

Christmas Eve Service – December 24, 2025

Call to Worship

The Word became flesh and lived among us,
and we have seen his glory, full of grace and truth.

Let us rejoice that the Light of the World shines from the manger and the cross.

**We will worship God this Christmas Day,
with joyful hearts and songs of grateful praise.**

Light the Christ Candle.

Hymn

Oh come, all ye faithful

159

1. Oh come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant;
oh come ye, oh come ye to Bethlehem.
Come and behold him, born the King of angels:

Refrain

Oh come, let us adore him; oh come, let us adore him;
oh come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

2. God of God, Light of light, born unto Mary,
the virgin blest, very God, begotten, not created:

Refrain

3. See how the shepherds, summoned to his cradle,
leaving their flocks draw nigh with holy fear;
we too will thither bend our joyful footsteps:

Refrain

4. Sing, choirs of angels; sing in exultation;
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above:
"Glory to God in the highest!"

Refrain

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

Refrain

"Oh come, all ye faithful." Words (Latin) by John Francis Wade. Translation by F. Oakeley. Public domain.

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of mystery and wonder, Creator, Christ and Spirit,
On this holy night, the angels sing your praises with great joy.

The shepherds welcome your saving love, born in a manger.
Mary and Joseph ponder your promise, cradled in their arms.
Glory to you, O God, for such gifts entrusted to us in Christ Jesus!
And so we come to praise you, singing with the angels,
amazed like the shepherds, cradling the Christ Child in our hearts once again.
Glory to you, O God, Source of Light and Love for all people.

**God of grace and mercy,
you have given us the greatest gift of all, your Son Jesus,
but we confess even the pressure to give distracts us.
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 true meaning of all you offer us
each and every day in the child in the manger. Amen.**

Assurance of Forgiveness

The angel of the Lord assured Joseph he should take Mary as his wife, because her son, to be called Jesus, would save God's people from their sins. This night, receive the gift of God's forgiveness, offered in Christ Jesus. Know this gift is for you and share it with others in Jesus' name.

Prayer for Understanding

God of light and life, open our hearts to hear your promise of new life in the familiar stories of Christmas. Surprise us with new insights and refresh us with deep wisdom. Enfold us in the light of your Holy Spirit as we attend to the baby in the manger. Amen.

Scripture Reading Luke 2:1-20

The Birth of Jesus

In those days a decree went out from Caesar 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 in the guest room.

The Shepherds and the Angels

⁸ Now in that same 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. 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 Savior, 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.” 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 favors!”

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 and 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, just as it had been told them.

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Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church. **Thanks be to God.**

Message Embodied Promise

This story has become so familiar that we hardly hear it anymore. It has become the almost unnoticed backdrop to give a reason for our celebrations and commerce. For many, Christmas means holiday parties, baking, an abundance of food, making lists and checking them twice, shopping, Christmas concerts, and various other activities. For students it means vacation and a break away from studies. This is what Christmas may feel like for the many. Business and tv movies tell us this is what we should hope and desire and maybe even anticipate Christmas to be.

However, there are those for whom there is no family, no Christmas concerts, no presents to buy, either because there is no one to buy for or there is no money to buy them. There is loneliness, struggle, and hopelessness. So, as we go into this time of reflection whether we have an abundance of resources, family, joy and hope, or if we come into this time with pain, challenges, fear, lack of resources and few to none who can be of support, this is story of a babe born to a young woman and her husband, a story of God's love that holds promise for you.

Let's start by reimagining the Christmas narrative. We have our manger scenes in homes and churches yet we have sanitized it all. In these stories and pictures Mary does not look like she has given birth with clothes stuck to her from the sweat of labour and birthing waters. We dress her up in a blue robe and give her a sense of royalty. We do not see the fear in Joseph's eyes as he watches over the two, knowing that on this night he was unable to provide the lodging that would have been more appropriate for such a moment, nor is there a future hope of prosperity.

And as we imagine the scene, we have been led to believe through myth and legend, through translations from ancient Greek to English, that the couple were thoroughly alone, left out in the cold. But we don't know if they were alone. We are told that they were in with the animals, yet, it is likely that they were actually in the same structure as extended family. Maybe not in the guest room, as all the house may have been filled, but certainly not far from others. Because of the beloved hymn, Silent Night we image that animals and people stood in silent awe, yet the animals would have been making noises. I have yet to be in a area holding animals where all was silent. And even more so, baby Jesus would have been not so quiet as he entered the world and then cried when hungry. Yes, he would have been quiet when he slept, but don't clean up the humanness of this story.

Mary and Joseph had finished what was a long trip, found a place to rest that was not the most aesthetically pleasing or sterile place to be when giving birth or even coming to the end of a long day...but they were safe, warm enough, and accommodated.

So, there we have that part of the story. But this story of a family coming to Bethlehem and a baby being born is set against a backdrop of power, force, might, and control. Ceasar the Saviour of the Empire in juxtaposition with Jesus, Saviour of the World. Ceasar clothed in majesty and might, sleeping in a palace, commanding an army at will, declaring the Peace of Rome established in domination, and governing over an empire built on the taxation and work of those considered peasants. Thus the reason for a census.

Then there is Jesus, wrapped in bands of cloth, in with the animals, born to peasants, no money, appearing to have nothing to offer the world and as a baby, no might, no power to control anything. Yet, his birth is announced in majesty and mystery, as we heard read,

Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 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 Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord...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 favors!”

In a time before *Candid Camera* or *Punk'd*, the shepherds had no reason to question whether or not this was a joke. This was as real as real could be to them. They were terrified and yet moved to action, to set out on a journey to find this baby.

They knew their scriptures; they would have recognized the words from the angels as something they had learned and memorized over years. The hope of Israel had always been that someone from the line of King David, their most revered leader in history, would once again come and take the throne, would save them from oppression. With angels announcing the birth, the shepherds would have wondered, Is this the one? Is it finally happening?

God has a way of turning the world upside down. People didn't expect Jesus then and even now. People did not expect God to wield power in compassion and love. People expect power to dominate in ways that mean someone is always suffering, that someone, some human person, has power over another. It always means someone is oppressed.

Yet, as I said, for God, power is about love, compassion, light, peace. And this is not just for a few, but for everyone. God is about freedom, freedom to love and grow as human beings and as societies of care. Jesus was and is the embodied promise of God's hope, peace, joy, and love. This love has an abundant capacity for compassion, generosity, and grace.

Jesus comes to us as a child, vulnerable and powerless. His birth happens in the shadows of empire. The empire...and governments even today... especially those that wish to dominate others, give valuation to human life based on what a life can offer in terms of commerce, taxation, and labour. If you don't produce you have no value, if you don't conform to what is acceptable in terms of colour, race, culture, or sexual orientation your value is indexed. We don't need to look far, including this country of ours, to see how some are expendable or deemed unworthy, while others are lifted up and admired regardless of how self-absorbed they are or how poorly they treat others.

To this Jesus comes as Emmanuel, God with us. Jesus comes as the most vulnerable one can be, grows up, then teaches, heals, and restores people. People were not ready to hear him or see him, especially those with power, because power does not like to be

interrupted or threatened by the supremacy of another. Yet Jesus shows up anyway, the son of a carpenter and yet the Son of God. God and human, love and judgement, all rolled up in one example of grace and forgiveness.

Some come to church once or twice a year to hear the stories on these high and holy days, and we are glad you are here, but to understand the depth of this life of Jesus, the love of God, the communion of the Holy Spirit, this takes a lifetime of learning. Today you are invited to embark on a journey of learning who Jesus is, how God's love transforms lives, and how the Holy Spirit moves in, around, and with us in the world.

Our worship, the community of faith called the church, how we work together, how we grow and are ourselves transformed, experiencing the fullness of love, grace, and forgiveness that comes from God, we do that in community. We do it together. We don't do it perfectly, but just as Jesus embodied the promise of God to change the world in and because of love, we learn to live that in our life together. When we do that, we can change each other and our community.

As Christians together, who love others simply because they are each created by our loving God, regardless of religion, economic status, colour, creed, border, or whatever else we can use to separate ourselves from another...we commit to being part of a movement to lift up those who are on the margins, those who suffer, those who need to know they have value simply because they are human person and we commit to each other.

Of all things, remember that we celebrate Christmas each year not just as a past event, but as an ongoing invitation to recognize God's presence in vulnerability, in community, and in each person. When present powers choose to control, God breaking into the world through the birth of Jesus is a choice for compassion and care and that is why this story is told year after year.

This is Christmas, vulnerable, human, extraordinary, unexpected, and powerful. To live the Christmas story is to share hope, peace, joy and love in vulnerable, human, extraordinary, and unexpected ways that have the power to change and transform lives.

May you experience and share that transforming love and grace of God today and always. Amen.

1. See amid the winter's snow,
born for us on earth below;
see, the Lamb of God appears,
promised from eternal years.

Refrain

2. Lo, with in a manger lies
he who built the starry skies,
and who, throned in height sublime,
sits amid the cherubim.

Refrain

4. 'As we watched at dead of night,
lo, we saw a wondrous sight,
angels, singing peace on earth,
told us of the Saviour's birth?'

Refrain

Refrain:

Hail, O ever-blessed morn!
Hail, redemption's happy dawn!
Sing through all Jerusalem,
Christ is born in Bethlehem.

3. Say, now holy shepherds, say,
tell your joyful news today;
tell us why you left your sheep
on the lonely mountain steep.

Refrain

5. Sacred infant, all divine,
of God's tender love the sign,
for you came from highest bliss,
down to such a world as this!

Refrain

6. Hail, O ever-blessed morn!
Hail, redemption's happy dawn!
Sing through all Jerusalem,
Christ is born in Bethlehem.

Refrain

"See amid the winter's snow." Words by Edward Caswall. This version
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Prayers of the People

O God in whom we live and move and have our being,
In this season of Christmas, we give you thanks that your love
took flesh in the Christ child and that his story still fills us with wonder.
With all the hectic visiting family and friends this season, we remember
Mary and Joseph and their journey in the midst of another busy time.
Watch over all who travel at this time of year, for happy reasons or
in the face of difficulties. May they find your peace in the midst of their journeys.

As we remember the innkeeper who found space for Mary and Joseph,
we are grateful for the spaces we call home, whether simple or sophisticated.
We pray for all those who are homeless, and those who seek a welcome
in strange places. May they find an open door and kindness within.

As we remember the shepherds watching over their flocks,
we give you thanks for those who watch over us this night.

We pray for all those who must work on holidays,
tending to the well-being of others. May they know a blessing in the services
they provide and our gratitude for their efforts.

As we remember the angels and their message of peace and goodwill,
we are grateful for peace and order in our communities.

We pray for all those who work to establish and maintain peace
in troubled places and troubled lives, knowing trouble rarely takes a vacation.

As we remember the Magi and the gifts they brought to honour the Christ Child,
we thank you for the generosity that overflows at this time of year.

May it touch the lives that need it most.

May each of us find ways to offer you what we value most in the year ahead.

Hear these prayers and all the silent prayers of our hearts, O God,
and cradle them and us in your holy wisdom,

as we offer the prayer Jesus taught his friends and followers:

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

God's gift in the Christ Child arrived in a small town, a humble stable, to a couple that need shelter – and still that gift changes lives. Our gifts to God this Christmas share in that miracle. May you be moved to support the ministry that is done through this congregation on an ongoing basis or just as a gift this Christmas.

Check out the opportunities to support St. Andrew's ministry at our website,
[St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay, ON – Part of the PCCWeb network of churches](#)

Candle Lighting – should you wish, take this time to light a candle
or sit with the candle lit at the beginning of this service and sing...

Hymn

Silent Night

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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.

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Benediction

To you is born this night a Saviour who is Christ the Lord.
May the love of the Christ Child embrace you,
and the joy of the Christ Child fill your heart.
May the peace of the Christ Child give you rest,
and the hope of the Christ Child guide you into the year ahead.

Response

Joy to the World

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1. Joy to the world! the Lord is come: let earth receive its 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 us our 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 world 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, and wonders of his love.

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*Words for this liturgy are from The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner.
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