

## 4:00 pm – 24 December 2023 – Christmas Eve Communion – *Sing a New Song*<sup>1</sup>

### Welcome / Land Acknowledgement

We come to worship in Jesus' name acknowledging with gratitude the land where each one of us lives. Our family is gathered tonight on the Coast Salish Territory of Lkwungen people – the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ. This is traditional and unceded land – I don't know the full story of its history but continue to pray that past and present injustices can be reconciled as we commit ourselves to just and respectful relationships.

### Call to Worship / The Christ Candle

**Voice 1:** The angels sing the glory of God in the highest heavens.

**Voice 2:** *“Be not afraid, for I bring you good news of great joy for all people. To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord... you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger. Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom God favors!”* (Luke 2)

**Voice 1:** At Christmas, God speaks in signs. The baby in the manger is a sign of a new life and new governance shining in the world. Christ is born and the world is filled with the promise of hope, signs of peace, joy and the incarnation of God's love.

**Voice 2:** Holy are you, Source of all new life among us.

**All:** Jesus Christ is the light of the world.

**Voice 2:** We join with all creation in joyful praise.

**All:** We light this candle because God has been made flesh and dwells among us

□ *Oh come, all ye faithful* (verses 1, 2, 4)

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### PWS&D Message ~ **Rejoice! Christ is born!**

Hope is not lost even in the face of poverty, injustice and disaster.

The church, through PWS&D, responds to God's call to reach out to those in need. Together with our partners, we are making a positive impact in our global community, helping those affected by disasters and providing a sustainable way out of poverty.

Encouraged by God's promise of abundant life, we are addressing hunger, poverty, injustice and disaster. Our efforts are focused on caring for the poor, sick and vulnerable. Through our collaborative efforts, we aim to restore human dignity, alleviate suffering and promote community cooperation.

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<sup>1</sup> The inspiration and much of the content for the Advent services is from “Sing a New Song: An Advent Devotional” from the PCC.

As a reflection of Christ's hope, peace, joy and love, we are striving toward a sustainable, compassionate and just world.

As we celebrate the birth of Christ, let us remember our brothers and sisters across the globe. Your support is crucial to the success of this transformative work. Thank you for continuing to help bring hope, peace, joy and love around the world through your contributions to PWS&D.

### † Gathering Prayer / Words of Hope

God of mystery and mercy, you stir in our hearts and bring us joy. You stir in our minds and bring us wisdom. You stir in the world and bring hope for the future. You came as a little child, stirring up praise, so we come to adore you with the angels – to bow with the shepherds – to kneel in wonder with the magi – to ponder your mystery with Joseph – to love and cherish you with Mary. We come with humble hearts full of joy because you came to us in Jesus, whom we hold on our hearts this day.

God of grace and truth, in Christ you offer us the gift of yourself, but we are attracted to presents under the tree. You came to us in flesh and blood, but we fail to see you in the humans right beside us. You shine in the world, but we dwell on the darkness in the daily news. Forgive us. Renew our hope and our trust in you as you reach out to us from the manger. Amen

[The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light! Walk in the assurance of God's grace and forgiveness. Be people of light and forgive one another.](#)

### Scripture and Song     **Isaiah 9: 2-7**

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

□ *Hark! The herald angels sing*

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**Titus 2: 11-14**

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

□ *I wonder as I wander (verses 1-3)*

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### **Luke 2: 1-7**

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered.

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. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 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 for them in the inn.

□ *Still, still, still*

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### **Luke 2: 8-14**

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!”

□ *It came upon a midnight clear*

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### **Luke 2: 15-20**

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.

□ *Infant holy, Infant lowly*

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**Psalm 96, 97, 98** (selected verses paraphrased)

O sing to the Lord a new song; sing to God, all the earth. Sing and bless God's name... Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice – let the sea roar, and all that fills it – let the field exult, and everything in it. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before our God who is coming...

Light dawns for the honourable, and joy for the upright in heart. Rejoice O you righteous and give thanks to God's holy name!

O sing to the Lord a new song, for God has done marvelous things... Make a joyful noise all the earth – break forth into joyous song and sing praises. Sing praises to the God with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody. With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before our Creator. Let the sea roar, and all that fills it – the world and those who live in it. Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy...

### Reflection

Today, we celebrate the birth of our long-awaited Saviour! The Advent season of preparation has ended, and we can lift up a new song of glad tidings and joy for the arrival of what we've been waiting for.

Mary's song magnifies and blesses God for divine faithfulness to God's people in the coming of the Messiah through her. God scatters the proud and exalts the humble, brings the mighty low and lifts up the lowly, leaves the rich empty and fills the hungry.

Zechariah's song praises God for delivering Israel from its enemies and remembering the past covenant. God sends John as a prophet and forerunner of Jesus, who will be God's saving act and the Peacemaker for humanity.

The heavens burst forth in song as the angels exclaim to the shepherds: *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward all."*

And Simeon sings his last song of most profound satisfaction and peace at having witnessed the answer to the world's ancient prayers with his own eyes.

What a reasons to sing! We sing in all kinds of situations to express emotions when words fail us. And so, the psalmist calls all the nations to sing a new song because of the new – yet ancient – thing God is doing in Jesus Christ – the whole earth is glad! This new hymn comes from renewed lives that have experienced the grace of Emmanuel, God with us.

Through the challenges of dead-ends, pandemics, exceptional loss, swelling fears and growing uncertainty, we can confidently join with the ancient songs of the faithful as we celebrate Christ's coming with great joy. Let us sing a new song of praise together!

□ ***On Christmas night all Christians sing (verses 1 and 4) 162***

Invitation to the Lord's Table (adapted from Jerie Lukefahr)

Wonderful Counselor. Mighty God. Everlasting Father. Prince of Peace. The prophet gave us many names to use when we speak of Jesus.

Friend. Disciple. Neighbour. Beloved. Jesus gives us many names to use when we speak of each other.

Communion. Eucharist. Heavenly banquet. The Lord's Supper. This meal is known by many names, but only one person prepares it, and invites us to partake of it, and that is Christ, our brother, our saviour and our friend.

The invitation is for each of us: all who are faithful – all who doubt. All who are fearful – all who are strong. Come to the table – it may be familiar, or it may be brand new to you. This table does not belong to the church, it belongs to Jesus Christ – and it is he who invites everyone to share the bread of life and the cup of grace.

□ ***Let all mortal flesh keep silence***

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† Celebrating Together with Thanksgiving

Holy and Merciful God, maker of all; blessed are you for all the wonders of creation. All your works, from the heights of the heavens to the depths of the sea, echo the music of your praise. You gave us breath and speech, melody and harmony, to join with all living things to sing your praise:

□ ***Let heaven and nature sing, let heaven and nature sing,  
Let heaven, let heaven and nature sing.***

God of heaven and earth – God with us in the infant Jesus – God with us on the streets where we live – you came to be with us – to show us the way to healing and peace.

Born into a world of conflict, Jesus showed us how to seek justice, love kindness, and care for the vulnerable. As we gather around this table laid for us in Jesus' name, we give you thanks for all the festive meals we have shared over the years, and for those we will share in the days ahead. Thank you for our companions. Thank you for all the goodness we taste in the gifts of the earth. Thank you for the many ways you feed us. We remember all your children who do not have enough, and we pledge ourselves to share what we have more generously.

□ *With wonders of his love, with wonders of his love,  
With wonders, wonders of his love.*

In this time of silence, O God, we offer you all the concerns that burden our hearts and ask you to help us carry them for a while...

All this we surrender to you to hold and to heal, in the transforming name of Jesus Christ.

God of mystery and manger, come again to feed us at this table, so that we may taste your presence in our lives. Let your Holy Spirit move in power over us and over these gifts of bread and wine. As we taste the bread and sip from the cup, may we know that Jesus Christ, your love made flesh, shares our flesh. Open our eyes to see him in each other, that together we may...

□ *Repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy  
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.*

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour are yours now and forever. Amen

### Sharing Bread and Wine

On the night he was betrayed, Jesus sat down to a meal with his friends. While they were eating, he took the bread, said a prayer, and shared it with everyone at the table saying: *This is my body, which is for you. Do this to remember me.*

Later, when the meal was ending, he took a cup of wine and raised it, saying: *This cup that is poured out is the new covenant.*

The one who was first held by Mary, is held for us in this bread.

The one whose body was laid in a manger, is cradled in this cup.

In these gifts God comes to us so that we may come to God.

### Closing Prayer

Eternal and ever-present God, in gratitude for this meal in which you have given yourself to us, we give ourselves to you. Take us out this night to walk in your light, to

follow the Prince of Peace, to lead lives filled with your love – feeding a hungry world and sharing your Good News with those we meet. We thank you this holy night that you chose to be with us. We join our voices to sing in prayer...

□ ***Our Father in heaven*** (*The Lord's Prayer – no repeats*) **469**

### Blessing

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. Amen

□ ***Silent night***

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