

Outline of Worship December 15th, 2024

Advent 3

Worship leaders: Simba at NUC Pearl at SUC Pianist: Julie at NUC

PRELUDE

WELCOME

Simba

WE GATHER WITH LIGHTING OF ADVENT CANDLES

SUC-Pearl

We begin by relighting the candles of previous weeks,
the blue candle of acceptance, the orange candle of justice.

Today, we light a rainbow candle to recall a story that is told

For all throughout the world.

We hear of the inclusion of Zechariah,

the father of John the Baptist

who was struck mute

and could only speak and praise God once John was born.

We hear of Joseph, who was engaged to Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Both of these men dreamed dreams.

Even the shepherds were included,

the lowliest of the low at that time.

Yet they were the first to hear the news of Jesus' birth.

We hear these stories with gratitude and inspiration.

May our light of inclusion overcome the darkness.

SONG: VU5 All Earth is Waiting vs 1

Words: Catalanian, Alberto Taulé 1972 Music: Alberto Taulé 1993 Words, Music copyright © Oregon Catholic Press. Translation copyright © The United Methodist Publishing House. Harmony copyright © Skinner Chávez-Melo 1989

All earth is waiting to see the Promised One,

and open furrows await the seed of God.

All the world, bound and struggling, seeks true liberty;

it cries out for justice and searches for the truth.

LIFE AND WORK of our churches and communities

Pearl/Simba

SONG: VU 62 Once in Royal David's City vs 1-4 *standing*

Words: Cecil Frances Alexander 1848 Music: Henry John Gauntlett 1849. Words, Music: Public Domain Harmony copyright © 1957 Novello & Co. Limited, administered by Shawnee Press Inc. Descant copyright © Oxford University Press

Once in royal David's city stood a lowly cattle
shed,

where a mother laid her baby in a manger for
his bed.

Mary was that mother mild, Jesus Christ her
little child.

For he is our lifelong pattern; daily when on
earth he grew,

he was tempted, scorned, rejected, tears and
smiles like us he knew.

Thus he feels for all our sadness, and he
shares in all our gladness

He came down to earth from heaven who with
God is over all,

and his shelter was a stable, and his cradle
was a stall.

There among the poor and lowly lived on earth
our Savior holy.

And our eyes at last shall see him, through his
own redeeming love;

for that child who seemed so helpless is our
Lord in heaven above;

and he leads his children on to the place where
he is gone.

VU 69 Away in the Manger vs 1-3 seated

Words: Author unknown. Music: William James Kirkpatrick 1895 Arrangement: © 1992 Desmond Hassell
Music: Public Domain

Away in the manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where
he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.

I love you, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky,
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.

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 thy tender care,
and fit us for heaven to live with your there.

PRAYER

Gracious God, in your presence & the presence of one another, we are gathered. We open our hearts to the sweeping winds of blessings that reached Mary and Elizabeth. We seek to be identified as you would want us. We seek to be renewed, to be whole and to be restored. As we raise our voices in prayer, song and praise. May we find comfort and hope in your presence. Through Jesus the Christ. Amen.

THEME TIME: "Excuse Me?"

SUC - Lil

SONG: VU7 Hope Is a Star vs 1

Words: Brian Wren 1985 Music: Joan Collier Fogg 1987 Words, Music copyright © 1989 Hope Publishing Company.

Hope is a star that shines in the night,
leading us on till the morning is bright.

When God is a child there's joy in our song.

*The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,
and none shall be afraid.*

A MOMENT TO PONDER:

In this season of advent. We take time to contemplate and anticipate. What are you contemplating on and what is it that you are anticipating? Take your time to ponder.

SONG: VU74 What Child Is This? vs 1-3

Words: William Chatterton Dix 1865. Music: English melody, harmony attributed to John Stainer 1871.
Public Domain.

What child is this, who laid to rest,
on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
while shepherds watch are keeping?

*This, this is Christ the King,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud,
the Babe, the Son of Mary!*

Why lies he in such mean estate
where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear; for sinners here
the silent Word is pleading.

*This, this is Christ the King,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud,
the Babe, the Son of Mary!*

So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;
come, one and all, to own him.
The King of Kings salvation brings;
let loving hearts enthrone him.

*This, this is Christ the King,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud,
the Babe, the Son of Mary*

SPIRITUAL READINGS:

Travelling to a town in the hill country of Judea

Scripture Luke 1:57 – 66

SUC-Ken B

When the time came for Elizabeth to deliver,
she gave birth to a son.

When her neighbours and relatives heard
that God had been merciful to her, they shared her joy.

When all had assembled for the circumcision on the eighth day,
they intended to name the baby after his father Zechariah.

But his mother spoke up, "No, he is to be called John."

They pointed out to her,

"But no one in your family has this name."

Then they made signs to the father to find out what he wanted the child to be named. The father
asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." They were all astonished.

Immediately Zechariah's mouth was opened, and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak in
praise of God.

Their neighbours were all filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea, people were
talking about these events.

All who heard the news stored it in their hearts and said, "What will this child turn out to be?"

For God's hand was with him.

Luke 1: 76 – 80

And you, my child, will be called the prophet of the Most High, for you'll go before our God to prepare
the way for the Promised One, giving the people the knowledge of salvation through forgiveness of
their sins.

Such is the tender mercy of our God, who from on high will bring the Rising Sun to visit us, to give
light to those who live in darkness and the shadow of death and to guide our feet into the way of
peace.

In the meantime, the child grew up and became strong in spirit. He lived out in the desert until the
day he appeared openly in Israel.

Prepare Your Way by Steve Garnnar Holmes (Unfoldinglight.com)

NUC-Holly

Holy One, prepare your way in me. Give me faith, like the stable, to know your presence within me.
Give me courage, like Mary, to let your life overwhelm mine.

Give me strength, like Joseph, to protect what is holy, tender and growing.

Give me patience, like the shepherds, to be still and listen. Give me humility, like the magi, to kneel
before your presence. Give me trust, like the child, to let myself be borne into a new world. Give me
joy, like the angels, to bring good news to the poor.

Give me love, like the manger to hold Christ within. Holy One, prepare your way in me.

SONG: VU18 There's a Voice in the Wilderness vs 1-3

Words: James L Milligan Public Domain Music: Henry Hugh Bancroft 1938 copyright © permission of Eldred Bancroft, Estate of Henry Hugh Bancroft, c/o Mr Brian Burrows

There's a voice
in the wilderness crying,
a call from the ways untrod:
prepare in the desert a highway,
a highway for our God!
The valleys shall be exulted,
the lofty hills brought low;
make straight all the crooked places
where God, our God, may go!

O Zion, that bringest good tidings,
get thee up to the heights and sing!
Proclaim to a desolate people
the coming of their King.

Like the flowers of the field they perish,
like grass our works decay;
the power and pomp of nations
shall pass, like a dream, away.

But the word of our God endureth,
Whose arm is ever strong;
God stands in the midst of nations,
and soon will right the wrong.
God shall feed the flock
like a shepherd,
the lambs so gently hold;
to pastures of peace will lead them,
and bring the safe to fold.

REFLECTION

This story brings men into the fold, albeit with mixed response to the promise. For Zachariah, this story was hard to believe. Unfortunately, he lost his voice. It becomes the precursor of what was to follow, where Jesus' story and message was accepted by the "non-cultic folks" or religious outsiders. The renowned religious leader did every ritual, going into the holy of holies, yet he did not believe the message from the angel. He would swing the thurible, yet didn't believe when it comes to the crucibles of faith. Believing the annunciation or proclamation.

On the other hand, women believed what the Angels said. This story is replete with metaphysical beings though. This brought me to a question; "do we really need to understand everything God is doing in our lives?" **Does our faith depend on human intellectual prowess or a matter of trust/faith? The intellectual in me is asking; "is faith enough without understanding?" What do you think? What is the difference between a story and an historical event?**

Unconventional Tradition

John did not get named after a family member, not believed by the priest, eventually never inherited his Father's office. He even later left the city altogether to live and preach from the Transjordan valley. No sacrifices, no portions of the sacrificed animals. No remuneration of any kind. He did not dress like any of them. He would not be bribed into accepting immoral behavior of the king. He called Herod on inheriting his young brother's wife. Very unconventional. **What a disruptive son to the conventional order of the family and religious tradition.** What a change? The name **John** in Hebrew, means – **"God is gracious."** Thus, it is not a masculine name as the society has assigned and limited it. Elizabeth named him, and Zechariah confirmed it by writing. The society was shocked to see that. **That is change. In simplest terms; Change is disruptive in its essence.** God's grace prophesied by John's name was coming through Jesus. It was a paradigm shift from religious legalism. Are we choosing to change and follow the good news of grace? Are we choosing to stay the same? The choice is yours.

Luke's story is not premised on too much tradition. **If we are not careful, we can cause a lot of harm in pursuit of our appetite for cultural and traditional practices, which have nothing to do**

with the gospel message. In fact, I would argue that; most of the hostilities in the church and other religions, have nothing to do with the good our faiths teach. Rather, it's because we want the communities to fulfil our socially constructed valued & traditions.

The Christmas Story Ushers in a change: John as a name, point to grace, not punishment. Zechariah prophesied about going before the Lord, to prepare the way. That laid the foundations for the gospel message. We are reminded of the ideals of Jesus, which are hardly traditional or conventional. Sometimes, we need to take a stand about ourselves, and not get pushed around by mythical traditions. **We need to start interrogating some of these established practices before following them. Remember the practice of “cutting the ham?” Do we have a reason to do what we are doing, or ask people to do?** Healthy faith is always in conversation with lived experience, seeking meaning and understanding. The moment we stop asking questions is the moment our faith becomes dead. That is why traditionalism “is the dead faith of the living,” as opposed to tradition “which is the living faith of the dead.”

SONG: MV23 Come O Holy Spirit vs 1-3 *Simba will introduce*

Words: Fred Kaan, 1998 copyright ©1998 Hope Publishing Company Music copyright © Ron Klusmeier, 2000
www.musiklus.com.

Come, O Holy Spirit, set the church on fire;
strike it as the lightning hits a posing spire.
Burn away the structures and consume the
sham

of our holy systems:
Come, in Jesus name!

*Come, come, come in Jesus name!
Take our hearts by storm.
All the world lies o-pen:
Pentecost is now!
I said a ...*

*Come, come, come in Jesus name!
Take our hearts by storm.
All the world lies o-pen:
Pentecost is now!*

Blow away the cobwebs of our stubborn past.
Come, send flying from us myths unfit to last.
Wind of change, refresh us and disturb our
calm;
teach us what true love is,
take our hearts by storm.

*Come, come, come in Jesus name!
Take our hearts by storm.*

*All the world lies o-pen:
Pentecost is now!
I said a ...*

*Come, come, come in Jesus name!
Take our hearts by storm.
All the world lies o-pen:
Pentecost is now!*

Free us from the babble of our Babel mind;
spark in us a language all can understand.
Lighten then our darkness, come and show us
how
all the world lies o-pen:
Pentecost is now!

*Come, come, come in Jesus name!
Take our hearts by storm.
All the world lies o-pen:
Pentecost is now!
I said a ...*

*Come, come, come in Jesus name!
Take our hearts by storm.
All the world lies o-pen:
Pentecost is now!
Amen!*

OFFERING INVITATION:

We are invited to offer ourselves, our talents, time, skills and resources to the creator and to the ministry. May we present these & other offerings before God.

SONG: O What a Wonderful Gift vs 4 and refrain

So, as we bring our gifts,
and offer them with pray'r,
may we be people seeking peace
and justice ev'ry-where.

Oh what a wonderful gift!
Oh what a wonderful gift!

*God gives lives of hope and love,
Oh, what a wonderful gift!*

*Oh, what a wonderful,
Oh what a wonderful,
Oh, what a wonderful gift!*

OFFERING PRAYER:

God of many blessings. We present what we feel compelled to offer. Accept and bless these gifts, visible and invisible ones. Through Jesus. Amen.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: Mission & Service stories

SUC-Ken B

Giving Gifts with Vision

It's almost Christmas, and time seems to really fly at this time of year. If you still have someone on your list, instead of searching "last-minute gift ideas," why not try Gifts with Vision?

With Gifts with Vision, you can give meaningful gifts without the stress of packaging or last-minute mall dashes. Every gift helps transform lives across Canada and around the world. With gifts in categories such as addressing poverty and hunger, healing and reconciliation, and education, there is truly something for everyone.

Each Gift with Vision supports a unique Mission and Service project that wouldn't be possible without your help.

So, this Christmas, skip the rush—**Gifts with Vision** is just a click away!

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

In this season of advent, we gather in anticipation of the indwelling of your Spirit, to stir in us the non-conventional ways of love, justice and kindness. We are grateful for the blessing of Jesus, the love demonstrated in incarnation. We celebrate the love shown to us and the whole creation. We look forward with hope and joy, to be part of your community, called to serve, to seek justice, and resist evil in all its forms.

We pray for some of us who are facing difficult situations. We ask for your sustaining love and assurance. We pray for those struggling with life challenges. May they find strength and courage to face without fear whatever the challenge. We pray for wisdom on how to respond and how to offer support to our colleagues.

Send us out with love, compassion and kindness, to serve and to represent your ideals in our community and beyond. This we ask as we join in reciting the prayer taught by Jesus:

"The Prayer Jesus taught"

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.

SONG: VU59 Joy to the World vs 1-4

Words:

Isaac Watts 1719 Music: attributed to George Friedrich Handel 1742 arranged by Lowell Mason 1836. Public Domain

Joy to the world! The Lord is come:

let earth receive her King!

Let every heart prepare him room,

and heaven and nature sing,

and heaven and nature sing,

and heaven, and heaven

and nature sing.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,

nor thorns infest the ground:

he comes to make his blessings flow

far as the curse is found

far as the curse is found

far as, far as

the curse is found.

Joy to the earth! The Saviour reigns:

let all their songs employ,

while fields and floods,

rocks, hills and plains

repeat the sounding joy,

repeat the sounding joy,

repeat, repeat

the sounding joy.

He rules the earth

with truth and grace;

and makes the nations prove

the glories of his righteousness

and wonders of his love

and wonders of his love

and wonders, wonders

of his love.

BLESSING

May the grace of Jesus, the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you; go with you and keep you now & always. Until we meet again. Amen.