

Quispamsis United Church

December 24, 2023 - 4th Sunday in Advent

Liturgical Colour: Blue

Presider: Rev Ian Manson

Music: Stephen Alexander

Reader: Ben Alward

Centering Reflection: *God of impossible love,
announcing to us a new way of being...
give us the faith of Mary to work with the Spirit of life;
give us her perplexity as an opening to a new future;
give us her deep thought which delves beyond the norm;
through Jesus Christ, long awaited, unforeseen.*
— Steven Shakespeare

GATHERING TOGETHER

Opening Music (In dulci jubilo" - J.S. Bach) & Time of Prayer and Candle Lighting

Welcome and Lighting of the Christ Candle

Lighting of Affirm Candle & Acknowledgment of Territories

Celebrations

Introit:

Come Now, O God
Come now, O God of love
We are your people
Pour out your spirit
That we be one body.

VU 34

Call to Worship (Responsive):

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice before the God of all.

For God comes to earth in love to redeem the entire human family.

Let us once more welcome the Spirit into our midst, who fills the hungry with good things and heals our deepest afflictions.

Let us rejoice that God embraces the world with righteousness, and offers the light of life to all who are in need.

Prayer of Approach (Unison)

Holy One,

**with Mary, our spirits rejoice in you this day,
for you look with favour on all your children.**

You have done great things for us.

You have scattered the proud and lifted up the lowly.

**You have filled the hungry with good things,
and kept the promises made to our ancestors.**

Your mercy is known from generation to generation.

**And so, we offer our gratitude with hearts full of love,
trusting that you will be with this day, and always. Amen.**

Opening Hymn:

Joy to the World

VU 59

**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.**

**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.**

**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.**

**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.**

Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy (Responsive)

Darkness abounds these days.

But the Hope Christ offers means never giving up on the light.

The world is filled with conflict and violence.

But the Peace Christ offers shows us the way to the dawn.

Sometimes it is hard to find signs of hope.

But the Joy Christ offers is a fire in our hearts that nothing can extinguish.

light HOPE, PEACE, JOY candles

At the core of all this is God's eternal love for us.

It is a love without condition or limitations.

It is a love that reaches out to heal and embrace the brokenness of the world.

It is a love that leads to the wholeness, hope, peace, and joy we seek.

light LOVE candle

We light this candle of love. And so, with the light of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love,

we see the way ahead, and prepare to receive Christ's love once more.

Candle Lighting Hymn

A Candle is Burning

VU 6 (vs 4)

A candle is burning, a candle of LOVE,

A candle to point us to heaven above

A baby for Christmas, a wonderful birth

For Jesus is bringing God's love to our earth.

Time for All Ages

Prayer of Illumination (Unison)

God of all the ages, the stories of this season are familiar, so send your Spirit to give us a fresh understanding of their significance. Make us attentive to Jesus, the living Word, and to your gifts of life, love and faith. Amen.

Readings:

Luke 1: 26-56

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be

holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.’ Then Mary said, ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.’ Then the angel departed from her.

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leapt for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.’

And Mary said,
‘My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.’

And Mary remained with her for about three months and then returned to her home.

Sung Response to Scripture

Watch and Pray

VU 33

**Watch, watch and pray
Jesus, the word will come**

The Gift of Music

How Great the Joy

Message

“When God Chooses You”

RESPONDING TO GOD’S WORD

Hymn:

Angels We Have Heard on High
Angels we have heard on high
sweetly singing o'er the plains,
and the mountains in reply,
echoing their joyous strains.

VU 38

Refrain

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
which inspire your heavenly song? R

Come to Bethlehem and see
Christ whose birth the angels sing;
come, adore on bended knee
Christ, the Lord, the newborn King. R

See him in a manger laid,
whom the choirs of angels praise;
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid,
while our hearts in love we raise. R

Life and Work of the Church

Sharing of Gifts and Talents

Offertory Dedication Hymn:

In the Bleak Midwinter

VU 55 (vs. 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.**

Prayer of Dedication (Unison):

Gracious God, we give these gifts to express our love for you and for the world. Bless them, and bless those whose lives they touch. Amen.

The Gift of Music Gaudete! Christus Est Natus

Prayers of the People and Lord's Prayer

SENDING FORTH

Closing Hymn:

Go, Tell It on the Mountain

VU 43

Refrain

***Go, tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and everywhere.***

***Go, tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born.***

**While shepherds kept their watching
o'er silent flocks by night,
behold, throughout the heavens
there shone a holy light. R**

**The shepherds feared and trembled
when lo, above the earth
rang out the angel chorus
that hailed our Saviour's birth! R**

**Down in a lonely manger
the humble Christ was born,
and God sent our salvation
that blessed Christmas morn. R**

Commissioning (Responsive):

Go in love this day.

We go to greet friends, neighbours and strangers with the warmth and wonder of Jesus in our hearts.

Benediction

Choral Closing:

**Rejoice, Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

Closing Music

Postlude on "Adeste Fideles - Sigvart Hofland