

**ZOOM Worship for December 26, 2021
First Sunday of Christmas
Celebrating the Carols we love**

Territorial Acknowledgment and Announcements

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is situated upon traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron - Wyandot, the Haudenosaunee and later the Mississauga of the Credit First Nations. The territory is mutually covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibway and other allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.

Today, this remains the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in their community, and to share and respect Mother Earth.

Centering Music: "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing" VU 48 verse 1

Hark! the herald angels sing,
'Glory to the newborn King,
peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!'
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
join the triumph of the skies;
with the angelic host proclaim,
'Christ is born in Bethlehem!'
Hark! the herald angels sing,
'Glory to the newborn King!'

Call to Worship and Opening Prayer

One: Come, o ye faithful!
Two: *come to Bethlehem and see.*
One: Go, tell it on the mountains,
Two: *that away in a manger Jesus was born.*
One: Into our living rooms God's Light and love is born.
Two: *On our ZOOM screens God's love is shared.*
One: Let us sing in our hearts and our spaces.
Two: *Let us celebrate our Christmas story in song.*
**All: God with us, God in us,
as we continue to celebrate Jesus birth
help us to birth your Love into our world.
Guide us to continue to share this story
of awe and mystery even as our calendars
leave Christmas behind.
We pray as we sing, as we listen,
and as we make music across distances and devices.
in the name of the one who is your love song to the world,
Jesus the Christ. Amen**

Opening Carol: "O, How Joyfully" VU 57

Oh, how joyfully, oh, how hopefully,
waits the world on Christmas Eve!
Love comes healing, God revealing.
Friends, be joyful and believe!

Oh, how joyfully, oh, how peacefully,
sleeps the world on Christmas Night!
Sins are covered, grace discovered.
In our darkness shines the light!

Oh, how joyfully, oh, how thankfully,
wakes the world on Christmas Morn!
God has spoken, death is broken.
Hallelujah! Christ is born!

Carol for Reflection and Revelation “Let Earth and Heaven Combine” *tune VU 213*

This carol was introduced to our Advent Study group, and was unknown to most of us. It is not included in our hymn books, but the rich imagery included, and theology of God-with-us prompted the group to recommend that we share this hymn together. The words were written by Charles Wesley, one of the foundational members of the Methodist church in England in the 1700s, who also wrote words to over 6,500 other hymns.

Let earth and Heaven combine,
Angels and men agree,
To praise in songs divine
The incarnate Deity,
Our God contracted to a span,
Incomprehensibly made man.

God laid his glory by,
God wrapped him in our clay;
Unmarked by human eye,
The latent Godhead lay;
Infant of days he here became,
And bore the mild Immanuel's name.

See in that infant's face
The depths of deity,
And labor while ye gaze
To sound the mystery
In vain; ye angels gaze no more,
But fall, and silently adore.
Unsearchable the love
That hath the Savior brought;
The grace is far above
Of men or angels' thought:
Suffice for us that God, we know,
Our God, is manifest below.

He deigns in flesh t'appear,
Widest extremes to join;
To bring our vileness near,
And make us all divine:
And we the life of God shall know,
For God is manifest below.

Made perfect first in love,
And sanctified by grace,
We shall from earth remove,
And see his glorious face:
His love shall then be fully showed,
And we shall all be lost in God.

Scripture Reading:

Luke 1:21-40 *selected verses*

After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word;
for my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.'

And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.'

There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.

One: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

All: Thanks be to God.

Carol and Reflection: "Good King Wenceslas"

Reflection**

Though the tune is taken from a much older madrigal, John Mason Neale's "Good King Wenceslas" (1853) is about a man who braves winter storms during Saint Stephen's Day (December 26) to help his poorer neighbours. The story it tells is based on a real person—Wenceslaus I, Duke of Bohemia—who was assassinated by his own brother and had been adored by his subjects. His charity and popularity eventually led to his being named the patron saint of the Czech Republic.

This carol is beloved by many, in large part because of the evocative story images and the possibility to share the story by having different voices sing the parts.

Good King Wenceslas look'd out,
On the Feast of Stephen;
When the snow lay round about,
Deep, and crisp, and even:
Brightly shone the moon that night,
Though the frost was cruel,
When a poor man came in sight,
Gath'ring winter fuel.

"Hither page and stand by me,
If thou know'st it, telling,
Yonder peasant, who is he?
Where and what his dwelling?"
"Sire, he lives a good league hence.
Underneath the mountain;
Right against the forest fence,
By Saint Agnes' fountain."

"Bring me flesh, and bring me wine,
Bring me pine-logs hither:
Thou and I will see him dine,
When we bear them thither."
Page and monarch forth they went,
Forth they went together;
Through the rude wind's wild lament,
And the bitter weather.

"Sire, the night is darker now,
And the wind blows stronger;
Fails my heart, I know now how,
I can go no longer."
"Mark my footsteps, good my page;
Tread thou in them boldly;
Thou shalt find the winter's rage
Freeze thy blood less coldly."

In his master's steps he trod,
Where the snow lay dinted;
Heat was in the very sod
Which the Saint had printed.
Therefore, Christian folk, be sure,
Wealth or rank possessing,
Ye who now will bless the poor,
Shall yourselves find blessing.

Carol and Reflection: "He Is Born/Il est Né VU 50

Sophie Cook

He is Born is often considered the best known traditional French carol. Some say it comes from the region of Provence and there are suggestions that the tune was derived from a Normandy hunting song. The tune appears in a collection of music in 1862 and the French text in 1875.

A great variety of translations into English exist and there is even a Mohawk version collected from Harriet and Carole LeFrance of the St. Regis Mohawk reservation in the United States. It is #50 in Voices United.

This carol always gives me a happy feeling as I imagine a group of street musicians and maybe some dancers spreading the good news of the birth of the Christ Child with an easily repeated chorus and simple details in the verses.

It is probably not on your top ten list of Christmas favourite carols but I chose this carol because it reminds me of an enriching time in my work life and a continuing friendship. One of the schools where I taught became a dual track – English and French Immersion and several of my English colleagues expressed doubts about how we would get along (unfortunately the rep was that never the twain would meet for joint projects and even in the staffroom). At the time I had started a school choir. Shortly after the new teachers and pupils arrived, one of the teachers struck up a conversation with me about music and the result was we expanded to two choirs (taking turns as director and accompanist)- primary and junior, including any child who wanted to join and who was willing to come regularly to practice. This carol is one of the first we included in our junior choir repertoire. We all learned the French (chorus and verse 1) and English together. We branched out with both choirs into other dual language carols and songs throughout the year. I would like to think that our “harmonious” partnership was a positive influence on others to work co-operatively for the benefit of all the students. And it made me a friend with whom I still keep in touch!

“He Is Born/Il est Né VU 50

He is born, little Child divine;
lay on the reeds while the lutes are strumming.
He is born, little Child divine;
join the song to announce the day.

Through long ages of the past,
prophets have foretold his coming;
through long ages of the past,
now the time has come at last! R

O how lovely, O how pure
is this perfect child of heaven;
O how lovely, O how pure,
gracious gift to humankind! R

Lowly lodged in a stable poor,
laid on straw for his infant cradle.
Lowly lodged in a stable poor,
God came down to our mortal aid. R

Jesus, Lord of all the world,
coming as a child among us,
Jesus, Lord of all the world,
grant to us your heavenly peace. R

Carol and Reflection: “All Poor Ones and Humble” VU 63

Barb Finlay

These words were written by Katharine Emily Roberts, and set to a traditional Welsh tune. Her father was an Anglican Priest and her mother was active in the suffrage movement. Rev. Clayton was Assistant Bishop in Peterborough, England and, coincidentally it was in Peterborough (Ontario) that I first became familiar with this carol.

I was separated by many miles from Joanne during those years, and she introduced the hymn to me, and it has become one of my favorites.

Its poetic words and lovely melody underscore the sentiment of Jesus championing those less fortunate in the world. That Jesus may reign over us, but never fails to be servant to all. Deserving of all praise, and yet coming as a child to lead us turns the world upside-down and miraculously makes everything right. As if that were not enough, the assurance that his love for us is everlasting and immovable fills one with comfort and joy.

All poor ones and humble, and all those who stumble,
come hastening, and be not afraid; for Jesus, our treasure,
with love pasted all measure, in lowly poor manger was laid.
Though wise men who found him laid rich gifts around him,
yet oxen they gave him their hay; and Jesus in beauty
accepted their duty: contented in manger he lay.

Refrain:

Then haste we to show him the praises we owe him;
our service he ne'er can despise, whose love still is able
to show us that stable where softly in manger he lies.

The Christ child will lead us, the good Shepherd feed us,
and with us abide till his day. Then hatred he'll banish,
then sorrow will vanish, and death and despair flee away.
And he shall reign ever, and nothing shall sever
from us the great love of our King. His peace and his pity
shall bless his fair city; his praises we ever shall sing.

Refrain:

Carol and Reflection: “Carol of the Bells”

Rev. Joanne

With calls to “throw cares away” and know the joy of Christmas through the sounds of Christmas Bells, this has been a favourite carol of mine for many years. The music was written in 1914 by Mykola Leontovych, a Ukrainian composer, and based on a folk chant. The words were added by American composer and choral conductor Peter J. Wilhousky and still remain under copyright to this day.

I have listened to many recordings of this carol, and sung it in choirs large and small. I learned it as a choral piece when I was 12 years old, and singing in a small all-girl choir. It has been performed by rock bands and orchestras, recorded by heavy metal groups and symphonies, presented in jazz style, country, classical and even by the Muppets. There is something inherently joyful about the tune, a liveliness that ‘rings’ like a bell and always lifts my spirits. I hope it lifts yours today with this special recording by Rob Carruthers!

Hark! how the bells
Sweet silver bells
All seem to say
"Throw cares away."
Christmas is here
Bringing good cheer
To young and old
Meek and the bold

Ding, dong, ding, dong
That is their song
With joyful ring
All caroling
One seems to hear
Words of good cheer
From ev'rywhere
Filling the air

Oh how they pound
Raising the sound
O'er hill and dale
Telling their tale
Joyf'ly they ring
While people sing
Songs of good cheer
Christmas is here
Merry, merry, merry, merry Christmas
Merry, merry, merry, merry Christmas

Virtual Offering **

One: In the gifts of word and song,
we hear the story of your gift of life, O God.
Here, we offer what we can of ourselves,
we who are part of that same story.

Two: *Receive these gifts, God of All, for the work of your shalom reign.
May our words become witness, and our witness become work,
for your people, in your world.
Amen***

Sung Response: "In the Bleak Midwinter," VU 55 verse 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 one I would do my part,
yet what I can, I give him – give my heart.

Prayers of the People **

One: As you have drawn us to your cradle of wondrous love, O God,
draw us together in this virtual space, that we might
pray for your people and your world.

Two: Today, we give you thanks for the gift of your child, Jesus Christ,
who in birth, life, death, and resurrection revealed
your unending love for all people and opened to us
the purpose and promise of life together.

One: We give thanks also for the gifts of this season:
hope for the vision of justice you promise, even in the midst of despair;
for peace within and among your people, even in the midst of conflict;
joy found in reunion and celebration, even amid the challenges of this life;
and love, with the power to transform and heal all things, even in the midst of brokenness.

Two: We pray for those who still long for these, your gifts, God of Love:
for those who will spend this season alone or anxious...
for those who grieve an empty place at the table this year...
for those who are ill, in body or in spirit...
for those in hospital and in care...
for those who endure the terror of conflict and oppression...
for those who will go hungry this day, and who long for the simplest of creation's gifts...
for your people and your world, we pray, O God.

One: Let us listen to the angels' song again, your song of love for this world.
Move us to return that song in what we say and do,
that we may be instruments of your hope and peace and joy and love.
We pray these things in the name of Jesus, who became the Christ,
and who gave us words to say together when we pray to you

The Lord's Prayer (sung) VU 960

Closing Carol: "The Virgin Mary Had a Baby Boy" VU 73

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.

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. R

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. R

Commissioning /Blessing

May God, who sang the universe into being, go with you.

May Christ, who is God's love song to the world, attend you.

May the Holy Spirit continue to sing God's love
into each and every heart, each and every day.

Musical Benediction: VU 75 verse 6

'All glory be to God on high,
and to the earth be peace!

Good will to all from highest heaven
begin, and never cease.'

*** Written by Andy O'Neil, minister at St. Paul's United Church in Riverview, NB and published in Advent Unwrapped, 2019. Adapted and used with permission.*