



Carlisle and Kilbride United Churches  
**Friday December 24, 2021**  
**Christmas Eve Communion**  
**On Zoom**

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Music Leader: **Heather Olaveson**

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**Call to Worship:** by Richard Bott

On that first Christmas Eve,  
Mary, Joseph, and the newborn Jesus  
were in their family bubble; safe and together, for that night.

We gather tonight, distant, but together;  
as families in our own homes, but also as family with Jesus.

We may be separated from the night of his birth by geography and time.

We may be separated from each other, because of this pandemic.

But we are together in God's love.

Nothing can separate us from that, or from each other in that.

So, friends – in Jesus name – let us be together in this time of Christmas worship!

Alleluia! Alleluia, Amen!

**Opening Hymn:** VU 64 O Little Town of Bethlehem

Enjoy the smooth, warm vocals of Nat King Cole (1919-1965) as he performs the first two verses of this classic carol. Although Cole recorded forty albums (not including compilations) over a twenty-year span, only one is a Christmas album: *The Magic of Christmas* (1960).

[Nat King Cole - O Little Town Of Bethlehem \(Lyric Video\) - YouTube](#)

- 1 O little town of Bethlehem,  
how still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
the silent stars go by;  
yet in thy dark streets shineth  
the everlasting light;  
the hopes and fears of all the years  
are met in thee tonight.

- 2 For Christ is born of Mary;  
and gathered all above,  
while mortals sleep, the angels keep  
their watch of wondering love.  
O morning stars, together  
proclaim the holy birth,  
and praises sing to God the King,  
and peace to all on earth.
- 3 How silently, how silently  
the wondrous gift is given!  
So God imparts to human hearts  
the blessed gift of heaven.  
No ear may hear his coming;  
but in this world of sin,  
where meek souls will receive him, still  
the dear Christ enters in.
- 4 O holy child of Bethlehem,  
descend to us, we pray;  
cast out our sin, and enter in;  
be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels  
the great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us,  
our Lord Emmanuel.

### **Lighting the Advent Candles:**

We light our candles this night celebrating the hope, peace, joy and love foretold with the birth of sweet Jesus:

*(light the four advent candles and the Christ Candle)*

Hope born in a Manger, marked by a star in the night

Peace as a ribbon binding us to God's love

Joy as a heartbeat measuring justice and truth

Love as God's breath giving us life

Grace of God, come in Jesus to set us free. Amen.

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

What a stunning reimagining of a traditional Christmas carol! The London-based group The Spirituals was formed in October 2020 for a Black History project that reimagined spiritual anthems, and these musicians have since recorded a Christmas project at St Paul's Cathedral and an Easter project at Lambeth Palace that fuse gospel, tradition, and gorgeous cinematography.

[O' Come All Ye Faithful \(Bless The Lord\) | The Spirituals Choir \(Official Music Video\) - YouTube](#)

- 1 O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,  
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem:  
come and behold him, born the King of angels;  
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.
- 2 God of God, light of light,  
lo, he abhors not the virgin's womb;  
very God, begotten, not created: R
- 3 Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,  
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;  
glory to God in the highest: R
- 4 See how the shepherds summoned to his cradle,  
leaving their flocks, draw nigh with lowly fear;  
we too will thither bend our joyful footsteps; R
- 5 Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;  
Jesus, to thee be glory given;  
word of the Father, now in flesh appearing: R

**Scripture: Isaiah 9:2**

<sup>2</sup>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.

**Blessing: How the Light Comes**

I cannot tell you how the light comes.

What I know is that it is more ancient than imagining.

That it travels across an astounding expanse to reach us.

That it loves searching out what is hidden, what is lost,  
what is forgotten or in peril or in pain.

That it has a fondness for the body, for finding its way toward flesh,  
for tracing the edges of form, for shining forth through the eye, the hand, the heart.

I cannot tell you how the light comes, but that it does.

That it will.

That it works its way into the deepest dark that enfolds you,  
though it may seem long ages in coming or arrive in a shape you did not foresee.

And so may we this day turn ourselves toward it.

May we lift our faces to let it find us.

May we bend our bodies to follow the arc it makes.

May we open and open more and open still

to the blessed light that comes. — Jan Richardson from *Circle of Grace*

**Prayer:**

God of Surprising Generosity and Unexpected Grace,  
we yearn to be part of a miracle;  
and so, we prepare our hearts for a new invasion of Your Light.

We desire once again to open our souls and our lives to the divine birth.  
And in this sacred moment we ask for Your gentle Presence  
to captivate and challenge us.  
May the glory of the grace of Jesus  
be reborn in us this night. Amen

**Hymn:** VU 47 Still, Still, Still

English choral conductor John Rutter directs the Cambridge Singers in his own arrangement of the Austrian carol and lullaby "Still, Still, Still." Although the origins of this *Weihnachtslied* (Christmas song) are not certain, it seems the folk tune first appeared in print in 1865.

[Still, still, still - John Rutter \(arr.\), Cambridge Singers - YouTube](#)

- 1 Still, still, still: the night is calm and still.  
The Christ-child in his crib lies sleeping,  
angels round him watch are keeping.  
Still, still, still: the night is calm and still.
- 2 Sleep, sleep, sleep: sweet Jesus, softly sleep,  
while Mary sings and gently holds you,  
safely in her arms enfolds you.  
Sleep, sleep, sleep: sweet Jesus softly sleep.
- 3 Joy, joy, joy; glad tidings of great joy!  
For through God's holy incarnation  
Christ is born for our salvation.  
Joy, joy, joy; glad tidings of great joy!

**Prayer:**

Now in the silence,  
whisper of joy which comes  
into every life.  
Now in the comfort of carols,  
sing of hope which  
takes away the despair  
which envelops us.  
Now in familiar words heard anew,  
speak to us of grace  
which is born into barren lives,  
of peace which is birthed  
in war's shadowed fears.

Now leaning next to those who have always been a part of us,  
and those from whom we have been apart,  
remind us of your heart  
which always accepts us,  
always welcomes us.

Now in the love which is ours forever,  
draw us closer to your heart,  
so we can be surprised by wonder,  
swaddled in serenity,  
embraced by tenderness.

Now touch us once again with Christmas,  
God in Community, Holy in One.

**Hymn:** VU 58 Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

Bonnie McMaken, Johannah Swank, and Marissa Cunningham sing a beautiful a cappella arrangement of this Polish carol. "W Żłobie Leży" ("In the Manger He Lies") might date back as far as the thirteenth century; however, it wasn't published until 1908 and then was soon translated into English (1921). The folk tune uses the rhythmic pattern of the Polish mazurka, a musical form made famous by Frédéric Chopin.

[Infant Holy, Infant Lowly - YouTube](#)

1 Infant holy, infant lowly, for his bed a cattle stall;  
oxen lowing, little knowing Christ the babe is Lord of all.  
Swift are winging angels singing,  
noels ringing, tidings bringing:  
Christ the babe is born for all.  
Christ the babe is born for all!

2 Flocks were sleeping; shepherds keeping vigil till  
the morning new  
saw the glory, heard the story, tidings of a gospel true.  
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow,  
praises voicing greet the morrow:  
Christ the babe was born for you.  
Christ the babe was born for you!

**Scripture: Luke 2: 1-20**

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>All went to their own towns to be registered.

<sup>4</sup>Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David.

<sup>5</sup>He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her

child. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

<sup>8</sup>In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

<sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup>to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

<sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup>And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup>“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

<sup>15</sup>When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.”

<sup>16</sup>So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup>When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup>and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.

<sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

<sup>20</sup>The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

**Hymn:** VU 48 Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Seven-year-old YouTube sensation Claire Crosby sings and plays ukulele with her family in this recording (verses 1 and 3). Claire's father, Dave, competed on season 13 of NBC's *The Voice*: after he auditioned, the judges recognized him from YouTube and invited his daughter to come onto the stage to perform as well!

[Hark! The Herald Angels Sing - The Crosby Family - YouTube](#)

- 1 Hark! the herald angels sing,  
'Glory to the newborn King,  
peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled!  
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,  
join the triumph of the skies;  
with the angelic host proclaim,  
'Christ is born in Bethlehem!'  
Hark! the herald angels sing,  
'Glory to the newborn King!'
- 2 Christ, by highest heaven adored,  
Christ, the everlasting Lord,  
late in time behold him come,  
offspring of a virgin's womb.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;

hail, the incarnate deity,  
pleased with us in flesh to dwell,  
Jesus, our Emmanuel! R

3 Hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings,  
risen with healing in his wings.  
Mild he lays his glory by,  
born that we no more may die,  
born to raise us from the earth,  
born to give us second birth. R

**Intercessions:**

One: Our God, Immanuel, while we meet tonight  
in warm fellowship and love,  
we pray for those who are still out in the cold.

**All: May the light of Bethlehem's greatest Child,  
touch every dark place.**

One: For those who because of persistent hatreds, terrorism or war  
are far from the promise of peace and goodwill.

**All: Come, Immanuel, and help your servants  
complete the works of love and peace  
which you have launched.**

One: For those who this night live in refugee camps,  
squat in derelict buildings, or sleep in back alleys  
or on park benches.

**All: Come, Immanuel, and aid all your lost and homeless  
children to find their true inheritance.**

One: For those who are ill, at home or in hospital;  
the diseased and maimed;  
the latest accident victims of our highways and streets.

**All: Come, Immanuel, and bring comfort and hope  
through those nurses and doctors  
who do your healing work this night.**

One: For those grieving folk who for the first time  
are facing Christmas without a precious loved one at their side.

**All: Come Immanuel, and give to the grieving that deep soul-peace  
that no human voice or hand can offer.**

One: For the church in every land, wherever it worships and works  
in peace, and especially where it lives  
under constant threat and persecution.

**All: Come Immanuel, and give all your people  
the assurance of your constant presence,  
and your all-sufficient grace.**

One: And now, holy Friend, we pray for ourselves,  
that this Christmas may not pass in vain.

O Spirit of Christ,

**All: You are the very Word of God who became flesh,  
give each of us the will and the wisdom  
to fulfill our prayers with appropriate actions.  
To your praise and glory. Amen.**

**Holy Communion:**

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

**All: May the God of herald angels be with you!**

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

**All: May Emmanuel come to abide in our hearts.**

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

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

Gathering around the table as we celebrate new life borning,  
we remember so many stories shared around tables;  
tables where bread is broken and cup is poured out,  
where families gather and generations share,  
where stories are remembered, refined, reshaped.

Gathering around the table on this holy night,  
we remember the story of the sacred daring to share our life,  
the story of the holy donning human flesh and dwelling among us,  
a story that is at once both ethereal and earthly.

Gathering around this table at this holy time,  
we remember the babe who grew into a boy and then a man.  
A man who walked with the outcast, ate with the marginalized,  
showed compassion for those suffering and brought healing to all.

Gathering around the table on this Christmas night,  
we break the bread and remember the paradox  
that it is in our brokenness that we become whole;  
we fill this cup and remember the abundance  
discovered in each new sharing of our sacred stories.

Together, around the table, we pray:  
Come, holy Spirit, come.  
Bless this bread and bless this fruit of the vine.  
Bless all of us in our eating and drinking  
that our eyes might be opened,  
that we might recognize the Spirit rising in our midst

indeed, in one another.  
Come, holy Spirit, come.

**Fraction and Distribution & Offering:**

Mary responded to God with great joy and exultation.  
We, too, are invited to respond to God's presence in our lives. Let us offer ourselves in joy as we receive the bread of life and the cup of blessing.

**Prayer after Communion:** VU 53

Eternal God,  
In Jesus Christ your light shines in our darkness, giving joy in our sorrow  
And presence in our loneliness. Fill us with the mystery of your Word made flesh,  
Until our hearts overflow with praise and joy,  
For he is the beginning and he end of all that exists, living forevermore. Amen

**Hymn:** VU 67 Silent Night, Holy Night

Christmas doesn't quite seem like Christmas without hearing some of those classic crooners . . . like Bing Crosby. Crosby recorded "Silent Night" several times during his career, but his biggest hit was his recording of Irving Berlin's "White Christmas," which was first broadcast over the radio on Christmas day 1941.

[Bing Crosby - Silent Night - YouTube](#)

- 1     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.
  
- 2     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.
  
- 3     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:** May your Christmas be blessed and full of peace. Amen.

**Online Postlude:** Christmas Canon

Many thanks to Bob Moulder for this lovely find: a YouTube user has put together wintery visuals to accompany the Trans-Siberian Orchestra's "Christmas Canon." This

piece is from their 1998 album *The Christmas Attic* and is set to Pachelbel's familiar canon. I hope it brings you peace and joy.

[Christmas Canon \(with lyrics\) - YouTube](#)



### **Announcements:**

All in-person activities have been cancelled and will be delivered on Zoom instead.

Worship services for Sunday December 26 and January 2 will be on Zoom at 10:00 am, followed by coffee hours on Zoom at 11:00 am. Links will be in the Events Calendar on the Carlisle website.