

Cochrane Street United Church

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



December 24th, 2021 Christmas Eve

Minister: Rev. Miriam Bowlby, B.A. (Hons) M.Div
Minister Emeritus: Rev. Eric Hillier
Minister of Music: Patricia Young
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Welcome to Cochrane Street United Church

Whether you are here for the first time or this is your church home – welcome to our community of faith.

USHERING TEAM FOR DECEMBER

Roger Crosbie, Jim Oakley, Jim Austin, Jeff Critch

THIS WEEK AT COCHRANE STREET DECEMBER 27 – JANUARY 2

Sunday, Dec 26: No Service
Sunday, Jan 02: On-Line Service Only

OFFICE

Office Hours: Wednesday 9:00 am – 2:30 pm
Thursdays 9:00 am – 2:45 pm

Email: info@cochranestreetuc.com

Phone: 709-722-3023

Website: www.cochranestreetuc.com

Cochrane Centre Contact information for bookings
709-754-2532 or info@cochranecentre.ca

CONTACT REV. MIRIAM

Have a question or need to make an appointment?

You can reach Rev. Miriam in the following ways:

Email: revmiriam@cochranestreetuc.com or Cell: 709-728-8410

Like us on Facebook or Follow us on Twitter!

www.facebook.com/Cochranestreetuc and [@CochraneStreet](https://twitter.com/CochraneStreet)

GATHERING AS GOD'S PEOPLE

*please stand as you are able

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We respectfully acknowledge the territory in which we gather as the ancestral homelands of the Beothuk, and the island of Newfoundland as the ancestral homelands of the Mi'kmaq and Beothuk. We would also like to recognize the Inuit of Nunatsiavut and NunatuKavut and the Innu of Nitassinan, and their ancestors, as the original people of Labrador. We strive for respectful relationships with all the peoples of this province as we search for collective healing and true reconciliation and honour this beautiful land together.

PRELUDE:

*SUNG INTROIT VU#59: Joy to the World vs. 1

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.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please see your congregational email for detailed announcements.

LIGHTING OF CHRIST CANDLE & PASSING OF THE PEACE:

The light of Christ is with us
Here. Now. In this place.

In Christ, although we are many,
We are one.

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 76: See Amid the Winter's Snow vs. 1

1 See amid the winter's snow,
born for us on earth below,
see, the tender Lamb appears,
promised from eternal years.
Hail, thou ever-blessed morn;
hail, redemption's happy dawn;
sing through all Jerusalem,
Christ is born in Bethlehem.

CALL TO WORSHIP:

An unmarried teenage girl was invited—
to carry Christ into this world.

An ordinary carpenter was invited—
to be a father to a child unlike any other.

The shepherds were invited—
outcast and isolated, included at the manger.

The Magi were invited—
foreigners and seekers, included at the manger.

And if she was invited, and he was invited, and they were invited—
then we can trust that we too are invited.

This story is for us.

This love is for us.

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 VU #60: O Come, All Ye Faithful vs. 1, 3 & 5

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.

3 Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;
glory to God in the highest: **R**

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**

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES

Reader: All through the season of Advent as we prepared for Christmas, we've been exploring how we as a church can "make more room in the inn," becoming more hospitable to the needs of our community.

Reader: On this Christmas Eve, we declare that The Inn is open for the business of compassion, with room enough for all! The long-awaited Messiah has been born and on him the light shines.

Reader: We have only to open the doors of our lives and say “welcome.”

Reader: Our Advent journey has led us to this moment when the light shining through the closed doors of life becomes an open door to new possibilities, new relationships.

Reader: What a poignant moment for us this year as the light—the hope, peace, joy and love—multiplies from one illuminated heart and hand to another.

Reader: Tonight we offer the Lights of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love

Light 4 Candles

Reader: And we add the brightest light of all... the Light of the Newborn Jesus.

It shines bright like the star that rose over Bethlehem.

May this light also shine in our hearts, in our lives, and in our church.

May this light awaken us to possibilities

and lead us to greater hospitality.

There *IS* room in this Inn, a House for the Holy.

Light Christ Candle

Hymn: A Candle is Burning vs. 5

5 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.

LEARNING TOGETHER

HYMN VU #40: Before the Marvel of This Nights (vs. 1 – 3)

1 Before the marvel of this night
adoring, fold your wings and bow,
then tear the sky apart with light
and with your news the world endow.
Proclaim the birth of Christ and peace,
that fear and death and sorrow cease:
sing peace, sing peace, sing gift of peace,
sing peace, sing gift of peace!

2 Awake the sleeping world with song,
*this is the day the Lord has made;
assemble here, celestial throng,
in royal splendour come arrayed.
Give earth a glimpse of heavenly bliss,
a teasing taste of what they miss:
sing bliss, sing bliss, sing endless bliss,
sing bliss, sing endless bliss!

3 The love that we have always known,
our constant joy and endless light,
now to the loveless world be shown,
now break upon its deathly night.
Into one song compress the love
that rules our universe above:
sing love, sing love, sing God is love,
sing love, sing God is love!

OFFERING INVITATION & VOLUNTARY

There are many ways you can offer your financial gifts. As you enter the sanctuary you may lay your offering in the plate. You can send your offering by mail or drop them off in the mailbox. You can donate via eTransfer: csuctreasurer@gmail.com. You can sign up for PAR (Pre-Authourized Remittance) or use the donate button on our website.

OFFERTORY HYMN VU 81: As With Gladness Men of Old vs. 3

3 As they offered gifts most rare
at that manger crude and bare,
so may we with holy joy,
pure and free from sin's alloy,
all our costliest treasures bring,
Christ, to you, our heavenly King.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

GOD'S WORD FOR US TODAY

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION:

Holy God,
We've heard this story a million times—
Mary and Joseph, the angels, the shepherds.
We've heard it a million times,
but we want to hear it like it's the first.
So move among us.

Circle back. Draw close.

Crack open our hearts and fill them with your goodness.

**Help us to hear what it is you might be saying to us
with curiosity, joy, and hope.**

This is an invitation.

Come be here with us.

Gratefully we pray, Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 2:1 - 20

The Word of the Lord – **Thanks be to God.**

SOLO: “Believe”

soloist: Ben James

SERMON:

HYMN VU #44: It Came Upon a Midnight Clear (vs. 1–4)

- 1 It came upon the midnight clear,
that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth
to touch their harps of gold,
'Peace on the earth, good will to all,
from heaven's all-gracious King!'
The world in solemn stillness lay
to hear the angels sing.
- 2 Still through the cloven skies they come
with peaceful wings unfurled;
and still their heavenly music floats
o'er all the weary world;
above its sad and lowly plains
they bend on hovering wing,
and ever o'er its Babel sounds
the blessed angels sing.
- 3 Yet with the woes of sin and strife
the world has suffered long;
beneath the angel strain have rolled
two thousand years of wrong;
and warring humankind hears not
the love song which they bring.
O hush the noise, and cease your strife,
to hear the angels sing.

4 For, lo! the days are hastening on,
by prophets seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years
shall come the time foretold,
when peace shall over all the earth
its ancient splendours fling,
and the whole world send back the song
which now the angels sing.

GOING FORTH TO SHARE GOD'S LOVE 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.

Breaking of the Bread and Pouring of Wine

The body of Christ.

Thanks be to God for the bread of life.

The blood of Christ.

Thanks be to God for the cup of blessing.

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 Christmas,

we should not be surprised that you met us here.

All of all of us.

And you fed us here.

All of 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.

HYMN VU #67: Silent Night (vs. 1–3)

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.

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.

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.

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

SUNG BENEDICTION VU #43: Go Tell It on the Mountain vs. 3

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

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

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

POSTLUDE

Please take your bulletins with you when you leave the pew.

