Mary and Joseph that night, as well as the people who finally said, “Yes, there is room here.” May we be people who are always in the habit of saying, “Yes, there is room here. There is room for you, your dreams, your hopes, your fears, and your love. All of you are welcome at the table of God.”

God of Alleluias and angel choruses— Surround us with your light this night, for the gospel reminds us that you drew near to us long before we ever drew near to you—and even in our absence, you continue to draw near to us. So it is with joy in our hearts that we return to this table—step by step—drawing near to you.

Strengthen us. Hold us.
Equip us to tell the story of your good news.

Send, O God,
your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts,
that all who share in this bread and cup
may be the body of Christ:
light, life, and love in the world.

Through Christ, the Word made flesh,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory is yours, God most holy,

now and forever. Amen.

We gather these and all of our prayers,
thankful that you have given us your Son in infant form,
and now we turn to you, praying together,
Our 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. Amen.

Prayer after Communion

God of starlight,
we came to this table hungry—
 Hungry for a glimpse of you.
 Hungry to hear the sound of angel choruses.
 Hungry for a meal in which all might be fed.
God of manger scenes,
we came to this table with our hearts on our sleeves,
 our prayers on our lips,
 and our hopes on our hearts.
God of Christmas,
we should not be surprised that you met us here.
 All of us.
And you fed us here.
 All of us.
And so we see you, amid the winter's snow,
And so we feel you, sending your joy into the world
And so we sing of you, the "Son of God, Love's pure light"
For you alone are worthy.
You alone are God.
And again, we are in awe.
Gratefully we pray,
Amen.

GOING FORTH TO SHARE GOD'S LOVE

***HYMN # 67: Silent Night, Holy Night**

PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE

Holy God, Dreamer of dreams,

We offer Cochrane Street United Church to you. We are your people, this is your church. We come to you seeking your guidance, your purpose, your vision. Align our will with yours, so that we will be willing to do whatever it takes to carry out your plan. We ask you to break through in new ways in our church. Show us the great ministry you have in store for us. Help us dream your dreams. Pour out your Holy Spirit on us, giving us the vision, boldness, and confidence to do all that you call us to do. Amen.

COMMISSIONING AND BENEDICTION

CHORAL BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

UPCOMING SERVICES

DECEMBER 30TH 11 AM

Christmas Carol Sing along and readings

JANUARY 6TH 11 AM

Guest preacher Oliver Dingwell

Potluck after church – bring something to share!

MEMORIALS

*In memory of Ken Reynolds,
a son, brother, husband, father, and uncle,
from Sonia, Paula & Tim, Geralyn, Leah, Allen & Sarah*

In memory of our loved ones, from Cheryl, Byron, Ellice, and Allana

*In memory of Helen & Horwood Guzzwell and Ann & Bill Bourne
from nieces, Ruth and Catherine Davidge*

*In memory of Mother and Father, Irene & Walter Tucker,
from Linda Facey*

In memory of Grace Oakley from Judy & Ed Stratton

*In memory of Grandparents, Jesse & Levi Drodge,
Parents, Olive & Ralph Barnes, from Betty Barnes*

*In loving memory of my daughter, Barbara Garland,
and grandson, Chad Mercer, from Joan Garland*

*In Memory of mother and father, Leah & Lewis Bursey,
and brother, Gordon, from Doug & Joan Bursey*



Draw near to love

By Sarah Are

I know love's real,
for I have felt it in my bones
the way cold air finds my lungs
and music finds my memories—
certainly and entirely.

And I know winter is real,
for I have worn grief like a blanket—
A blanket of what once was, covering my bony elbows
and forgotten smile lines.

Somewhere in between
those certain realities,
I find myself wishing on shooting stars
and wondering if they were the same ones that Jesus slept under.
I find myself whistling,
"O come, O come, Emmanuel,"
followed shortly by, "All is calm, all is bright."

It's the melodic rotation I live in— Joy and doubt.
Light and night.
Love and grief.
You alone and you with me.

So I'll never stop waiting for Christmas.
Every day I'll rise with the sun
and pray that today it will be Christmas again,
that today will be a day when you are here,
when you are near me,
when the blanket is ripped away to reveal the light
and my smile lines have reason to bow again.

Then the stars fall,
the sun rises,
and in my heart of hearts,
I know it is.
For ever since that day
so many moons ago,
nothing has been able to separate us from your love.
And so I say—
I know love's real,
for I have felt it in my bones.
All is calm. All is bright.