

Welcome to Worship

Fundy St Lawrence Dawning Waters Region  
Regional Council 15  
First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council

December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020

### A Service of Lessons and Carols for Christmas

Christmas is not a time or a season but a state of mind. To cherish peace and good will, to be plenteous in mercy, is to have the real spirit of Christmas. If we think on these things, there will be born in us a Savior and over us will shine a star sending its gleam of hope to the world."

- Calvin Coolidge

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PLACE

### WELCOME

### MINUTE FOR MISSION

### CALL TO WORSHIP:

One: *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace and goodwill toward all.*

All: **For out of God's own being, Jesus has come to bring light and love to all people.**

One: *Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us, come to gather our tears and laughter, our work and our play, into God's loving embrace.*

All: **Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace and goodwill toward all.**

INTROIT: VU 29 Hark the Glad Sound

### OPENING PRAYER (unison):

**Wondrous God, thank you for revealing your glory to us through unlikely people in unexpected places. Surround us as we worship in many different places, as we remember your incarnate love born to a woman from a forgotten corner of the world. Let the holy mystery that surrounds Jesus' birth surprise us with joy and strengthen us to go out into the world with your light, that hope, peace, and love might shine forth from us to your honour and glory and praise. Amen**

### LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLES

Babe in a stable born,  
a gift from God, of God  
vulnerable and small, yet Saviour of all.  
We confess that this gift is often neglected  
by our fear that turns to a violent over-powering.  
Fill us with your Spirit  
so we will recognize the spark of holiness  
in one another and in the world around us.  
"Light of Christ, light flaming bright,  
Burn in our hearts, holy fire"  
(Light the first candle.)

Saviour of All,  
your gift of salvation is made known  
in the presence of your people.  
We confess that this gift is often dampened  
by our lack of attention and neglect.  
Fill us with your Spirit  
so we will recognize the spark of holiness  
in one another and in the world around us.  
"Light of Christ, light flaming bright,  
Burn in our hearts, holy fire"  
(Light the second candle.)

Divine Giver of Light,

your presence burns brightly  
for us and for all of creation.  
Yet we are quick to shield this light  
and keep it to ourselves.  
Open our hearts  
and give us the means to shine  
beyond this community into the world.  
"Light of Christ, light flaming bright,  
Burn in our hearts, holy fire"  
(Light the third candle.)

Mysterious One,  
you reveal the inner thoughts  
of all who draw near to you.  
We confess it is easier to keep you at arm's length  
than to allow you to transform our hearts.  
Draw us near  
and comfort us with your eternal love  
as we learn to live as children of the light.  
"Light of Christ, light flaming bright,  
Burn in our hearts, holy fire"  
(Light the fourth candle.)

The gift of Jesus Christ,  
the ultimate gift of God's love,  
burns within the heart of this community.  
Through this gift,  
we come to know forgiveness, joy, and peace  
that transcends our present struggles.  
May we open this gift among us  
and shine with the love of God  
in this community and into the world.  
(Light the Christ Candle)

**CAROL:** VU 75 While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night

**SCRIPTURE:** Isaiah 9: 2,6,7

### **THE STORY OF STILL, STILL, STILL**

The melody for "Still, still, still" is a traditional folk tune from the Austrian state of Salzburg. The carol appeared for the first time in 1865 in a folksong collection by Maria Vinzenz Süß (1802-1868), founder of the Salzburg Museum. The words, which run between four and six verses in German, describe the peace of the infant Jesus and his mother as the baby is sung to sleep. The modern standard German version is attributed to Georg Götsch (1895-1956).

There are various English translations of "Still, still, still." The version that we sing was translated by John Rutter in 1994.

**THE CAROL:** VU 47 Still, Still, Still

**SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 34: 1-10

### **THE STORY OF ANGELS FROM THE REALMS OF GLORY**

Next to Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley, no writer has made a greater contribution to English hymnody than James Montgomery. Montgomery's parents were Moravian missionaries in the West Indies. While attending Moravian seminary, James learned of their deaths, and for a period, lived in aimless discouragement. He took up editing for a newspaper called the Sheffield Register, in London, where he became known for his poetry. "Angels from the Realms of Glory" first appeared as a poem in his newspaper on December 24, 1816. Many students of hymnody have acclaimed this as one of our finest Advent and Christmas carols.

**THE CAROL:** VU 36 Angels from the Realms of Glory

**PRAYER:**

**God of gifts, God of grace, bless our ears and our hearts this day, that as we sing these carols, hearing both stories of scripture and inspiration, we might find both comfort and challenge within them. May we be inspired to sing with gusto, telling the story of scripture through our actions**

with reckless abandon, so that the world might be touched by your love. In the name of Jesus, the Christ, we offer this prayer. Amen.

**LEARNING TIME:** Room for a Little

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 2: 1-20

### **THE STORY OF JESUS, OUR BROTHER**

This carol originally hails from a 12th century Latin song "Orientis Partibus" which first appeared in France and is usually attributed to Pierre de Corbeil, Bishop of Sens (d 1222). The tune is said to have been part of the Fete de l'Ane (The Donkey's Festival), which celebrated the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt and was a regular Christmas observance in Beauvais and Sens, France in the 13th century. During the mass, it was common for a donkey to be led or ridden into the church.

The words and tune were designed to give thanks for the ass on which Mary rode, and began: Orientis partibus Adventavit asinus ('From the East the ass has come'). Each verse was sung, and finished with the chorus 'Hail, Sir donkey, hail'. It was a solemn affair, but the tune became very popular in 17th and 18th century Germany. The song emigrated to England in the 12th century, where it began to take on its modern character. It is for this reason that some sources will give the origin of this song as England.

**THE CAROL:** VU 56 Jesus, Our Brother

### **OFFERING OUR GIFTS**

**DUET: MARY'S LULLABY**

### **PRAYER OF DEDICATION:**

Gifted by your grace, we offer you what you have given us, O God, and pray that these gifts may be used for the sharing of love, the doing of justice, and the giving of peace. Amen

**SCRIPTURE:** Revelation 21: 1-6

### **THE STORY OF GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN**

During the bitter days of slavery, black slaves on American plantations solaced themselves with song and created a unique form of American hymnology—the Negro Spiritual. One of these that was found and published became a well-loved Christmas carol, Go Tell it on the Mountain. John Wesley Work Jr. was born in Nashville in 1871. Growing up around music, due mostly to his Dad being a choirmaster, he learned to not only appreciate, but to preserve and perform the Negro Spiritual. Many of the words to this particular spiritual were somewhat unknown, due to the passing of the spiritual from plantation to plantation and from generation to generation. But the chorus, Go Tell it on the Mountain/Jesus Christ is Born was crystal clear. Intrigued by this, John wrote two new stanzas for the song. To black slaves, the birth of a liberating Saviour was a message to be heralded from the highest mountains. It still is for us all.

**THE CAROL:** VU 43 Go Tell it on the Mountain

### **PRAYERS FOR OURSELVES AND OTHERS**

In the name of Jesus, we give thanks for the Light,  
who came as light for the world,  
we join in prayer for all the faithful  
who seek the light in true community on earth.  
(moment of silence)  
God, in your love, hear our prayer.

In the name of Jesus, we give thanks for the Light of justice  
born a Jew in the Roman empire,  
we pray for all who are persecuted, who suffer for reasons of  
gender or race, for reasons of faith or politics.  
(moment of silence)

God, in your love, hear our prayer.

in the name of Jesus, we give thanks for the Light of hope,  
who was born in a stable,  
we pray for those who are in need of any kind, be it need  
of shelter, need of food, need of meaningful work, need of caring.  
(moment of silence)  
God, in your love, hear our prayer.

In the name of Jesus, we give thanks for the Light of compassion,  
for whom there was no safe place,  
we pray for all of the fearful, all of the bereaved, and all of the  
sick, and for all who are in pain and special need.  
(moment of silence)  
God, in your love, hear our prayer.

Light of our souls, call us onward into your light, as this new year  
begins. Let this be the year of the coming of your dream... you  
Kingdom here  
on earth...as we pray together the prayer Jesus taught his  
disciples to pray:

## PRAYER OF JESUS

### SCRIPTURE:

Titus 2: 11-14

## THE STORY OF O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

The minister of Holy Trinity, Phillips Brooks, was born in Boston, in 1825 and educated at Harvard. He was a beloved and respected evangelist. After serving several Episcopal churches in Philadelphia and Boston, he was appointed Bishop of that area.

This giant of a man, who stood 6-feet 8 inches, also had a big heart that endeared him to old and young alike. There were toys in his office for the many children who visited him. It was a familiar sight to see the beloved bishop sitting on the floor playing a game with a group of children.

He had visited Bethlehem in December of 1865 while travelling in the Holy Land. His journey included a horseback ride from Jerusalem to Bethlehem on Christmas Eve. By nightfall he was in the field where, according to tradition, the shepherds heard the angelic announcement. Then he attended the Christmas Eve service at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

Something about the beauty and simplicity of that visit stayed with Phillips Brooks when he returned to America. Several years later, when he wanted a new song of Christmas for the children to sing at his church, he reached back in memory for inspiration from his Holy Land visit. The poem he wrote painted in words the sights and sounds of that little town of Bethlehem he had visited.

Writing to the children of his congregation, he recalled that first visit:

"I remember especially on Christmas Eve, when I was standing in the old church in Bethlehem, close to the spot where Jesus was born, when the whole church was ringing hour after hour with the splendid hymns of praise to God, how again and again it seemed as if I could hear voices I knew well, telling each other of the "wonderful night" of the Savior's birth."

### THE CAROL: VU 64 O, Little Town of Bethlehem

### COMMISSIONING:

One: Every day of the week ahead is a Christmas Day.

All: **A day in which Christ is, and will be; A moment into which the holy one has come,  
And a moment which anticipates the reign of peace.**

One: Let us then, live as a Christmas people.

All: **Let us be a people filled with God here and now, compassionate, loving, justice-seeking friends of Jesus. Let us also be a people with a light in our window, awake and ready for the Messiah's return.**

### SUNG BENEDICTION: VU 59 Joy to the World