

**DOWNTOWN UNITED**  
*A Service of St. Paul's and Wilmot United*  
Fredericton, N.B.

Dec 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023

Longest Night

7pm

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**CENTERING MUSIC:** *O Come, O Come Emmanuel*

VU 1

**WORDS OF WELCOME**

**CALL TO WORSHIP:** *(Responsive)*<sup>1</sup>

We come here with all our stories, our lived experiences, and our struggles.

**We carry the weight of loss, worry, grief, and pain.**

We come weary, seeking rest from expectations. We also seek a holy presence to be with us.

**We come to this place, to be held in the resilient grace of God, to be embraced by the love that never lets go.**

Together we worship, resting in God's holy presence.

**OPENING PRAYER**

**HYMN:** *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus*

VU 2

*Come, thou long-expected Jesus,  
born to set thy people free:  
from our fears and sins release us,  
let us find our rest in thee.*

*Israel's strength and consolation,  
hope of all the earth thou art,  
dear desire of every nation,  
joy of every longing heart.*

*Born thy people to deliver;  
born a child and yet a king;  
born to reign in us for ever;  
now thy gracious kingdom bring.*

*By thine own eternal Spirit  
rule in all our hearts alone;  
by thine all-sufficient merit  
raise us to thy glorious throne.*

**SCRIPTURE READING:** Matthew 1:18-2:23 with Reflections

**HYMN:** *What Child is This?*

VU 74

*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?*

**Refrain:**

***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. R***

***So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;  
come, one and all, to own him.  
The King of Kings salvation brings;  
let loving hearts enthrone him. R***

**SCRIPTURE:** John 20:19-22

**REFLECTION**

**HYMN:** *In the Bleak Midwinter*

**VU 55**

***In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,  
earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;  
snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,  
in the bleak midwinter, long ago.***

***Our God, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain;  
heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign;  
in the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed  
the Lord God almighty, Jesus Christ.***

***Enough for him, whom cherubim worship night and day,  
a breast full of milk, and a manger full of hay.  
Enough for him, whom angels fall down before,  
the ox and ass and camel which adore.***

***What can I give him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;  
if I were a wise man, I would do my part;  
yet what I can I give him - give my heart.***

**SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 121

**REFLECTION**

**CANDLE LIGHTING LITURGY <sup>2</sup>**

**PRAYER:** *(In Unison)*

Comforting God, wrap us in your presence, and let these candles remind us of the light that has come and is coming into the world through Christ Jesus. When we are feeling lonely or lost, guide us to kindle these flames, so they may remind us we are never alone. You are a light that shines in the darkness, help us to stand in your light, a light that will lead us day by day, step by step, breath by breath. May the soft glow push back the sadness and grief we hold, replacing it with comfort and peace. This we pray in Christ's name. Amen

**HYMN:** *Silent Night, Holy Night*

VU 67

*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.*

*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.*

*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.*

**BLESSING**

*Feel free to stay in the warmth of this sanctuary as long as you like before venturing out into this night.*

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Jamie Miller, *Gathering ACE 2023/24* pg. 33

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Nancy Townsley, *Minister Matters* Nov 21, 2011

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*Thank you to our Greeter, Deborah West*

