

# St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay – Liturgy

<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> - Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski

Christmas Eve 2024

## Call to Worship

In this silent night,

**We ponder your mystery with Mary and Joseph.**

On this holy night,

**We come with the shepherds to worship.**

On this night of joy for the world,

**We sing praises with choirs of angels.**

In the darkness of this night,

**We celebrate the Light of the World.**

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. Christmas Eve/Day. December 24<sup>th</sup>/25<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Year C.

## Lighting the Christ Candle

We've been waiting for the Savior. Waiting with hearts that are often preoccupied with our own wants and desires . . . with hearts that are weary and worn . . . with hearts that are subject to fears and doubts.

But these waiting hearts have longed for so much more. We long for God's comfort and peace—for God's guidance and strength. We've been longing for our Saviour.

Tonight we light the Christ candle. We celebrate this good news: that Christ the Saviour is born! The true light that gives light to everyone has come. Let our waiting hearts rejoice and be glad! (Light the Christ Candle)

LISA VANDERKAMP. LONGING FOR MORE | REFORMED WORSHIP. ACCESSED SEPTEMBER 18, 2024.

## Hymn

*What child is this*

161

1. 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.
2. Why lies he in such mean estate  
where ox and ass are feeding?  
Good Christians fear, for sinners here  
The silent Word is pleading.  
Nails, spear shall pierce him through,  
the cross be borne for me, for you.  
Hail, hail the Word made flesh,  
the babe, the son of Mary.

3. So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;  
come, peasant, king, to own him.  
The King of kings salvation brings;  
Let loving hearts enthrone him.  
Raise, raise the song on high;  
the virgin sings her lullaby.  
Joy, joy for Christ is born,  
the babe, the son of Mary. Words and Music: public domain

## **Prayer of Adoration and Confession**

God of mystery and wonder,  
Creator, Christ and Spirit,  
Glory to you, O God

On this holy night, the angels sing your praises with joy and we join their chorus.  
The shepherds welcome your saving love, born in a manger and join them in  
adoration. Mary and Joseph ponder your promise, cradled in their arms and we join  
in their love for you. And so we come to praise you,

singing with the angels, amazed with the shepherds,  
cradling the Christ Child in our hearts. Glory to you, O God.

In confidence of your loving kindness, we confess to you our sins:

**God of grace and mercy,  
you give us the greatest gift of all, your Son Jesus,  
but we confess we get caught up in our own gift giving on this holy night.  
You offer us new life in the babe of Bethlehem,  
but we smile at the baby and forget the new direction he offers.  
Jesus was born in human flesh,  
but we fail to see the dignity in the human lives around us.  
Forgive us, O God,  
and help us cherish the meaning in your gifts of wonder in the Christ Child.**

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## **Assurance of Forgiveness**

The angels brought glad tidings that first Christmas night.  
Their words still echo through the ages, "Do not be afraid."  
This very night, a Saviour is born for all of us in this hurting world.  
Accept the forgiveness that the Christ Child brings for you,  
and rejoice with the angels. The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. Christmas Eve/Day. December 24<sup>th</sup>/25<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Year C.

## Luke 2:1-7

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

<sup>8</sup>In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup>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: <sup>11</sup>to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup>And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup>“Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

<sup>15</sup>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.” <sup>16</sup>So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup>When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup>and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.

<sup>19</sup>...Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup>The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

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## Message We Wonder

I wonder about a lot of things. Many trivial, others more significant.

We wonder.

We wonder about the world. We wonder what will come of it given the political climate around the globe. We wonder what will become of this earth with the effects of climate change. Some wonder whether or not they should bring a child into this world. We all tend to wonder what the future will hold.

On the days before Jesus' birth and that night when the Christ child was born, many wondered about the events that were unfolding. In our time we may wonder at what did all of this mean then and now. As I looked at the characters in the Christmas story as

told by Luke, I wondered what would Emperor Augustus and Quirinius the governor of Syria have thought if they knew that the decree to be registered, each in their own towns, would fulfil a prophetic scripture, one in which Joseph and Mary would find themselves in the little town of Bethlehem.

One could wonder about how Mary and Joseph were managing as the baby was at full term and due to arrive anytime. What were their thoughts and emotions given that they did not have a room in which to spend their nights? We gather from the detail that the babe was laid in a manger, a feeding trough for animals, they were at least indoors, protected from the harshest elements.

So much uncertainty.

And Joseph would not have been a rich man. As a carpenter working with his hands, a tradesman, there would not have been any extra in their coffers. We know through Luke's story telling that Mary was pregnant before the marriage, and though that would not necessarily mean ruin for women now, in Mary's time it would have been a deep disgrace. Joseph could easily have turned his back on her. Yet, from Matthew's gospel, we are told of angel visitors and dreams that gave the couple the determination to forge forth together.

Their minds must have been full of wonder...wondering how they were going to manage the gossip, the finances, the travel, the birth itself, and their marriage, given all the challenges.

Then there were the shepherds. Awe and wonder are the words that come to mind. Well that would be after they got over the terror of an angel standing before them with the glory of the Lord shining around them. Can you even imagine?

Right now, one of the big stories in the States is about drones flying over New Jersey. This is causing alarm and concern for people, now think about that being an angel who is then joined by a whole host of angels. No wonder they were terrified! But once the angels left and the night sky was back to its familiar self, the shepherds said to one another, let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened. In other words the wonder and curiosity of it all had them on the move.

The shepherds find the mother, father, and child. One can only wonder at what that moment must have felt like. What was it like to see the holy one as a baby? We wonder what each of them was thinking as we imagine the scene. Whatever they experienced from the angels to the manger with the child, it was enough for the shepherds to tell others about it as we are told that "all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them." They continued on their way glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen as it had been told them. The shepherds must have wondered about that night for the rest of their lives.

And finally, Mary. What she must have wondered as all these things came to pass as is written in the story, "she treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart."

What parent or caregiver hasn't gazed upon a newborn child and wondered about what the future would hold for them. In the early days of her pregnancy, Mary sang a song that tells us that she knew that this child she was carrying was no ordinary child and that he would grow in strength, bringing down the powerful, sending the rich away empty, and lifting up the lowly. She must have wondered about his safety, about who would be his friends, how would all this unfold.

And then we are left here on this Christmas Eve to wonder. What brought you here this night? Is it tradition? Is it your faith? Maybe like Mary we can wonder about the power of Jesus to transform lives. Can we go a little deeper than just sitting in the beauty of this sanctuary and this moment, with the Christmas lights here and on homes and buildings, and the promise of gifts, the singing of songs and listening to stories, and wonder, what is God up to through Christ today, in us, in our families, our homes, in the church and in the world?

We may wonder if we can trust this Jesus to be someone who truly can save us from our sin, if Jesus really is someone who can transform our lives. We wonder if God seriously has the power to act in the world. Can our wonder be allowed to inspire our faith, our trust, and our love of the one who loved us so much that he became one of us, flesh and blood?

Our God is God of the earth, not just in some heavenly realm, but both in heaven and on earth, as Creator and as Redeemer. Let's wonder with awe and curiosity but take it a step further into trusting that God is with us, that God has got us, because God promises to be with us and came to us in the Christ child.

Tonight, we sit in awe and wonder, as we should everyday, but don't let it stay there, look for God with us, among us, for us. Wonder and believe. Christ is born for us so that we can live life with hope, peace, joy, and love this day and everyday. Amen.

## Hymn

### *Hark the herald angels sing*

139

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| 1. Hark! the herald angels sing<br>glory to the newborn King,<br>peace on earth and mercy mild,<br>God and sinners reconciled.<br>Joyful, all ye nations, rise;<br>join the triumph of the skies;<br>with the angelic host proclaim,<br>"Christ is born in Bethlehem."<br>Hark! the herald angels sing<br>glory to the newborn King. | 2. Christ, by highest heaven adored,<br>Christ, the everlasting Lord,<br>late in time behold him come,<br>offspring of a virgin's womb.<br>Veiled in flesh the Godhead see!<br>Hail the incarnate deity!<br>Pleased on earth with us to dwell,<br>Jesus, our Emmanuel.<br>Hark! the herald angels sing<br>glory to the newborn King. |
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3. Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail he son of righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings,  
Risen with healing in his wings,  
Mild, he lays his glory by,  
born that we no more may die,  
born to raise the lost of earth  
born to give us second birth.  
Hark! the herald angels sing  
glory to the newborn King.

Words and Music: public domain

## Prayers of the People

God of the starry heavens and this ancient earth,  
Eternal God, God with us, tonight, you come among us in the figure of a baby,  
a newborn reaching out to us, to bring a smile to our lips and hope to our hearts.  
Thank you for your tenderness with which you touch our lives.

Tonight, as we remember the baby lying in a manger,  
We pray for peace:  
Peace in all the places where there is anger or war or fear...  
Peace in all the hearts that know sorrow or stress...  
We pray for people who will not sleep safely tonight  
because of conflict in their lives.....  
Cradle all these people and places in your love  
so the world may sleep in heavenly peace this night.

Tonight, as we remember the mother Mary rocking her baby,  
we pray for all children born this Christmas season...  
Watch over mothers and fathers and grandparents,  
hoping for the best for their newborns...  
Help us create communities where every child is valued  
and every family has enough ...  
May families rejoice because Christ the Saviour is born  
for each of us and for all of us.

Tonight, as we remember the father Joseph protecting his little one,  
we pray for all those watching over the helpless and the hopeless...  
Be with all those who must work tonight  
to keep the world safe and to care for those in need....  
Be with those who are sick or sad or lonely  
so each one will know your comforting presence...

God of the starry heavens and the good old earth,  
Eternal God, God with us, tonight as we remember the shepherds coming in haste,  
and the wise men coming in wonder,

open our hearts to reach out to the Christ Child,  
to receive the gift you offer us in him, even as we offer our love to you in his name.  
Bless us in the year ahead so we can share your love  
with all the lives that touch ours.

And now in one voice we pray the prayer that Jesus taught.

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## Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen**

## Invitation to the offering

How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given. God's gift in the Christ child arrived in a small town, a humble stable, to a couple no one invited in – and still that gift changes lives. Our gifts to God this Christmas share in that miracle.

St. Andrew's uses the donations that we receive to support the ministry of God from this church and in community. Should you desire to make a one-time donation or support this ministry on an ongoing basis, your gift makes an impact. Please check us out at [standrewpres-tbay.ca](http://standrewpres-tbay.ca). There you can find various ways of giving from e-transfer to the online donate button that allows you to give by credit card. We are deeply grateful for your generosity

## Hymn

## *Silent Night*

154

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| <p>1. Silent night! holy night!<br/>All is calm, all is bright<br/>round yon virgin mother and child<br/>holy infant so tender and mild<br/>sleep in heavenly peace;<br/>sleep in heavenly peace.</p>           | <p>2. Silent night! holy night!<br/>Shepherds quake at the sight:<br/>glories stream from heaven afar,<br/>heavenly hosts sing "Hallelujah,<br/>Christ, the Saviour is born!<br/>Christ, the Saviour is born!"</p> |
| <p>3. Silent night! holy night!<br/>Son of God, love's pure light<br/>radiant beams from thy holy face;<br/>with the dawn of redeeming grace,<br/>Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,<br/>Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.</p> |  |

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## Benediction

Tonight we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the most precious of Christmas gifts.  
Through the power of the Holy Spirit may you keep the hope,  
peace, joy and love of this season in your heart, now and throughout the coming year.  
Praise be to Emmanuel – God is with us, now and forevermore.