

NEW MARYLAND UNITED CHURCH

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

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December 24th, 2023 7 pm
CHRISTMAS EVE: Celebrating The Birth Of Jesus!

Welcome and thank you for joining in our worship! If you are visiting, or new to the congregation, we hope you feel at home in our midst. Let us pause to remember that in this region we live and work and worship on lands that are, by law, the unceded territories of the Wabanaki peoples—predominantly the lands of the Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqiyik and Passamaquoddy. May we live with respect on this land, and live in friendship with its people. Grace and peace to you all on this Holy Night!

T H E G A T H E R I N G

***Please rise in body or in spirit for sections marked with an asterisk.**

A CAROL SING AS WE GATHER!

THE WELCOME

***Hymn# 60 VU O Come All Ye Faithful**

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: The joy of Christ be with you!

People: And also with you!

Leader: Let us worship the Lord together!

THE LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

Reader 1: Here we are, gathered together to tell once again, the old, old, story of how God came to us on that first Christmas! It is a night of stories and songs, that we might enter the mystery of Emmanuel: God-with-us.

Reader 2: And so we tell of shepherds, and angels, and inns that have no room. And we tell of the babe who is birthed in a stable, and laid in a manger.

Reader 1: As we awaited this night, we have been counting down the weeks, lighting candles to push back the darkness, and brighten our hearts. We have lit the Candles of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

Reader 2: And now the wait is over!

[The Christ Candle is lit]

For unto us is born this night, as he was so long ago, a Saviour who is Christ the Lord!

ALL: MERRY CHRISTMAS!

***HYMN #48 VU Hark The Herald Angels Sing**

A RESPONSIVE READING OF THE GOSPEL: Luke 2: 1-16 KJV

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host **2.**

praising God, and saying,

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

***HYMN #59 VU Joy to the World**

~ FINDING OURSELVES IN THE MIDST OF THE NATIVITY!

ANTHEM: *Were You There On That Christmas Night?* N. Sleeth

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER Ending with THE LORD'S PRAYER:

We ask for your blessing O God, on shepherds in the field, whatever the field, on all those who are keeping watch this night: medical teams, police and fire fighters, military personnel – all those who, for the sake of us all, are apart from their loved ones.

Bless them and keep them, O God.

A blessing upon all who are suffering this night.

For a light shines in the darkness, and the darkness shall not overcome it.

A blessing upon all those who, like the angels that holy night, call us to new life and adventure; blessings upon those who lead us to surprises, and those who sing us home.

May the heavens ring with our thanks for them!

A blessing on this gathering, and upon all whom we love – those in life, and those in loving memory.

[a pause to remember]

The grace of God has appeared among us.

The Spirit of the Lord has been poured out richly upon us.

A blessing on the whole world, O God!

Let all the earth rejoice – for unto us, a child is born!

A Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, and who taught us to pray together, saying:

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,

For ever and ever. Amen.

OFFERING & OFFERTORY: (#55 VU, v.4)

What can I give him, poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;

if I were a wise man, I would do my part;

yet what I can I give him - give my heart

SHARING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

A choir member will come down and light the candle of the person at the end of the row. They will say: *The Light of Christ has come!* The response may be: *Amen!* This continues as you light the candle of the person next to you, and so on. When everyone's candle is lit, we will sing together: Silent Night – words are printed in bulletin.

(Note: slide the cup down the candle for the purpose of lighting. Once lit, slide the cup up to fully enclose the flame. The person with the lit candle should hold it upright, and the unlit candle can be tipped to receive the light.)

***HYMN# 67 VU Silent Night**

**Silent night! Holy night! All is calm, all is bright
round yon virgin mother and child.**

**Holy infant so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.**

**Silent night! Holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight:
glories stream from heaven afar
heavenly hosts sing hallelujah,
Christ the Saviour is born, Christ the Saviour is born.**

**Silent night! Holy night! Son of God, love's pure light,
radiant beams from thy holy face,
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord at thy birth, Jesus Lord, at thy birth.**

***BENEDICTION**

***CHORAL BLESSING: Away In A Manger (#69 VU, v. 3)**

**Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask you to stay
close by me forever, and love me, I pray.**

**Bless all the dear children in your tender care,
and fit us for heaven, to live with you there.**

*The bulletin tonight is dedicated in loving memory of grandparents
Byron and Rhoda Connors from Christine and Mark Morrison.*

Greeters: Mark, Christine, Blake, Hailey, and Adam Morrison