

# **Bolton United Church,**

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**Ministers: The Congregation**

**Rev. Eleanor Scarlett**

**Pianist/Organist: Louise Harding**

**Choir Director: Andrew Dunn**

**Church Secretary: Sandra Hautot**

## **Sunday, December 20th 2020, 10 am, Advent IV Service of 9 Lessons and Carols**

### **Prelude**

#### **Call to Worship:**

At this Christmastime, we delight to hear again the message of the angels, and in heart and mind to go to Bethlehem and see this wondrous thing which has come to pass, and the blessed Babe lying in a manger. Let us read in Holy Scripture the tale of the love of God from the first days until the glorious redemption brought to us by the Holy Child.

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

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 ever-lasting 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; descent 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.

## **Welcome**

### **The Life and Work of the Congregation**

#### **Acknowledging the Land**

We acknowledge that we are in the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinaabe peoples, on whose land and by whose waters we gather. We acknowledge their stewardship as we worship, listen, learn, share, and heal together in the name of our Creator, the Holy One of Blessing.

#### **Candle Hymn: VU 7 Hope Is A Star vs. 4**

4.

Love is a flame that burns in our heart,  
Jesus has come and will never depart.  
When God is a child there's joy in our song.  
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,  
and none shall be afraid.

#### **Advent Candle Lighting:**

VOICE - Last Sunday we lit the candle of Joy. We light it along with the candles of Hope and Peace again as we remember that Christ is Hope, Peace and Joy in our world's brokenness yet, we have not lost Hope, we hold firm to the assurance of Christ Peace and Joy for us.

(a person lights the candles of hope, peace, and joy)

VOICE – Today we are lighting the fourth candle on our Advent wreath. The fourth candle of Advent is the Candle of Love. Its light is meant to remind us of the love that God has for us.

VOICE - Jesus is the revelation of God's perfect love for all peoples. The love of God is like sunshine, it enfolds and reminds us that God is with us; we are loved unconditionally. We are encircled in a love that is stronger than death, a love that has no ending. Thanks be to God. Amen!

VOICE - We light this candle today to remind us of how God's perfect love is found in Christ Jesus, the Messiah.

Light the Fourth Candle

VOICE - LET US PRAY: Loving God, we thank you for your gift of love – revealed to us perfectly in Jesus Christ. Help us prepare our hearts and homes to receive Him. Bless our worship. Help us to hear and do your word. We pray it in the name of the One born in Bethlehem. Amen

**Prayer of Approach:**

Loving God, we have lit candles of hope, joy, love, and peace. Now we hear again the Christmas story, and we celebrate your presence in our lives. We confess that we often forget the true meaning of Christmas as we get caught up in the commercial trappings of the season. As we hear your Word and re-tell the story played out so long ago in Bethlehem, help us to remember always Your love for us.

**9 Lessons and Carols**

*The Lessons and Carols will proceed unannounced.*

**The First Lesson**

Genesis 1: 1–5 The Creation

**Carol: 62 Once in Royal David's City vv. 1 – 2**

1

Once in royal David's city stood a lowly cattle shed,  
where a mother laid her baby in a manger for his bed.  
Mary was that mother mild,  
Jesus Christ her little child.

2

He came down to earth from heaven who, with God, is over all,  
and his shelter was a stable, and his cradle was a stall.  
among the poor and lowly  
lived on earth our Saviour holy.

**The Second Lesson**

Genesis 22: 15–18 God promises to faithful Abraham that in his seed shall the nations of the earth be blessed

**Carol: 73 The Virgin Mary Had a Baby Boy vv. 1 – 2**

Refrain

He come from the glory,

come from the glorious kingdom.  
He come from the glory;  
he come from the glorious kingdom.  
Oh, yes! Believer! Oh, yes! Believer!  
He come from the glory,  
he come from the glorious kingdom.

1.

The virgin Mary had a baby boy,  
the virgin Mary had a baby boy,  
the virgin Mary had a baby boy,  
and they say that his name is Jesus.

2.

The angels sang when the baby was born,  
the angels sang when the baby was born,  
the angels sang when the baby was born  
and they say that his name is Jesus.

### **The Third Lesson**

Isaiah 9: 2, 6–7 Christ's birth and kingdom are foretold by Isaiah

### **Carol: 60 O Come, All Ye Faithful vs. 1, 3**

Refrain

O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
Christ the Lord.

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;

3

Sing, choirs of angels; sing in exultation,  
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;  
glory to God  
in the highest:

### **The Fourth Lesson**

Isaiah 11:1–3, 6–9 The peace that Christ will bring is foreshown

**Carol: 43 Go, Tell It on the Mountain vv. 1 – 2**

1

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

Refrain

Go, tell it on the mountain,  
over the hills and everywhere.  
Go, tell it on the mountain,  
that Jesus Christ is born.

2

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

**The Fifth Lesson**

Luke 1: 26–33 The angel Gabriel salutes Mary

**Carol: 38 Angels, We Have Heard on High vv. 1 – 3**

1

Angels we have on heard high  
Sweetly singing o'er the plains,  
and the mountains in reply,  
echoing their joyous strains.

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!  
Gloria in excelsis Deo!

2

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

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!  
Gloria in excelsis Deo!

3  
Come to Bethlehem and see  
Christ whose birth the angels sing;  
come adore, on bended knee  
Christ, the Lord the newborn King.

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!  
Gloria in excelsis Deo!

### **The Sixth Lesson**

Luke 2: 1–7 The birth of the Christ

#### **Carol: 57 O How Joyfully vv. 1 – 3**

1  
Oh, how joyfully, Oh, how hopefully,  
waits the world on Christmas Eve!  
Love comes healing, God revealing  
Friends, be joyful and believe!

2  
Oh, how joyfully, Oh, how peacefully,  
sleeps the world on Christmas Night!  
Sins are covered, grace discovered,  
In our darkness shines the light!

3  
Oh, how joyfully, Oh, how thankfully,  
wakes the world on Christmas Morn!  
God has spoken, death is broken,  
Alleluia! Christ is born!

### **The Seventh Lesson:**

Luke 2: 8–16 The shepherds go to the manger

#### **Carol: 75 While Shepherds Watched their Flocks vv. 1 – 4**

1  
While shepherds watched their flocks by night  
all seated on the ground,

the angel of the Lord came down,  
and glory shone around.

2

“Fear not,” said he, for mighty dread  
had seized their troubled mind;  
“glad tidings of great joy I bring  
to you and humankind.

3

“To you in David’s town this da  
is born of David’s line a Saviour,  
who is Christ the Lord,  
and this shall be the sign’

4

“The heavenly babe you there shall find  
to human view displayed,  
all meanly wrapped in swaddling bands,  
and in a manger laid.”

### **The Eighth Lesson**

Matthew 2: 1–11 The Magi are led by the star to Jesus

One: The Magi presented the Christ child with treasures, as their offering to Him, for they knew who He was and what He would become. We present our offering to God, so that we may in some small way repay the great and wonderful gifts of life and love and grace we are given each and every day. Together we are joyfully sharing God's love for all creation through faith, fellowship, and service.

We offer these gifts, O God, as we share the joy and the hope of Christmas. Help us be mindful of those who want, those who despair, and those for whom Christmas is not a joyful time. As we present our humble offering, join us with those of old, who witnessed the Christmas story as it unfolded before them; and, like us, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom in Jesus Christ we are one for evermore. Amen.

### **The Ninth Lesson**

John 1: 1 – 17 John unfolds the great mystery of the Incarnation

**Carol: 44 It Came Upon the Midnight Clear vs. 1, 2, 4**

1

It came upon the midnight clear,  
that glorious song of old,  
from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold.  
"Peace on the earth, good will to all,  
from heaven's all gracious King!"  
The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing.

2

Still through the cloven skies they come  
with peaceful wings unfurled;  
and still their heavenly music floats o'er all the weary world;  
above its sad and lowly plains  
they bend on hovering wing,  
and ever o'er its Babel sounds the blessed angels sing.

4

For, lo! The days are hastening on,  
by prophets seen of old,  
when with the ever circling years shall come the time foretold,  
when peace shall over all the earth  
its ancient splendours fling,  
and the whole world send back the song which now the angels sing.

#### **Closing Prayer:**

We pray for the needs of the whole world; for peace on earth and goodwill among all God's people; for unity within the Christian fellowship everywhere; and especially in this our own church family. We ask for your blessings for the poor and the helpless, the cold, the hungry, and the oppressed; the sick and those who mourn; those who are lonely; and all those who need our love, care and compassion, especially at this time of year when we want for little, but many must do without. These prayers we offer humbly in Jesus' name. Amen.

#### **Benediction**

#### **Choral Closing: 6 A Candle Is Burning 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.

## **Postlude**

The service of 9 Lessons and Carols is a Christmas tradition nearly 140 years old, based on a Christmas Eve service first drawn up by the Bishop of Truro, in Cornwall, England, for Christmas Eve in 1880. The best-known version is probably the one from Kings College, Cambridge, which has been celebrated there annually since 1918 and which is frequently broadcast.

Versions of the service vary, but all incorporate essentially the same 9 readings, telling the story of the Christian journey from beginning to end. Our version at Bolton United Church incorporates the traditional readings and some of the traditional hymns and carols, but with newer songs and updated liturgy. It has been part of our tradition here for nearly 25 years.

<https://event.forgetmenotceremonies.com/ceremony?c=ba3f8ccb-3f9d-4997-97d6-047d32690845>