

CHRISTMAS EVE
“O come and adore him”
December 24, 2021
7:00 p.m. on Zoom.

Call to worship:

Isaiah 9:2-7

Lighting 4 candles of Advent

During the season of Advent, which is the four Sunday's preceding Christmas, we light candles to symbolize the light which Christ brings to the hearts and minds of those who believe in, love, and follow Him. Each candle represents an aspect of this light.

On the first Sunday of Advent,
we light the candle of Hope.
We consider the age in which we're living,
and we prepare ourselves to welcome Christ
not only at the cradle,
not only at the wedding feast of heaven and earth,
but in the daily, chaotic, messiness
that is life between the horizons.

On the second Sunday of Advent,
we light the candle of Peace.
We remember that as long as we are apart
from the One who created life itself,
there will be no peace.
We thank God for His offer of forgiveness
realized in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Christ.
We turn to Him in heart, mind, and body,
and rejoice in the peace that passes understanding.

On the third Sunday of Advent,
we light the candle of Joy.
And we rejoice in the assurance,
that with the advent of the Messiah,
the Father is working all things
for the redemption and re-creation
of His Garden of Eden.

On the fourth Sunday of Advent,
we light the candle of Love.
We bow in wonder at the love of God,
who chooses again and again

to reach out to us,
and rescue us from all darkness.
And we yield to His love,
praying with Mary:
“Here am I, the servant of the Lord.”

Tonight, as we celebrate Christ’s coming to us,
the light that shines, dispelling all darkness,
O come, all ye faithful,
come and adore Him.

Hymn: “O come, all ye faithful” Kevin Shaw

Prayers of praise, confession

God of mystery and wonder,
Creator, Christ, and Spirit,
on this holy night, the angels sing your praises with great joy!
Glory to you, O God!
Mary and Joseph ponder your promise, cradled in their arms.
Glory to you, O God!
And so we come to praise you,
singing with the angels,
amazed with the shepherds,
cradling the Christ Child in our hearts.
Glory to you, O God, Source of Light and Love for all people.

**Heavenly Father,
full of grace and mercy;
You give us the gift of your Son, Jesus,
but we confess we get caught up in our own gift giving
on this holy night.
You offer us new life in the babe of Bethlehem,
but we smile at the baby
and forget the new direction he offers.
Jesus was born in human flesh,
but we fail to see the dignity in the human lives around us.
You offer us Light,
but too often we remain clouded
in discouragement, anxiety, and sin.
Forgive us, O God,
and help us cherish the meaning
in your gifts of wonder in the Christ Child.¹**

¹ Worship resource for December 24, 2021 from presbyterian.ca/worship

Assurance of pardon

The angels brought glad tidings that first Christmas night.
Their words still echo through the ages: "Do not be afraid."
This very night, the Saviour is born for all of us.
Accept the forgiveness that the Christ Child brings for you,
and rejoice with the angels.

And give thanks to the Lord,
for He is good.
His love endures forever.

God's word proclaimed:

Read: Luke 2:1-7

Message:

Emperor Augustus ordered that all citizens be registered.

Such registration ensured that all citizens were appropriately taxed and knew who was in charge. It also kept the government apprised of who was eligible to be pressed into military service.

In those days, life was pretty good.

There were roads, reasonably reliable water infrastructures, a standing police force and even a fire brigade! In those days, there was peace in the land ... as long as every man, woman, child, and donkey obeyed without question the man on the throne: Augustus – whose self-given name suggests near-divinity.

In those days, a carpenter and his 9-month pregnant fiancé travelled to his ancestral town to be registered.

Because the Emperor Augustus said so.

Two poor travelers amid hundreds, if not thousands.

It must have seemed, to Augustus, to be a sign of his greatness that all these people were on the move because he said so!

And yet, apart from their tax payments and possible military service, their lives and activities were completely insignificant as long as they didn't break the peace.

Insignificant lives carrying out the orders of a self-proclaimed near-god Emperor.

Except, unbeknownst to the emperor, this insignificant carpenter was a descendant of David. And David, was the king appointed by the true God to rule over His people, Israel.

Unbeknownst to the emperor, this royal descendant and his pregnant fiancé were travelling to the true king's ancestral home.

Unbeknownst to the emperor, it is from this very town that the prophet Micah spoke of a new king coming to rule God's people:

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephratha, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.²

While the emperor sat in his palace, surrounded by his military generals and officials, congratulating himself on his ability to govern and keep the peace of the empire (albeit, through force and fear if necessary!), an insignificant carpenter gave his name to an insignificant registrar who dutifully recorded it in the empire's census.

And Mary gave birth to her firstborn son.

An insignificant event.

Except, that boy would inherit the throne of the rightful, true-God-appointed king of Israel.

Except, that boy would receive gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh from the kings of the nations.

Except, that boy would render that census and all it represents insignificant.

Tonight, we light the last candle in the Advent wreath: the Christ candle. We light this candle because, although the birth of this child may seem insignificant when viewed through the eyes of empire: of power and politics, economics and infrastructure, yet when viewed with the eyes of faith, it is anything but.

² Micah 5:2

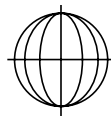
Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, the heir of King David, has been born!

*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. ...
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.³*

We light the candle of Christ.

(*Video: share screen, light while choir sings *A candle is burning (verse 5)*)

(*Zoom worship: share screen with responsive reading followed by choir singing *A candle is burning (verse 5)*)



Presbyterian World Service & Development

Christmas Eve/Day

L: God has come into the world.

P: Glory to God in the highest!

L: This is the good news for all people:
to us is born a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

P: The world is transformed.

L: And things cannot remain the same.

P: It is made new in hope, peace, joy and love.

The candle is lit.

L: Let us pray:

³ Isaiah 9:2, 6, 7

P: Source of light, shine in our lives and in your world with your transforming power. Through Jesus Christ our Lord we pray. Amen.

Choir: "A candle is burning" (verse 5)

Read: Luke 2:8-14

Hymn: "Angels we have heard on high" St. Andrew's choir

Prayer of supplication:

Father, you have revealed your love
by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ into our world.
Help us to welcome him with joy,
and to make room for him in our lives and homes,
that we may abide in him and he in us;
Through the same Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns
with you, O Father, and the Holy Spirit.

Lord, open our hearts to your love,
and make your home within us.
As you took upon you our nature,
grant that we may be partakers of the Divine.
Grant that we may ever rejoice in your presence,
King of kings and Lord of lords.⁴
Amen.

Choir: "That first Nowell" St. Andrew's choir
(Don Besig, Nancy Price)

Read: Luke 2:15-20

Message:

Here we are. Another Christmas Eve during which we're
worshiping online.

I'm sure many of you are disappointed. Perhaps you're anxious,
tired, burned-out. Maybe you're ill yourself.

It is for situations like this that Christ came among us: to rescue us
from the darkness; to rescue us from the power that sin tries to exert over
us – to discourage us and turn us away from the light.

Christ came that we might have life, and have it abundantly.

⁴ David Adam, *The Rhythm of Life*,

Now is the time for Christians to come and adore the new-born King. Now is the time for Christians to make known what we have seen and what we have been told.

For the sake of the name of the Lord Jesus, the Christ;
for the health of a world gripped by darkness and anxiety,
for the refreshment of your mind, heart, and body,
Will you come adore?
Will you call him Lord?
Will you join the song the angels sing?
Will you share the love?
Will you share the light of the tiny child
who comes this Christmas night?

We respond:

Solo: "Can you see the light?" Kevin Shaw
(Don Besig, Nancy Price)

Prayers of thanksgiving and intercession:

Christ, as a light,
illumine and guide us.
Christ, as a shield,
overshadow and cover us.
Christ be under us. Christ be over us.
Christ be beside us, on left and on right.
Christ be before us.
Christ be behind us.
Christ be within us.
Christ be without us.
Christ, as a light,
illumine and guide us.

Heavenly Father,
who, by the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ,
dispelled the darkness of the world
and gave light to all peoples,
protect us as the darkness descends,
and keep us ever in your light,
and continue to enlighten our lives by your great glory.
Through Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God,
now and forever,
Amen.⁵

⁵ David Adam, *The Rhythm of Life*, 60, 63

Hymn: “Silent Night” St. Andrew’s choir

Benediction:

The Wonderful counsellor guide you,
the Mighty God protect you,
the Everlasting Father be with you,
the Prince of Peace inspire you,
and the blessing of God be upon you,
now and evermore.⁶

Choir: *“A Christmas wish” St. Andrew’s choir*

⁶ David Adam, *The Rhythm of Life*, 59.