

South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges

First Sunday of Christmas – December 31st, 2023

Prelude: by Christie Coatsworth

Welcome & Announcements:

Thank you for your support of all our past services, which are posted on our websites - Southbuxton.ca and Talbotstreet.ca

Call to Worship:

Eric: Arise, shine, for the light has come.

People: Light radiates. Lift up your eyes and look around.

Eric: See how light shines here in your sons and daughters.

People: Light reflects the glory of God.

Eric: Look around.

People: Our hearts thrill and rejoice.

Eric: God is here again.

Lighting of the Advent Candle:

Eric: It begins here where we dare to believe that there is peace for this world for each of us when so much seems to have gone wrong. We light the Candle of Peace. *(Light the first purple candle).*

Hymn: VU 6 “A Candle is Burning”

A candle is burning, a candle of peace,
a candle to signal that conflict must cease:
for Jesus is coming to show us the way;
a message of peace humbly laid in the hay.

People: One candle does not shine brightly by itself. We need more light to welcome this Child and the hope we imagine will come in this holy birth. We light the Candle of Hope. *(Light the second purple candle).*

Hymn: VU 6 “A Candle is Burning”

A candle is burning, a flame warm and bright,
a candle of hope in December's dark night.
While angels sing blessings from heaven's starry sky,
our hearts we prepare now for Jesus is nigh.

Eric: Light shines to make the heavens glad. Earth rejoices. Trees sing and the sea roars with delight. We light the Candle of Joy. *(Light the pink candle).*

Hymn: VU 6 “A Candle is Burning”

A candle is burning, a candle of joy,
a candle to welcome brave Mary's new boy.
Our hearts fill with wonder, and eyes light and glow
as joy brightens winter like sunshine on snow.

People: The true light, which enlightens everyone, is coming into the world. It is this birth that brings us to Bethlehem to prepare a place for that tiny light that will be the light of all people. We light the Candle of Love. (*Light the last candle*).

Hymn: VU 6 “A Candle is Burning”

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.

Eric: Christ is born, and so we light this candle amidst the ones that have illuminated our way through Advent.

People: This candle reminds us of the light of the world born on this day, born every day, in our hearts and in the living of Christ's way of love, compassion, and justice. We light the Christ Candle. (*Light the center white Christ Candle*).

Hymn: VU 6 “A Candle is Burning”

We honour Messiah with Christ-candle's flame,
our Christmas Eve candles glad tidings proclaim.
O come, all you faithful, rejoice in this night,
as God comes among us, the Christian's true light.

Scripture: Luke 2: 1 - 7

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. This taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

Hymn: VU 69: “Away In a Manger”

1 Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

- 2 The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love you, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky,
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.
- 3 Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask you to stay
close by me for ever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care,
and fit us for heaven, to live with you there.

Scripture:

“When Jesus was born in the village of Bethlehem in Judea, Herod was king. During this time some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem and said, “Where is the child born to be king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.”” *(Matthew 2: 1 - 2)*

Opening Hymn: B 206 “We Three Kings of Orient Are”

We three kings of Orient are,
Bearing gifts we traverse afar,
Field and Fountain, moor and mountain,
Following yonder star.

O Star of wonder, star of night,
Star with Royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect light.

Born a King on Bethlehem’s plain,
Gold I bring to crown him again.
King forever, ceasing never
Over us all to reign.

O Star of wonder, star of night,
Star with Royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect light.

Scripture:

“Herod secretly called in the wise men and asked them when they had first seen the star. He told them, “Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, let me know. I want to go and worship him too.”” *(Matthew 2: 7 - 8)*

Hymn: VU 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 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.

Opening Prayer:

People: Holy Mystery, you twinkle and shimmer like the stars in the heavens above, and it feels like anything could happen. We pause here with you, O Mystery, to contemplate the stars and to wonder what brought us here to this moment, this time, this place. Guide us with words that would give us meaning. Show us how your light reflects the truth of who we hope to be. There is so much possibility. Orient us with your radiance. Amen.

Hymn: VU 44 “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear”

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.

Yet with the woes of sin and strife
the world has suffered long;
beneath the angel strain have rolled
two thousand years of wrong;
and warring humankind hears not
the love song which they bring.
O hush the noise, and cease your strife,
to hear the angels sing.

Scripture Prayer:

“After the wise men had gone, an angel from the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up! Hurry and take the child and his mother to Egypt! Stay there until I tell you to return.” *(Matthew 2: 13)*

Hymn: VU 36 “Angels from the Realms of Glory”

Wise Men, leave your contemplation,
Brighter visions beam afar,
Seek the great Desire of nations,
Ye have seen his natal star
*Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the new born King.*

Saints before the altar bending,
Watching long in hope and fear,
Suddenly the Lord descending,
In his temple shall appear.
*Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the new born King.*

Scripture Prayer:

“That night, Joseph got up and took his wife and the child to Egypt, where they stayed until Herod died. So the Lord’s promise came true, just as the prophet had said, “I called my son out of Egypt.” (Matthew 2 14 - 15)

Hymn: VU 91 “The First Nowell”

The first Nowell the angel did say
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
in fields where they lay akeeping their sheep
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, born is the King of Israel.

Then entered in those wise men three,
full reverently upon their knee,
and offered there in his presence
their gold and myrrh and frankincense.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, born is the King of Israel.

Then let us all with one accord
sing praises to our heavenly Lord,
that hath made heaven and earth of nought,
and with his blood our life hath bought.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, born is the King of Israel.

Scripture Prayer:

I bring you Good News, news of great joy for the whole nation. Today there has been born to you in the City of David, a Saviour – the Messiah, the Lord. (Luke 2: 10-11)

Children's Hymn: VU 74 "What Child is This..."

What child is this, who laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
while shepherds watch are keeping.

*This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing,
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the son of Mary.*

Why lies He in such mean estate,
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian: fear for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading.

*This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing,
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the son of Mary.*

Scripture Prayer:

Joseph got up and left with them for Israel. They went to live in the town of Nazareth. So the Lord's promise came true, just as the prophet had said, "He will be called a Nazarene." *(Matthew 2: 21 - 23)*

Reflection: "Gifts for Jesus"

The dictionary defines epiphany as "a moment of sudden and great revelation or realization." The wise ones followed the star from its rising until it stopped. That was their epiphany, but epiphanies are not always so revealing. On this last Sunday of Christmas, we stop with the wise ones to wonder what this birth has revealed.

It is not clear who are the wise ones in Matthew – they may have been kings or astronomers, while some biblical translations say that they are magi. Nor is it clear how many people came, or their gender, but we can be reasonably certain they came from a different country, have access to wealth (because of the expensive gifts), and travel to honour and pay respect to Jesus.

It is believed that the wisdom of the wise ones came from dreams. Herod, too, got his hunch about these travellers from dreams. Herod was wealthy and powerful, was considered an enemy of the Jews, and was paranoid about any potential threat to him presiding on the throne. The wise ones did not bring Herod back information. We are told their dream told them to go home another way

We might think we know a lot of things. Like we know there is three wise men, who came from the East. Maybe it is an Epiphany to you that we really do not know how many or exactly where they came from.

Matthew shared a few weeks ago about dreams to Joseph, and we ask about how we listen to our dreams. Have you ever shared a dream with another and they share they had a similar dream?

Epiphany, formally celebrated on January 6, marks the end of the Christmas season. It is the day when we celebrate Jesus' identity being revealed to the wise ones who followed the star to find Jesus. Matthew's gospel tells that Jesus was a small child when the wise ones found him, which implies that their quest was a long one – a journey of hope.

We have been waiting a long time for the New Year. Now that it is here, how might you reach out in faith to help others to care, protect, and love each other as Jesus loves us. Jesus' dream for a better world is reliant on all of his followers. We are all needed to help, care, protect, and love what God birthed in Jesus.

We are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

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

- 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!
Hark! the herald angels sing,

'Glory to the newborn King!'

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Leader: With joy and love, let us present our offerings of support for the work of our church.

Offertory: VU 541 "Praise God From Whom..."

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Offertory Prayer:

Bless these gifts, O God, and bless our hands in the work of your realm of peace, love, and justice. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer:

Closing Hymn: VU 43 "Go Tell It On the Mountain:

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

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

*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!

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

- 3 Down in a lonely manger
the humble Christ was born,
and God sent our salvation

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

Benediction:

Eric: May the God of surprises bless you, may the Christ of possibilities keep you, and may the Spirit of new pathways hold you, now and forever more.

VU 6 - A Candle is Burning:

We honour Messiah with Christ-candle's flame,
our Christmas Eve candles glad tidings proclaim.
O come, all you faithful, rejoice in this night,
as God comes among us, the Christian's true light.

Amen, Amen, Amen.

Postlude: – Christie Coatsworth

Prayers: - Please include these people in your prayers this week.

We have offered prayer for these people each Sunday morning just before the Zoom Service. It was suggested to share these names with the total group – as “In the Spirit We Are One”.

**Carol
Susan
Barb
Margie
Jerry
Erin**

**Natalie
Joan
Rick
David
Dave**

**Elizabeth
Mike and Janice
Barb
Rick**

**Don
Audrey
Harry/Ruth
Joyce
Heather**

**Dani
Barb
Branson
Carol
Wayne & Susan
Ian
Ed
Connie
Declan
Marg
Passing yesterday of Ken and Larry**