

## Worship at Home for December 27 2020

For this week, our Worship at Home reflections are also part of our “A Bite from the Apple” podcast. Thanks to those who offered their time and their thoughts for these reflections – most of whom are members of Applewood’s Worship Committee:

Ingeborg Nicholls, Joan Marshall, Peter Kite, Barb Finlay, Rev. Joanne and Ian Prentice

You may choose to read right through this document, stopping for your own reflection at any time, or only read the prayers or the scripture or reflection. You might read with family or friends, or alone. Links will take you to music that may enhance your experience as you move through the worship, but you might choose to visit them later, or not at all. Feel free to share this with anyone who might be interested.

If you’d like to comment or have a question, please call or email me directly:  
416-951-7911 [minister@applewoodunited.ca](mailto:minister@applewoodunited.ca)

In the Spirit

Rev. Joanne

### Centering Prayer

God of sultry stable air,  
God of frosty wind and snow,  
we come to you this wintry day,  
yearning to be swaddled  
against the raw chill of separation,  
loneliness, lovelessness.  
Thaw within us whatever keeps us  
from echoing the angels’ praise.  
Warm our moaning  
with the shine of your glory,  
as you fill the empty stable in our hearts  
with your outpouring of home and love.

Ame

*From “Celebrate God’s Presence” the United Church of Canada*

### ***Ingeborg Nicholls offers a reflection on “Silent Night”***

I came to his country as a young girl, speaking only two English words – “Mother” and “Father.” It was the first week of December.

I saw lots of snow, but I missed the mountains of Norway. My 14-year-old cousin Martha prepared a Christmas concert at the farmhouse where they lived. My sister and I mumbled a few words in English, without understanding what we said.

But when Martha began to sing "Silent Night" we felt at home. We called it Stille Natt, Heilge Natt," almost like the original German version, except for the for the German description of Baby Jesus with 'curly hair.'

I still love this carol.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUhEKaeC3s4>

***Joan Marshall offers a reflection on "The Huron (Wendat)Carol"***

New words by D.L. Seaborn (2018)

At this time of Christmas we hear traditional carols that warm our hearts as we remember old times – with, I hope, fond memories that bring smiles to our faces. Sometimes old songs are re-written to include more of society's values of today. As I chose the Huron Carol, I was directed to the United Church of Canada and found these new words that are recommended by them.

These new words were written by an Indigenous person. As I read her reasons why she felt compelled to write her version, I was moved to re-read it numerous times and reflect on her version.

As I reflected and thought deeply of her beautiful words, I found my joy of sharing this carol again.

These new words moved me and they tell us of the Indigenous view of their stories which they are sharing with us. She also includes the celebration of a Holy child who came into this world to love everyone and share God's love.

This new version shares with us their culture as they walked their own path. It inspires me to really listen to the stories that their elders have passed down to the next generation and so on. Their history has wonderful stories to tell but also disturbing ones.

The lands which we are on have always been sacred to the Indigenous people. And yet they still find soul-filled and deep rejoicing and see this special baby born of a Child of Light grow into a Man of Light who showed the Light of God to all lands.

So let us sing joyfully as we sing these new words, as we remember we are an inclusive and loving church here at Applewood United Church.

Rejoice and celebrate!

For more information, visit this page <http://seabornsong.com/the-huron-carol/>

**A Huron (Wendat) Carol**

We gather at midwinter dark to share this hallowed night.

Within our longhouse, warm and dry, the fire glows with light.

Our Elders sing a teaching song;

it fills the night that seems so long:

This is our sacred home, 'neath heaven's dome,  
shining stars proclaim the dawn.

Sky Woman came down from above, but found no place to stand,  
till Toad put mud on Turtle's back, and that became the land.

Sky Woman died in giving birth;  
her holy body fed the earth.

This is our sacred home, 'neath heaven's dome,  
shining stars proclaim the dawn.

A valiant Little Turtle rode a cloud up to the sky;  
she used the lightning to make fire, and made our Sun to shine.

He journeys 'neath the world we see,  
returns to make the shadows flee.

This is our sacred home, 'neath heaven's dome,  
shining stars proclaim the dawn.

The Black Robes came from lands afar, and told us of a day  
Judea had been colonized, and Rome must be obeyed.

A mother bore a child of light;  
rejoicing filled the starlit night:

This is our sacred home, 'neath heaven's dome,  
shining stars proclaim the dawn.

Rejoice! Have courage one and all! The stars shine overhead,  
the same stars that shone down upon a baby's humble bed.

The infant grew to be a man;  
his words, like stars, light many lands.

This is our sacred home, 'neath heaven's dome,  
shining stars proclaim the dawn.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3c7S2WKb4o0> (instrumental version)

### ***Peter Kite offers a reflection on "Carol of the Bells"***

I was given what I thought was an easy task. To give a brief reflection on a Christmas Carol, the Carol of the Bells. A song whose various iterations I thoroughly enjoy for their emotive and evocative power.

Okay, I thought, no biggy. This will be straight forward. WRONG!

I was stunned to discover I had completely misunderstood the song's origin and significance. I have come to understand that the song only came to be in 1914. A composition based on old Ukrainian folk songs. The composer that arranged what is now a carol was Mykola Leontovych, it was called, the Shchedryk, (pronounced "shedrick"). The song was first performed in Kiev in late 1916. When the Russian Revolution took place the following year, it led to the briefly independent Ukrainian People's Republic. To promote that country's independent status and help gain world recognition and support for an independent Ukraine; that country's president

had a choir sent out to tour Europe and North America. That a cappella song was one of their showcase pieces.

By the time that choir performed at Carnegie Hall in October of 1921, the Ukrainian People's Republic had been crushed. the Ukraine absorbed in to the U.S.S.R, and Leontyovych had been assassinated by the Cheka, soon to be know as the KGB in what was later known as the Red Terror. The majority of the choir then settled in the U.S.. In the years thereafter, the English lyrics that made the song a Christmas carol were composed by the first generation American Peter Wilhousky, whose family had come from eastern Europe. He copyrighted the song in the Depression Era U.S. and the song became increasingly well known from a 1950s recording by Bing Crosby. The carol has grown in prominence in the 60 years since.

The song has had many diverse iterations in that meantime. It has been done by the Trans Siberian Orchestra, the Petatonix a cappella group, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, the California Raisins, the Muppets and many others. It has also been used in movies and games for non-spiritual/parodic background music.

I rather like this iteration. I hope you do as well. Merry Christmas!

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQadcm\\_dwEM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQadcm_dwEM)

### ***Barb Finlay offers a reflection on “All Poor Ones and Humble”***

I can start my reflection about the personal connection that I have to this Christmas Hymn. When Joanne was living far away from me in Sudbury, and had a one year old, (Stephanie) I asked her to record some Christmas carols on a cassette tape (yes kids, that was a thing) and send it to me. One of the carols she sent was this one, and it quickly became one of my favorites.

I really love the melody, but even more, the words spoke to me too. No matter who you are, no matter what your circumstances, we are called to the stable. Our reward for that trip to the stable is Love. An enduring and complete Love that knows no equal in the world.

The second verse encompasses the mission of Jesus and his promise to always be with us. Nothing can sever us from that Love.

I don't think we sing it often enough, it is a hymn for the whole Christian year, not only Christmas. I am happy to be sharing it today, and who knows, maybe some Sunday in July?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7Jj9c8mLQ4>

### ***Rev Joanne offers a reflection on “The Wexford Carol”***

The Wexford Carol is a beloved traditional Irish Christmas carol that seems to date from about the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It was not published until a folklorist named Grattan Flood heard it sung by a local man, and wrote the words and music down to share while he was in Enniscorthy, a town in Ireland's County Wexford. Some traditions state that only a man should sing this carol, as it was believed to have been sung for centuries only by a men's chorus.

I had heard it many times, but never so moving as when I was a student preparing for ministry. Our worship professor, Dr. Bill Kervin, simply stood and sang it for us at a student and faculty pre-Christmas gathering. He explained that these regional carols, like the Coventry Carol or the Sussex carol, would be sung at informal family gatherings as well as in worship. The haunting melody, the simple story, Bill's strong tenor voice proclaiming the Good News and the reminder of God's gift to us in Jesus has stayed with me ever since.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZmRwsuyG-c>

A Prayer for Christmas week:

May this eternal truth be always on our hearts:  
That the God who breathed this world into being,  
Placed stars into the heavens,  
And designed a butterfly's wing  
Is the God who entrusted incarnation – life with us -  
to the care of ordinary people;  
became vulnerable that we might know  
how strong is the power of Love.  
A mystery so deep it is impossible to grasp.  
A mystery so beautiful it is impossible to ignore.  
Amen

***Ian Prentice offers a reflection on "Joy to the World"***

The hymn was written by Isaac Watts in 1719. Twenty-three years later in 1742 George Frederic Handel composed Antioch. Almost a century later Lowell Mason put the two together in the arrangement we know today. It has been around for a long time. By the late twentieth century it was the most published Christmas hymn in North America. I have fond memories of 'Joy to the World' from my childhood. It was sung annually at the Christmas eve candlelight service or on Christmas Sunday; sometimes both. My favourite format was the hymn's use as the processional. The organ would play the intro, then the choir would enter singing with the congregation joining in. By the time the choir filled the center aisle, it was like musical thunder inside the packed church. I could barely hear myself singing. It is unfortunate that we won't be able to sing 'Joy to the World' together this Christmas, but I will have that musical thunder in my head.

[Christmas Eve at Washington National Cathedral – Hymn Joy to the World – YouTube](#)

Blessing:

May the joy of this season of Christmas continue to ring in your hearts,  
and may you know the peace of God's presence,  
the calm of Jesus' love,  
and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen