

Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Metcalfe
CHRISTMAS EVE
DECEMBER 24, 2024
Reverend Tom Hubschmid

Invitation to Worship

The Gathering of the Community

Celebrant: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with you all.

People: **And also with you.**

Celebrant: We acknowledge our presence on the ancestral lands of the Algonquin Anishinaabe nation.

All: **In a spirit of reconciliation, may we always seek to respect the history, spirituality, and culture of Indigenous Peoples and uphold our continuing responsibility as treaty people.**

Celebrant: Almighty God,

People: **to you all hearts are open,
all desires known,**

and from you no secrets are hidden.

**Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Celebrant: Glory to God in the highest,

All: **and peace to his people on earth.**

**Lord God, heavenly king,
almighty God and Father,**

**we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,**

you take away the sin of the world:

have mercy on us;

you are seated at the right hand of the Father:

receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One,

**you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

Celebrant: Heavenly Father,
who chose the Virgin Mary, full of grace,
to be the mother of our Lord and Saviour,
now fill us with your grace,
that we in all things may embrace your will
and with her rejoice in your salvation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
All: **Amen**

Lighting of The Christ Candle

Celebrant: We give thanks for the light of Christ,
shining in the lives of all God's people.

With the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah,
we watch and wait for the coming of Christ
who will bring light and peace to all the world.

With John the Baptist, we cry out in the wilderness:
"Prepare, the way of the Lord!
Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

With Mary, the mother of Jesus, we rejoice
for the Mighty One has done great things for us.
How holy is God's name!

With Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,
we tell the story of Jesus, the child of Bethlehem,
who came to save us and is coming again in glory.

With the choirs of angels we sing;
"Glory to God in the highest, and peace to all people on earth!"

The Proclamation of The Word

Reader: A reading from Isaiah 9:2-7
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.

You have multiplied exultation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.

For the yoke of their burden
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

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.

Great will be his authority,
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.

The Word of the Lord

People: **Thanks be to God**

Reader: Our Psalm is Psalm 96

Sing to the Lord a new song; *

All: **sing to the Lord, all the whole earth.**

Reader: Sing to the Lord and bless his name; *

All: **proclaim the good news of his salvation from day to day.**

Reader: Declare his glory among the nations *

All: **and his wonders among all peoples.**

Reader: For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; *

All: **he is more to be feared than all gods.**

Reader: As for all the gods of the nations, they are but idols; *

All: **but it is the Lord who made the heavens.**

Reader: Oh, the majesty and magnificence of his presence! *

All: **Oh, the power and the splendour of his sanctuary!**

Reader: Ascribe to the Lord, you families of the peoples; *

All: **ascribe to the Lord honour and power.**

Reader: Ascribe to the Lord the honour due his name;

All: **bring offerings and come into his courts.**

Reader: Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; *

All: **let the whole earth tremble before him.**

Reader: Tell it out among the nations: "The Lord is king! *

All: **he has made the world so firm that it cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity."**

Reader: Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea thunder and all that is in it; *

All: **let the field be joyful and all that is therein.**

Reader: Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy before the Lord when he comes, *

All: **when he comes to judge the earth.**

Reader: He will judge the world with righteousness *

All: **and the peoples with his truth.**

Reader: We worship you, God of glory, in the beauty of holiness, and we joyfully proclaim your just and righteous rule, established for all, through your Son Jesus Christ the Lord.

Reader: A Reading From Titus 2:11-14

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

The Word of the Lord

People: **Thanks be to God**

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Celebrant: The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke 2:1-20

People: **Glory be to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Celebrant: In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. 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. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 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 room for them in the inn. Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were

terrified. 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: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” 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.” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them, and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

The Gospel of Christ.

People: **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Homily Christmas Eve

May only the truth be spoken and only the truth heard. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

So, being the priest in Russell and Metcalfe means I drive a lot. Means there’s a lot more radio in my life than there once was. And all that radio means a lot more news, right?

News. What do we think the Christian message is? Is it a teaching? Is it wisdom? Is it spiritual advice? There’s a good deal of all that. But it all starts as news. News that we repeat and remember and hear again and again.

When you’re listening to the radio, you get your local, your national, your global news. And it’s very rare that, say, Adriene Arsenault or good old Peter Mansbridge on TV would give life advice, or teaching, or wisdom on the news. It’s just news. The finance minister suddenly steps down. The incoming president makes a tariff threat. Syrian rebel forces topple their dictator. Food banks across Canada are overwhelmed. An Ivy-league grad assassinates a health insurance Exec. News. It’s just the plain telling of events. And these events interest us because somewhere down the line events in the world impact our lives, maybe even dramatically change our lives. Like when the Corona Virus changed everything.

Christianity is based on ancient news. It’s news of an event. And it’s an event that’s been impacting lives for some 20 centuries. And it’s news that has always been drowned out by news of the nations, but nonetheless quietly and humbly and unstoppably changes lives.

The era when Jesus was born, was the most glorious era of the Roman Empire. There was a lot of news. That’s why Luke starts out his account of the birth of Jesus by mentioning Emperor Augustus. Emperor Augustus – Caesar Augustus – wants a head count of his empire. Who was Caesar Augustus? Son of Julius Caesar. Julius Caesar conquered half of Europe before it was

Europe. Augustus then won Caesar's throne after a bloody civil war. After taking the throne, Augustus turned Rome from a Republic that once hated Kings into an Empire with one supreme Emperor. He proclaimed that he brought justice and peace to the whole world. He declared his Father Julius a god, and styled himself as 'son of God.' Incredible building projects followed, and the infrastructure of Rome became unparalleled. People across the Empire called Augustus 'saviour' of the world, and many in the eastern part of the empire worshiped him as a god.

In Mary and Joseph's day, Augustus wanted a quick count of his world – a census. That's the setting. It was a world full of news. But Luke's gospel gives us other news.

"Gospel" is Greek for good news. And it's as spectacular as it is hidden. A pregnant mother journeys with her husband to his hometown. It's busy there because of the census. There's no vacancy in the inn. Only place they can sleep is where the animals of fellow travellers are stabled. Mary gives birth in the stable. She swaddles her baby and lays him in the feed trough. It's a good story, but it likely wouldn't make the news, especially Roman news.

Nearby there are shepherds in their fields. And something properly dramatic happens.

Something cosmic and otherworldly. An angel announces news to the Shepherds. They're a band of nobodies out in the dark of their pasture. "To you," the angel says – to you the simple people of the earth – "is born this day in the city of David a saviour, who is Messiah, the Lord." The angel then gives the shepherds some instructions on where to find this saviour. Then, because any Lord, Messiah, and Saviour would have an army, the saviour's army appears in the heavens. And it's a host of angels. Not marching, not beating their shields or firing ceremonial canons. They praise God and declare peace on earth.

Then the shepherds do the only sensible thing. They follow their instructions to find a baby lying in a manger somewhere. When they find him, they see, and then they spread the news. Luke writes, "They made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherd told them." The Shepherds must have told Mary and Joseph what they saw and heard in the fields, and Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart.

What was going on? Pretty much the whole of Christian life at church is a slow process of peeling back the layers of what was going on here. But I want us to see one thing in particular this Christmas Eve that relates back to all that stuff about Augustus and news of our own times and leaders and nations. The Angels announce to the shepherds that a Saviour is born, a Messiah, and they call him Lord. These are things the world at the time thought about their human ruler. Augustus, remember, styled himself 'son of God.' Jesus, we believe, is both Son of God and of the same Being with God. One with God. The angels, when they call Mary's baby, "the Lord" use the word the Bible uses as a placeholder for God's personal and holy name.

And so the news then and now leaves its hearers with a question. What kind of Kingdom and what kind of ruler do I really belong to with heart and soul?

The Lordship of rulers is distant and cold. The Lordship of God is close. It's closer to us than we are to ourselves.

The laws of rulers govern us sometimes against our wills. The law of God comes from the heart.

The wars of rulers are fought with armies and bloodshed, against other countries. The wars of God are fought with the Holy Spirit and angels, against our own sins, and only Jesus' blood is shed.

Rulers control land, control people, control resources in a specific place. The Kingdom of God appears anywhere, anytime. It just happens. The Kingdom of God is more of an event than a system or regime. We don't control it. The kingdom of God just shows up where it shows up. No limit placed on it by borders, skin colour, natural resources, or culture.

The Kingdoms of rulers show their strength and power with pomp and ceremony. They make towers and roads and arenas and parliaments and bridges. The Kingdom of God doesn't even appear like a Kingdom, except when religions try to play that game.

Eventually Rome collapsed. And the idea that a King could be a god became absurd. But the child born to Mary, heralded secretly by Angels to shepherds in their pasture, whose throne on earth was a cross, and whose crown was thrones, his power continues to reach into people's lives, everywhere in the world.

It's good news. It's still good news.

Amen.

Silence for reflection

The Apostles' Creed

Celebrant: Let us confess the faith of our baptism, as we say,

People: **I believe in God,**

**the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

**He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again.

**He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again
to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Reader: In joy and humility let us pray to the creator of the universe, saying, "Lord, grant us peace."

By the good news of our salvation brought to Mary by the angel, hear us, O Lord.

All: **Lord, grant us peace.**

Reader: By the mystery of the Word made flesh, hear us, O Lord.

All: **Lord, grant us peace.**

Reader: By the birth in time of the timeless Son of God, hear us, O Lord.

All: **Lord, grant us peace.**

Reader: By the manifestation of the King of glory to the shepherds and magi, hear us, O Lord.

All: **Lord, grant us peace.**

Reader: By the submission of the maker of the world to Mary and Joseph of Nazareth, hear us, O Lord.

All: **Lord, grant us peace.**

Reader: By the baptism of the Son of God in the river Jordan, hear us, O Lord.

All: **Lord, grant us peace.**

Reader: Grant that the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; hear us, O Lord.

All: **Lord, grant us peace.**

Confession and Absolution

Celebrant: Dear friends in Christ,
God is steadfast in love and infinite in mercy;
he welcomes sinners
and invites them to his table.
Let us confess our sins,
confident in God's forgiveness.

Most merciful God,

All: **we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.**

**We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.**

We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.

**For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us,
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your name. Amen.**

Celebrant: Almighty God have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,

confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in eternal life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: **Amen.**

Celebrant: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Prayer over the Gifts

Celebrant: Gracious God,
by the power of the Spirit
who sanctified the mother of your Son,
make holy all we offer you this day.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

All: **Amen**

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Celebrant: Lift up your hearts.

People: **We lift them to the Lord.**

Celebrant: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Celebrant: Blessed are you, gracious God,
creator of heaven and earth;
we give you thanks and praise
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who in the mystery of his incarnation
was made perfect man
of the flesh of the Virgin Mary his mother;
in him we have seen a new and radiant vision of your glory.

Therefore with all the angels of heaven,
we lift our voices and sing our joyful hymn of praise
to proclaim the glory of your name.

All: **Holy, holy, holy Lord,**

God of power and might,

heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Celebrant: We give thanks to you, Lord our God,
for the goodness and love
you have made known to us in creation;
in calling Israel to be your people;
in your Word spoken through the prophets;

and above all in the Word made flesh,
Jesus your Son.

For in these last days you sent him
to be incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
to be the Saviour and Redeemer of the world.
In him, you have delivered us from evil,
and made us worthy to stand before you.

In him, you have brought us
out of error into truth,
out of sin into righteousness,
out of death into life.

On the night he was handed over
to suffering and death,
a death he freely accepted,
our Lord Jesus Christ took bread;
and when he had given thanks to you,
he broke it, and gave it to his disciples,
and said, " Take, eat:
this is my body which is given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine;
and when he had given thanks,
he gave it to them,
and said, "Drink this, all of you:
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many
for the forgiveness of sins.
Whenever you drink it,
do this for the remembrance of me."
Therefore, Father, according to his command,

**All: we remember his death,
we proclaim his resurrection,
we await his coming in glory;**

Celebrant: and we offer our sacrifice
of praise and thanksgiving
to you, Lord of all;
presenting to you, from your creation,
this bread and this wine.
We pray you, gracious God,
to send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts,

that they may be the sacrament
of the body of Christ
and his blood of the new covenant.
Unite us to your Son in his sacrifice,
that we, made acceptable in him,
may be sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

In the fullness of time,
reconcile all things in Christ,
and make them new,
and bring us to that city of light
where you dwell with all your sons and daughters;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
the firstborn of all creation, the head of the Church,
and the author of our salvation;
by whom, and with whom, and in whom,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, almighty Father,
now and for ever.
All: **Amen.**

Celebrant: And now, as our Saviour Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,
People: **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,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Celebrant: We break the bread of life,
and that life is the light of the world.
All: **God here among us,
light in the midst of us,
bring us to light and life.**

Celebrant: The gifts of God for the People of God.
All: **Thanks be to God.**

Celebrant: Faithful God,
in this sacrament we receive the promise of salvation.
May we, like the Virgin Mary,
be obedient to your will.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.
All: **Amen**

Celebrant: Glory to God,
All: **whose power, working in us,
can do infinitely more
than we can ask or imagine.
Glory to God from generation to generation,
in the Church and in Christ Jesus,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Celebrant: May Almighty God,
who sent his Son to take our nature upon him,
bless you in this holy season,
scatter the darkness of sin,
and brighten your heart with the light of his holiness.
All: **Amen**

Celebrant: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Alleluia!
People: **Thanks be to God. Alleluia!**

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