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**December 24 2015, 10:00pm**

**Theme: Christmas Eve- Candlelight Communion**

† indicates stand as you are able  
**Bold** indicates participation by the people

**MV** = More Voices  
**VU** = Voices United

**We Gather with Open Minds, Hands, and Hearts**

**THOUGHT PROVOKER:** Throughout the Season of Advent we have pondered God's gifts of hope, peace, joy, and love. Tonight we remember and celebrate the anniversary of those gifts most fully combined in one person - Jesus. There seems to be an extra twinkle in the lights on an evening like this. Children vibrate with anxious energy and yet, the question remains: Does Christmas really make a difference? Does it change the world? How does Christmas impact your life? What difference does it make for you and those you care about?

**WELCOME & GREETING VISITORS** (*Leader*)

†**GREETING ONE ANOTHER** (Please feel free to move around)

**SINGING BOWL & SILENCE**

**THE CANDLES OF ADVENT – Christ Candle**  
Dialogue

Response: This Joy (sung to *This Little Light of Mine*)

This Joy\* that I have,  
the world didn't give it to me;  
This joy that I have,  
the world didn't give it to me;  
This joy that I have,  
the world didn't give it to me;  
The world didn't give it,  
the world can't take it away!  
(\*Hope, Peace, & Love)

**OPENING PRAYER**

In the quiet hush of this night we gather in this place. Normally reserved for the bright joy of Sunday mornings, tonight this becomes a special place wherein we huddle in the symbolic darkness of night and celebrate that you, gracious God, are with us in both night and day. We are never far from your love. May we experience that anew this night, and may we proclaim that good news always. Amen.

✠HYMN: *In the Bleak Midwinter* (on-screen)

VU#55

### The Christmas Story

THE STORY: **Luke 2:1-20** ~ *David Smith*

✠HYMN: *O Little Town of Bethlehem* (on-screen)

VU#64

THE HOPE: **Isaiah 9** ~ *Rachel Hanbury*

*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. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.*

✠HYMN: *O Come, All Ye Faithful* (on-screen)

VU#60

THE PRESENCE: *Cries of The Spirit, Hildegard of Bingen*

*I am the one whose praise  
echoes on high.*

*I adorn all the earth.*

*I am the breeze  
that nurtures all things  
green.*

*I encourage blossoms to flourish with ripening fruits.*

*I am led by the spirit to feed  
the purest streams.*

*I am the rain  
coming from the dew  
that causes grass to laugh  
with the joy of life.  
I call forth tears,  
the aroma of holy work.  
I am the yearning for the good.*

ANTHEM: *The Youth Choir~ Cantate, Exsultate~ by David Waggoner*

SERMON: *“The Mystery of it All”*

SOLO: *Rachel Hanbury~ O Holy Night~ by Adolphe Adam*

### **We Respond to God’s Gift**

INVITATION TO OPEN HANDS *(Leader)*



OPPORTUNITY TO OPEN HANDS

with our Tithes, Offerings, & Prayers.

*(Please print clearly and place your Prayer Slips in the Prayer Baskets.)*

*Tonight we are pleased to share 50% of the loose offering with the Kigezi Healthcare Foundation in Kabale, Uganda. In the summer of 2016, St. Thomas is planning a two week trip to the Kabale Clinic to implement a biosand filter project to provide families with clean, safe water. The remaining 50% will be used to support our refugee family, when they arrive in Calgary.*

MINISTRY OF MUSIC: *The Youth Choir~ Winter Canon (with “In the Bleak Midwinter”) Based on a melody by Thomas Tallis~ arr. with new words by Andy Beck.*

✠OFFERTORY: *Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow* (on-screen)

**VU#541**

✠OFFERTORY PRAYER *(Leader)*

**Loving God, may these gifts help us proclaim to all the world your power and mercy. May they help your church speak out for the justice that was born long ago in Bethlehem. May they help turn us from paths of destruction and lead us to protect this fragile planet. May they help others to know that you, Creator God, are not far away but are here, with us, even now. Amen.**

CALL TO PRAYER: *Hope Shines as the Solitary Star* (on-screen) **MV#220**

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS AND OURSELVES

THE PRAYER OF JESUS (Sung – on-screen)

SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION

Once upon a time,  
long, long ago,  
in a stable in a backward town,  
something wonderful happened.

To a people rapidly losing hope,  
wondering about the future,  
uncertain of who or what  
would dominate their living,  
God came.

**In the person of Jesus of Nazareth,  
whom Mary birthed  
and Joseph claimed as his own,  
this little child embodied  
the truth of God  
born for all humanity.**

And so we glorify that same God,  
and lift our hearts with praise  
as did the angels long ago:

On this night  
we pause to remember  
how Jesus transformed our world  
and our lives.

**Jesus spoke a word of hope to us  
even when we were mired in self-centeredness  
and bickering.**

When we wanted to give up,  
Jesus renewed God's promise to us,  
and even now  
in a world of misgivings and half-truths,

of uncertainties and unknowings,  
still Jesus reminds us that God  
is never far away.

We rejoice that Jesus led people to discover  
the sacred in the ordinary,  
in the lowly, in everyday life,  
in human yearnings to be better people,  
and in being neighbor to one another.

### **Bread and wine, the fruit of vine and earth.**

He gave us these to keep us connected to the story:  
We remember the night before he died,  
according to our tradition,  
when he shared a meal with his friends.

Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it.

He poured out the wine.

He gave thanks for all the blessings in his life  
honoring the God so faithfully present  
in his life and ours.

### **“Do this remembering me.”**

We break bread as Jesus did remembering  
the call to love generously and faithfully,  
whatever the cost.

We pour out wine remembering  
our responsibility to be bearers  
of forgiveness, tolerance, and understanding.

May these ordinary things be blessed.  
For they represent both the ordinary and the extraordinary  
as Jesus calls us to follow him.

**To this commitment we give our “Amen” and offer it as our Christmas gift to our family and friends and neighbours, as a sacrament to his life and death and resurrection, in those days, and in our hearts even tonight.**

(Communion Is Shared)

We give thanks for God being with us  
in the love of family and friends,  
in whatever has been,  
in the circumstances of life now,  
and in whatever the future holds for us.

**And as we go out, may we share generously of this wonderful light we have received and in so doing become light bearers and the next chapter in God’s story.**

When we offer a glass of water to a thirsty person

**it is Christmas**

When we clothe a naked person with a gown of love

**it is Christmas**

When we wipe the tears from weeping eyes

**it is Christmas**

When the spirit of revenge dies in me

**it is Christmas**

When in my heart I no longer want to stay apart

**it is Christmas**

When I am buried in the being of God

**it is Christmas**

✠HYMN: *Silent Night, Holy Night* (on-screen)

**VU#67**

SENDING FORTH

POSTLUDE

Participating in worship leadership today: Rev. Bob, Rev. Tracy, Barbara Tetzlaff, The Youth Choir, John Robertson, Myrna Malanik, Teri Smith, David Smith, Rachel Hanbury, Jenna Pennington, Amanda Sherwin, Christina Robertson, Shannon Taylor, Robyn Pugh, Lauren Cross.