



Virtual Service - December 24th, 2022

This pre-recorded service will be emailed at 5:30pm.

Merry Christmas!!

Our virtual Christmas Eve service is filled with prayer, music and the hope that Jesus' birth brings to our lives. As part of the nativity, each one of us celebrates Jesus' birth.

Tonight we go to the stable; the nativity recreated at Walton. It is far bigger than the one on the screen. In fact, every one of you is in the scene whether you are worshipping live or virtually. Throughout Advent, the Walton sanctuary is decorated by lovely handmade hanging banners made by the Sunday School a few years ago. Most of them are hanging on what is left of the old fixtures which once held the gas lights before there was electricity here in Bronte and inside Walton. Surrounded by these banners, we are stepping into a large nativity scene.

Tonight's service will be offered in 2 formats - video and text.

- View the video below
- read this week's announcements and complete service on [our website](#)
- download and print the service from this document - [link](#)

For the latest [news](#) and updates from Walton, please check our [Facebook page](#), [Instagram](#) and [website](#).
Subscribe to our [YouTube channel](#) for videos of service, the choirs and more!

Please contact office@waltonmemorial.com if you would like to be added to our email list.

Wendy [link goes here]

Video: https://youtu.be/ehd_fq2b24E

Prelude: "Joy to the World" ~ S. Spares, Violin

Land Acknowledgement

As we gather today on these treaty lands, we are in solidarity with Indigenous brothers and sisters to honour and respect the four directions, lands, waters, plants, animals and ancestors that walked before

us, and all of the wonderful elements of creation that exist. We acknowledge and thank the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation for being stewards of this traditional territory.

Lighting of Christ Candle

Tonight we place this Christ Candle in the middle of our worship centre to remind us of the light of God's love in Jesus Christ. This light is not placed away from the others, but is in the midst of them, that Christ's love may shine in all we do.

We light this Christ candle as a sign of love, peace, joy and hope in our lives. God has called us from darkness and has given us a great light, and the darkness shall never overcome it.

Let us pray: Lord of brilliant light, shine in our hearts tonight. Bring us to the manger with such longing for your love, bathed in the light of hope. Remind us that you are our hope and that through you will come peace, which will reign in our hearts forever. Amen.

adapted Nancy C. Townley © 2022 Ministry Matters

Welcome

- One: Come in, my friends, and welcome home!
- Two: Outside it's cold and dark. Those things are lovely,
- One: But just now, inside, it's warm. And the lights of the candles and the tree are a blessing. (pause)
- Two: Outside - outside there may be a lonely apartment or a house full of noisy relatives. Our homes, whatever they are, are lovely too.
- One: But inside, just now, you are among friends; you are not alone; here, you are home.
- Two: Outside, there are to-do lists and cell phones and turkeys to stuff, and all of that is wonderful!
- One: But inside, just now, you don't have to do one thing. All you have to do is sit there. Just sit. Sing if you want to; listen if you want to. Just sit if that is what you need. You are home.
- Two: Outside, questions and fears and heartache may well be part of our lives. They weigh heavily on our shoulders, and we wonder - where is the song of the angels? What heavenly messenger is there now to bring good news of great joy?
- One: Inside, just now, it's perfectly all right to feel that way, and inside, here in the light and warmth, we become like these candles. As the light shines, we become softer, open to the imprint of the holy in our midst - at least, willing to allow that the angels may be singing still.
- Two: Welcome, welcome home.

Call to Worship

- One: Glory to God in the highest and hope to all who are weary and worried. *(The first candle is lit.)*
- Two: Glory to God in the highest and peace to all who are struggling and lonely. *(The second candle is lit.)*
- One: Glory to God in the highest and joy to those who celebrate and those who wish they felt like celebrating. *(The third candle is lit.)*
- Two: Glory to God in the highest and love to each one of us. *(The fourth candle is lit.)*
- One: Glory to God in the highest, for Christ is born on this night. *(The Christ candle is lit.)*
- Two: Let us share together the wonder of God's love in song and word. Let us worship.
- One: Let us pray: God of Christmas, we are here to celebrate the unimaginable love you shared so generously through your son, Jesus. We are here to welcome the hope, peace, and joy you offer in abundance. You call each one of us by name and bless us. Knowing that you love us and care for us, may we celebrate in wonder this night. Amen.

Mary Parsons, The Gathering A/C/E

Chancel Choir & Youth Choir: "Glorious Light"

https://youtu.be/_WTq8ZuVq8I

Opening Prayer

On this night, God, for just a moment, time stands still.

For just a moment, we stop.

For just a moment, our hustle and bustle, our back and forth, our Christmas "chaos" is stilled.

We listen to the story of how you touched the world, then.

We listen to the story of how you touch us, now.

Open our ears, we pray.

Open our hearts, we pray.

Open our lives to Christmas hope.

Amen.

Richard Bott The Gathering A/C/E 2010/11

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. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Advent Candle Lighting

One: Four Sundays ago, we began our advent journey by lighting our candle of hope.

We light it once more as we continue to wait in hope.

(light the first purple candle)

Two: Three Sundays ago, in our White Gift service, we lit the candle of peace.

(light the second purple candle)

God is with us. We are not alone, and our hearts are filled with longing for peace. We light it once more.

Three: Two Sundays ago we added the light of the candle of joy.

(light the pink candle)

Eager for a world that shares in abundance, we light it again.

Four: Last Sunday we lit the candle of love, and we light it again, sharing a vision of our world thriving in a living tapestry of right relationships.

One: The time is now. We need to wait no longer.

Two: The one who redeems us from our self-centeredness, sorrow, conflict, and brokenness has come among us.

Three: The Way is aglow with hope, peace, joy and love.

Four: In thankfulness and praise for God's steadfast presence and glorious gift we now light our Christ candle, opening our hearts and minds to the transformative power of God with us, and we pray:

One: God of awesome mystery, you come into our lives this night. Through Jesus, whose arrival we celebrate, you call us into unity with you. And so we light the candle in the centre of our wreath,

All: Trusting that your ray of hope, peace, joy and love can become the centre of our hearts, the centre of our thoughts, and the centre of our lives, guiding us into wholeness and a world filled with light.

(adapted by Kathryn Eddy, The Gathering A/C/E 2010/11)

Hymn: "O Come All Ye Faithful"

Youth Story: "Angels"

Alison: Who here likes to tell other people good news? I know I do. It's fun to share a message with someone when you know it's going to encourage them, make them happy, or give them a reason to celebrate. On that first Christmas night, somebody special got to share the best news of all.

(Val holds up an angel snowglobe)

Val: That's right! It was an angel, like this one here. The angel told the shepherds, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news. It will bring great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord. Here is how you will know I am telling you the truth. You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger."

Alison: This news did bring great joy to all the people! They had been waiting for a LONG time for the Messiah, God's chosen messenger, to come. I am not sure they understood fully that not only would the Messiah be a messenger for God, but that he would be God himself—the Lord!

Val: That's the best and greatest news of all: that God came to us as a baby. Jesus came to live with us and to experience everything it means to be a human being. And, just as the shepherds were told to go and see and THEN to go and tell, we are asked to do the same.

Alison: But—and this is important—the shepherds didn't stay at the stable. They left there and told anyone that would listen about what they had seen and heard. And, the Bible says that's what God wants us to do as well. He wants us to be like the angels, telling everyone the wonderful news about Jesus.

Let's pray:

God, thank you for giving us Jesus. You have entrusted to us the very best news in all the world—you love us so much that you sent your Son to be with us! Christmas is not just about presents and lights; it's about the joy that comes from knowing we are loved by you. That is great news, and we hope that we can share this news with others so that all can share in our joy! In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading: Luke 2: 1-20

The Birth of Jesus

In those days a decree went out from Caesar 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 in the guest room.

The Shepherds and the Angels

Now in that same 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, and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

Scripture Response: "Infant Holy, Infant Lowly" Jillian 2022-12-15-19-50-07 2:48-3:30

Message: "The Message of Nativity Scenes" Rev. Jim Gill

In some form, in some place, at some time, you have probably had one or have been involved personally with a nativity scene. The writer Brett Leveridge tells us, "Tradition has it that Saint Francis of Assisi created the first crèche (or nativity scene) in 1223 when he mounted a living nativity scene, consisting of a manger, an ox, and a donkey, as part of a Christmas Eve Mass he organized while visiting the mountain town of Greccio. After that first nativity scene, the practice became popular and spread far and wide. Over time, statues, rather than living people and animals, were used, which eventually led to the in-home nativity scenes that are so much a part of Christmas today."

Our 2022 Advent and Christmas series of sermons is entitled, "The Message of Nativity Scenes." At each service either Gill or I will consider a different nativity scene which will be shown up on the screen.

Today's first nativity scene on the screen is a photo of the knitted nativity scene that sits at the base of the Communion table tonight, as it did throughout all four Sundays of Advent. The photo was taken at night in only candlelight. It draws us all into the nativity scene in a powerful way

Tonight there is another nativity scene here at Walton. It is far bigger than the one on the screen. In fact, every one of you is in the scene whether you are worshipping live or virtually. Throughout Advent, we have been surrounded by these lovely handmade hanging banners made by the Sunday School a few years ago. Most of them are hanging on what is left of the old fixtures which once held the gas lights before there was electricity here in Bronte and inside Walton. Surrounded by these banners, we are stepping into a large nativity scene. Let's explore three of the banners.

First, this banner. Now you will say, Jim, you have made the last first. True, but the Bible does tell us the first shall be last. Did you know there is a group of dedicated star watchers who gather on many clear nights here in Bronte, down by the outer harbour? This banner shows the wise ones watching the Bethlehem Star and following it to the stable, through the brown desert east of Bethlehem.

Did you notice the road the star watchers are taking is not straight? It is curvy. It reminds us all that the way to follow Jesus in daily life is not always straight. The Christian life is not a destination we reach in a moment, but a lifelong journey with ups and downs and plenty of curves. Yet we can still keep on keeping on following the star.

Second: This banner I think is one of my favourites, and not just because I cared for actual sheep in my younger days. The hills are calling out to me. I have been to those hills where the shepherds were that night. Imagine the darkness without the glare of 21st century lights. It must have made the majestic angel chorus even more spectacular. No wonder they were told, "fear not."

As a parent, who do you call or text first after a child is born? It can be a challenging choice. The hills in this nativity scene banner remind me that God took the story of this birth first not to Rome, not to Athens and not even to Jerusalem, but to the hills – to the shepherds out on the land where the angels went. It is like sharing major breaking news with us first in Halton or Hamilton or Peel or Niagara, wherever you live, rather than to Washington DC, or Ottawa, or New York City, or Londoni. We are the shepherds tonight. The angels are calling us to the stable.

Third: This banner pictures the stable, which puts us into the nativity scene. It is not the intricate Italian Renaissance painting we saw on the 3rd Sunday of Advent, that had such wealth, extravagance and abundance. This is a very bare-bones nativity scene. It reminds me that far too often we make Christmas and – most importantly – the message of Jesus coming to earth too complicated, confusing and complex. Jesus as a grown man said we are to become as a child to enter the kingdom of God.

The creche or stable in this banner has so much room in it. The nativity scene is not crammed to the rafters. There is still room in this huge, rather basically built stable for any one of us. There is, if you will, room at the inn of the stable for you and me.

So tonight please reflect on all these banners and not just the three we highlighted in this message. After the service, come and look at them all close-up. Put yourself in each banner for a time to meditate, reflect and contemplate.

Christmas blessings to you and yours.

Pastoral Prayer

God of bright and shining stars, we come this evening with the reminiscences of the old, old story in our hearts. For many here, the story has been heard numerous times, flooding their lives with warmth and love; For others the story is new, surprising, causing wonder and surprise. All around us are symbols and reminders of the miraculous Birth. We see the greens which remind us of your eternal presence and love for us. The candles shed their glowing light helping us to remember the many ways in which you have brightened our lives and offered light to our journey. The colours, the music, and aromas, the people, invite us again into your wonderful presence in the world in the birth of your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ.

In this world in which your holy land is in such turmoil, shed your light anew, that your healing love may bring peace and hope to people in conflict. We ask that you protect all those who are in harm's way; all those who live lives of anguish, poverty, oppression. We ask your loving presence to be with those who refuse to believe in you; who see your word through the church as a tradition, but see very little impact in their daily lives. Let the light of Jesus Christ penetrate that darkness of alienation and bring hope and peace to all your people.

May the light of the stars which sparkled in those dark skies, again illuminate our lives, guiding, healing, leading us to you, Blessed God.. As we gather in this time and place, hearing the story of the birth, remind us again that you are born continually in our lives. In gratitude we offer our praise and our love to you. Amen.

Nancy C. Townley © 2022 Ministry Matters

Chancel Choir: "Pavane for a Silent Night"

<https://youtu.be/YCa0t937gJ4>

Offering of Ourselves, Our Gifts, Our Tithes

Gift of love.

Gift of grace.

Gift of God.

Receive our gifts and make them gifts for the whole world.

Our offering will now be received.

♥ by secure online payment from your debit or credit card. [Click here](#) to go to our donation page to make a single or recurring donation. Multiple funds can be included in one donation by using the "Add Donation" button

♥ by cheque through the mail slot at the Church office entrance or by Canada Post

♥ by monthly PAR payments. To sign up contact stuart@waltonmemorial.com

Offering Hymn: "In the Bleak Midwinter"

Offering Prayer

One: We offer to you, Loving God, our Christmas gifts.

Two: We offer you our worship, our carols, our prayers, and our reflection on the Nativity story.

One: God, bless these gifts.

Two: We offer you our practical concern for those close to us who are going through difficult times.

One: God bless these gifts.

Two: We offer you our readiness to work with others to enrich the life of this church and this community.

One: God, bless these gifts.

Two: We offer you our wish to help all who need to know your presence.

One: God, bless these gifts. Amen.

Adapted David Sparks The Gathering A/C./E 2019

Advent Reflection

The deeper the darkness the brighter the light shines.

For love refuses to be extinguished by despair.

Resilience and hope cannot be quenched while the light of love burns steadily,
fueled by courage and by compassion. Look for the light and there you will find love.
(~ posted on RevGalBlogPals.)

Benediction

May the blessing of God settle upon us, as mysterious as the rustle of angel's wings, as surprising as a child in a manger, as holy as light in the darkness. Amen.

God bless and have a blessed Christmas day.

(Kate Crawford, The Gathering A/C/E 2010)

Hymn: Silent Night

Postlude: "Hark! The Harold Angels Sing"

In case you missed it...

Here is Rev. Jim's mid-week update for Wednesday, December 21st

<https://youtu.be/ya0h7fpGaXw>