**December 24, 2016**

**Christmas Eve**

**We Gather, Dreaming**

***CAROLLING***

***PRELUDE***

***ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE LAND***

***CAROL SING***

“Hark! the Herald Angels Sing” VU 48

“Angels, from the Realms of Glory” VU 36

“Away in a Manger” VU 69

***INTROIT***

***Call to worship***

The time we have been waiting for has come.

**We are excited. One more sleep! Tonight is the night!**

Young hearts are filled with great expectations. We have expectations of trees and food, Santa and presents, parties and celebrations… and a baby lying in a manger.

**We are anxious. No time left for further preparations.**

Pies have been baked, the turkey is thawing, gifts have been wrapped. We are either ready or we are not…for a baby lying in a manger.

**We are tired. We have worked hard to get ready for this night.**

We have been practicing anthems and pageants, attending concerts and parties, entertaining guests…because of a baby in a manger.

**We are concerned. Not everyone feels the joy of this night**.

Some of us are lonely and sad. Some of us are afraid and worried. Some of us are in need of good news … about a baby in a manger.

**As we worship on this night of nights, may we hear again the hopeful news brought to us by this baby in the manger – the news of justice and love for all creation.**

***CAROL*** “O Come, All Ye Faithful” VU 60

***LIGHTING OF THE CHRISTCANDLE***

In our Advent waiting,

**We have marked the weeks**

**With candles kindled,**

A candle of hope, of peace, of joy, of love.

**Tonight, we catch the fire of God.**

**This night, we light the Christ candle.**

*(As the Christ Candle is lit you are invited to hold the candle you received as you entered this evening. Take time to think about the light that you will share with the world when you leave this night. It, too, is the light of hope, of peace, of joy, of love for one another and for the world)*

The light shines in the darkness,

**And the darkness shall not overcome it.**

***MINISTRY OF MUSIC/Anthem***

**We Dream of Hearing Spirit Speak**

***CAROL*** “A Candle is Burning” VU 6

***CONVERSATION WITH OUR CHILDREN***

***PRAYER BEFORE SCRIPTURE***

May the words we hear offer us hope:

**Peace in our hearts**

**Joy in our lives**

**Love in our world.**

Scripture:

* Luke 2:1-20

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

**Thanks be to God.**

***STAR-CHILD***

**Our Dreaming Spirits Respond**

***CAROL “***It Came Upon the Midnight Clear” VU 44

***CREED***

**We believe in the truth of Christmas**

**A message from long ago and meant for us today.**

**We believe that God chooses the meek and the poor**

**to stand in equality with those who are rich in resources and power.**

**We believe in the incarnate Word,**

**leaping in a woman’s womb, cradled in poverty.**

**We believe in Jesus, son of Mary, child of God,**

**who came among us in weakness,**

**that we might come to know the profound strength**

**available to common people,**

**who like Jesus, are also children of God.**

**This is the message of Christmas.**

***ANTHEM***

***invitation TO OUR OFFERING***

Tonight we come with our hopes and our dreams. We come as little children. We come because for some of us it is tradition for the whole family to go to church on Christmas Eve. Some have come out of curiosity. Some come because of loneliness. We are here in this place, waiting on tiptoes for something to happen. We come offering our lives and bringing our gifts. In the spirit of this night, let us receive our Christmas offering

***OFFERING HYMN*** “A Light is Gleaming” (vs. 3) VU 82

***OFFERING PRAYER***

**Your offering of love**

**was not gift-wrapped, O God,**

**and not what anyone expected.**

**Our offering comes**

**wrapped in faith**

**and given in expectation**

**for we trust you will bless it, use it**

**and use us to further the work**

**of your realm**

**begun again on earth tonight.**

**Amen.**

***ANTHEM***

***PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE***

***CAROL*** “O Little Town of Bethlehem” VU 64

We Go in Peace

***SENDING***

The Child, whom we await is here.

**The shepherds heard it and came.**

The angels sang it to all who would listen.

**The people listen and respond!**

Glory to God!

**Peace for all.**

***CAROL*** “Silent Night” VU 67

*(As lights are dimmed and candles lit, be reminded of the light we take into the world – the light of peace and love)*

Tonight’s offering will go to **1JustCity**, because we believe in change. 1JustCity is the umbrella for four outreach ministries (West Broadway, St. Matthew’s-Maryland, Oak Table, and North End Stella) serve those living with addictions, those without a place to call home, or those shunned by others based on race, income and sexual orientation. The need for their presence continues to grow, especially in these times of economic stress. We believe that everyone would like to make their city, their country and their world a better place but just need the right avenue to express their gift.

* If you found tonight’s worship time meaningful or had your curiosity tickled, why not join us some Sunday? We worship at 10:30 a.m., and normally have a time of hospitality (otherwise known as *coffee*) both before and after worship. **We’d love to have you!** For more info about our church, check out our Facebook page
* for info about the United Church [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca)
* ***NOTE: All donations for the 2016 tax year must be in the office by Dec 31 or postmarked on or before December 31, 2016.***

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Celebrating this ancient birth,

go from here:

With the angels’ song on your lips,

The shepherds’ joy in your hearts,

The seeking minds of the Wise Ones,

And the love of the manger-Child

for all who need love.

*Blessings to you and yours,*

*From the staff of Crescent Fort Rouge United Church*

*Irene Greenwood – Ministry Staff*

*Michael Cutler – Music Director*

*Sherri Van Aert – Administrator*

*Adam McGhee – Caretaker/Security*