

Gathering Song: VU 36 Angels, from the Realms of Glory vv.1-3

****Welcome and Lighting of the Affirmation Candle**

One: We gather in the warmth of so much light today! After weeks of waiting and watching the light be rekindled in our Advent wreath, the circle has come to completion! In this season of Christmas, we celebrate the light of Christ that is born into this world, symbolized by our Christ candle.

And through our Affirmation Candle, we celebrate the light of Christ that is born in us, and we give thanks for all the diversity in which God creates us and calls us good! In this community of faith, we celebrate that:

Welcome All are welcome in this place.
 All are welcome by God's grace.

****Call to Worship**

One: In places of war and places of peace...

All: There, we will find the Christ child.

One: In moments of sorrow and moments of joy...

All: There, we will find the Christ child.

One: In times of despair and times of hope...

All: There, we will find the Christ child.

One: In places of hatred and places of love...

All: There, we will find the Christ child.

One: We find the Christ child in *all* places and times, for where two or three are gathered in his name...

All: There, we will find the Christ child!

One: So come, let us gather our hearts to worship, and let us find the Christ child together. Let us pray.

Prayer:

All: God of manger straw and swaddle cloth, God of silent nights and joyfully-chaotic mornings, we long to know you. The hustle and bustle of this time of year can be more than distracting, so for a moment, we pray, still our busy hearts. Quiet our minds. Help us to sink deeply into this day. Help us to pause here, to linger here as we hear your good news spoken over us. (*a time of silent prayer*)

God, we long to know you, so speak to us now. With grateful hearts, we pray. With grateful hearts, we listen. Amen.

Hymn: VU 76 See Amid the Winter's Snow

Reading: Luke 2:8–20

Intro: Listen to the Christmas story from the gospel of Luke as though I'm reading it to you for the first time. You may even want to close your eyes

and visualize the scene. Note the variety of ways characters in the story respond to the good news. Put yourself in their shoes. What would your response be? May God bless us with insight as we listen to a reading from our sacred scripture:

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 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: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

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.” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Hymn: VU 70 There’s a Star in the East

Reflection: (Penny and Kym)

Reflection Question: Over the course of this Advent, we have explored the ways in which God has dwelled with Creation from generation to generation through the stories of scripture. In the poem we just shared, we heard about the ways that the light shines in the darkness of creation and the depths of our despair, and the light has always continued to shine. And now it is time for us to reflect on our *own* stories to wonder: when were the times when God’s light shone in *our* lives? When have we felt God’s presence with us—either as a light in the darkness, or in the hand of a child, or the good news of a stranger or an angel or dream?

So, that is our reflection question this morning as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, whom we also call “Emanuel”, meaning “God With Us”. If it feels right for you, take some time right now to pause this video and reflect on this question: when has there been a time in your life that you felt God’s presence was with you? You might want to journal your answer, or if you’re worshipping with another person, have a conversation and share your stories. Or maybe you’ll

hold onto this question and ponder it through the day on a walk, or some quiet time after worship.

As you reflect on your *own* stories this day, may your heart be opened to the ways that Jesus, Emanuel, God With Us, has also been *God With You*. Thanks be to God! Amen.

Hymn: VU 43 Go Tell it On the Mountain

Offertory Invitation:

For generations and generations, it has been a Christian tradition to give gifts on Christmas. Children give homemade cards, parents and friends give presents wrapped in brightly-colored paper and bows. We do this in remembrance of the Magi who gave gifts when Jesus arrived. But we also do this because we love one another, and when you love someone, it feels good to give.

So just as we give gifts to one another on Christmas morning, let us also turn that same love toward God through our givings to this congregation of Knox United Church. Let us be generous with our time, talents, and treasures, because when we love someone, it feels good to give!

****Ministry of Music:** VU 40 Before the Marvel of this Night ?

**** Offering Dedication:**

All: Loving and gracious God, you have given the world the most precious gift—the gift of yourself in Jesus Christ. May *our* gifts and *our* lives be a reflection of *your* gift. May we, too, bring light to the world through all we say and do. In Jesus' name, we pray this. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Instructions: The seasons of Advent and Christmas can be filled with so much hustle and bustle and noise, which can be wonderful and also sometimes a little overwhelming! In a moment, we will take some time in silence and stillness to be with God in prayer—to bring the hopes and fears of all our years to God, and in the stillness, to feel God's presence right alongside us in our days. So, please join your hearts with mine in prayer:

Holy God of candlelight and open doors,
God of tables and feasts,
God of holly and of ivy, we give you our prayers.
Like pennies shaken loose from our pockets,
we turn over every corner of our hearts to give you our truth
through prayers of gratitude,
prayers of hope,
prayers of worry,
prayers of grief.
Collect them all and hold us close on this Christmas morning,
for today,
especially today,
we long to feel you near.
(a time of silent prayer)
With hopeful and grateful hearts we pray, God, for we trust that you are like Our Mother *and*
Our Father...
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our

trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn: VU 48 Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

****Blessing:**

One: Dear Siblings in Christ, from generation to generation, God keeps drawing near.

From generation to generation, a light has shone in the darkness.

From generation to generation, God's love has moved through the world like our connection moves across time and space, holding us together as a family of faith even when we are apart.

So may we celebrate that.

May we *celebrate* the ways that God has drawn near to us, year after year, and from generation to generation.

May we rest in the joy of this day, and may we allow it to change us.

Merry Christmas!

Go in peace. God is with you every step of the way.

****Parting Song:** VU 59 Joy to the World

**OUR MISSION
TO SHARE GOD'S LOVE
BY LIVING THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS:
showing mercy,
promoting justice,
offering forgiveness,
acceptance, and hope.**

Our Vision...

We, the congregation of Knox United Church, publicly proclaim our commitment to become an open and welcoming community of faith. We declare that we welcome everyone regardless of age, race, ability, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Everyone is welcome here.

Through the process of honouring diversity and challenging injustice with those who bear the weight of discrimination, we commit ourselves to openness, growth, education, love, and acceptance.

Christ's Disciples in Ministry: Everyone
MINISTER: Rev. Penny Nelson
Minister of Music & Dramatic Arts: John Lindsay-Botten
Church School Superintendent: Lynne Stewart
Youth Group: James O'Connell
Pastoral Care: Olive McIlldoon & Judy Hayes

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+Service adapted from the "Creative Christmas Liturgy" written by Rev. Sarah Speed. Call to Worship adapted from Richard Bott while at Dunbar Heights United Church, Vancouver, BC. Found in *The Gathering: A/C/E 2014-15*, pg. 33. Used with permission; Offering Dedication from Frances Flook, Emo/Devlin Pastoral Charge, Emo, ON. Found in *The Gathering: A/C/E 2014-15*, pg. 35. Used with permission;