



NEWCASTLE UNITED CHURCH

December 24, 2023

10:30 am

Fourth Sunday of Advent
~LOVE~

Welcome!

"As followers of Christ, we are called to be a worshipping and learning, receiving and giving community of faith, hope and love." -

Newcastle United Church Mission Statement

As we gather as a faith community, we acknowledge that we are on sacred land rich in the legacy, culture, and spirituality of the Indigenous people. It is home to many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people. We acknowledge that we live and work on land that is under the Williams Treaty, which has been the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Huron-Wendat and Haudenosaunee Nations, as well as many other Indigenous nations. These lands today are under the care of the Mississauga's of the New Credit First Nations people.

We acknowledge this land, out of respect for the many Indigenous nations who have cared for the lands and waterways from the beginning of time and continue to do so. Today we are grateful for the opportunity to live, work, and to worship on their traditional lands.

We are committed to learn and understand the truth of our shared history, confronting our past and present so that we can strive to build a future together upon true reconciliation, living out what the original ancestors of Turtle Island envisioned: sharing the resources of the land and waterways, and to live in harmony with one another as one people.

Approaching God With Praise

Welcome

Announcements

*** Indicates for congregation to stand as you are able.**

Prelude (A centering time)

**Lighting The Fourth Candle of Advent – Love
(Please remain seated)**

***(The first, second and third Candles of Advent
are lit – Hope, Peace and Joy)***

L: Today we light the last of the Advent candles marking the end of our time of preparation and waiting. Jesus is going to be born soon! We talked about the wreath being a circle to remind us that God's unending love will continue to grow through Jesus.

Three of the candles are blue. We use blue to signify expectancy. Mary's robe is often coloured blue, reminding us that Mary waited and prepared herself to birth her child that she knew was special. The candle we light today is the candle of love. It is hard for us to imagine that God loves us no matter what. It is even harder to imagine that God is love. Today, let us remember that God's love for us is never ending. Close your eyes, or focus on the candles.... Think of love by going to the place or memory where you are surrounded by love. Feel it, enjoy it, rest in it, offer thanks for it. Take this time now to center yourself in God's love that continually surrounds you.

(A few moments of silence for reflection – The sound of a chime will end the silence)

L: Jesus, help your light to shine in us as love.

The Fourth Advent Candle is lit, Love

A: Jesus, help your light to shine in us as love.

(<https://united-church.ca/worship-liturgical-season/first-sunday-advent> modified by Rev. B Ransom)

Hymn: (unannounced) “A Candle Is Burning”

vv. 1- 4

UV 6

Opening Prayer (In Unison)

Holy One, nothing is impossible for you. A poor young woman from a small town, in fear and uncertainty, gave birth to your realm of endless glory and love on earth. As with Mary, let your Holy Spirit fill us with new life and hope. With your power and grace let us, like Mary, be your servants, bearing witness to the promise of your Word, born through Jesus Christ, who comes in your Name, Holy One.

***Hymn: “O Ancient Love”**

VU 17

Listening For The Spirit Of God Through The Word

Scripture Readings:

New Testament: Gospel of Luke 1:26-38

Response

L: For the Word of God in scripture, for the Word of God among us, for the Word of God within us,

A: We give praise for the presence of God through the Word.

***Hymn: “ Away In A Manger ” vv. 1-2 VU 69**

Conversation Time

Hymn “Away In A Manger” v. 3

VU 69

Reflection: “God of gods”

**Ministry of Music:
“Mary’s Little Boy Child”**

Composer: Jester Hairston

Our Response To The Living Spirit Of God

Invitation to The Offering

***The Offertory Response “In The Bleak
Midwinter” v. 3 VU 55**

Dedication Of The Offering

Christmas Eve Day Communion

***Communion Hymn “Love Is The Touch”
vv. 1-4 MV 89**

**1 Love is the touch of intangible joy;
love is the force that no fear can destroy;
love is the goodness we gladly applaud:
God is where love is, for love is of God.**

**2 Love is the lilt in a lingering voice;
love is the hope that can make us rejoice;
love is the cure for the frightened and flawed:
God is where love is, for love is of God.**

**3 Love is the light in the tunnel of pain;
love is the will to be whole once again;
love is the trust of a friend on the road:
God is where love is, for love is of God.**

**4 Love is the Maker and Spirit and Son;
love is the kingdom their will has begun;
love is the path which the saints all have trod:
God is where love is, for love is of God.**

Words: Alison M. Robertson Music: John L. Bell

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

L: May the God of silent nights be with you!

A: May the God of herald angels be with you!

L: Open your hearts to the One born in the little town of Bethlehem.

A: May Emmanuel come to abide in our hearts.

L: Join all believers in singing of our joy this night.

A: May our voices blend with those of the angels and shepherds.

L: You crept into chaos so long ago,
Star-shaper,

so creation might be born:

sheep gathering on hillsides,

stars glittering in the night skies,

sea horses frolicking in warm waters.

Silently, you gathered up the dust,

shaping us in your image
as the Spirit breathed life into us.
All the gifts of your heart were for us,
 but we slammed the doors of our hearts,
 saying there was no room for you in our lives.
Prophets came time and again,
scattering your clues throughout the Story,
 but we were too busy enjoying
 the slight of hand done by sin and death.
When you saw we could not
understand the Mystery on our own,
you sent Jesus, to reveal everything to us.

As we gather as a family excited about what is to
come,
we join our voices with the holy catholic church
singing praises to you this Christmas eve day:

**L: We will not be afraid,
for great joy is ours today;
we will look for the signs of your presence,
grace swaddled in hope,
love wrapped around broken hearts.**

**Glory to you, God in the highest heavens!
May peace fill the lives of all your people!**

L: Leaving your side, God of holiness,
your Child came to walk with us

through the cold streets of our lives.
Born in poverty's shadows,
 he is the light which illumines
 your heart for us.
Unwrapped from glory's embrace,
 he gathers us from all the corners
 of our confused choices to make us one with you.
Placed in a rude feeding trough
layered with our fears and doubts,
 he breathes in your hopes
 and lives your will, until
 he is placed in death's cold embrace,
 waiting in the silence,
 where he breathes in resurrection's breath,
 and brings forth life for all who follow.

On this day, when we sing of the baby in the manger,
as the shadow of the cross is cast by the stars,
we proclaim that mystery called incarnation:

**A: Christ is our light,
and we will join the angels in singing the good news;
Christ is our life,
and we will join the disciples in telling the Story;
Christ is our promise,
and we wait for the joy of his return.**

L: Here in the silence and the singing,
of Christmas carols,
we gather around the Table of love,
as you pour out your Spirit upon
the most precious gifts of bread and cup.
As we feast upon the bread,
we remember a young pregnant girl,
who would bring about your vision of
hope, peace joy and love.
As we drink from the cup,
we think of a worried father,
who only desired for his family to raise his son in a
safe and healthy place
We are reminded that often we are surrounded by
loved ones who care for us
 Jesus embraces the lonely,
 those separated from loved ones,
 those who hear no music of joy, or hope in their
lives.

And when all time and history become silence,
we will be gathered with our sisters and brothers
from around the world, from every corner and
moment of every universe,
to join the angel choirs in forever singing your
praises
as we are welcomed to the Table of wonder and
grace, by God's love, through this infant Child
named Jesus.

2016 Thom M. Shuman modified by Rev. B Ransom

The Breaking of the Bread, The Pouring of the Wine

The first Christmas was an act of communion: the water that broke, the blood that was shed, the breast that fed Jesus. All of these things are so earthy and human, but at the same time the very presence of God. This cup and this loaf are for all who come to the table of God's Love.

We Remember that when Jesus gathered with the disciples in the upper room he said ...

Jesus Christ , The Bread of Life

Jesus Christ, The Cup of Blessing

Sharing of the Bread and Cup:

L: The good news of great joy is for all people, and so is this meal. All are invited to share in the miracle of Immanuel, God with us. Please come forward and receive God's gift of new beginnings.

Prayer After Communion

O God, creator of the of the universe and the stars
of the night,
You have met us at this table,
Strengthen our faith and fix our eyes on the infant
child Jesus, the babe of Bethlehem,
Be our Morning Star who gladdens our hearts and
guides us always. Amen.

Prayers of the People

***Closing Hymn: “Angels We Have Heard On
High”** **VU 38**

***Commissioning & Benediction**

***Sung Blessing - “Go Now In Peace”**

**Words can be found on the screens or in front
of Hymn book.**