

St. Philip's Anglican Church, Etobicoke

*Blue Christmas Evening Prayer
Sunday, December 20, 2020 at 7:00pm*



While Advent is a season of hope and Christmas is a season of joy, not everyone feels hopeful or like celebrating. Grief, illness, aging, depression, loneliness, unemployment, and loss are magnified. This year, the COVID pandemic has made this Christmas a difficult and lonely time for a lot of people. Many of us feel the loss of the usual Christmas festivities and traditions, and social distancing means that we will not be able to share this Christmas with family and friends. In this service, we hope you will find peace in your heart as we welcome the birth of God's very self into our lives.

In the Northern Hemisphere, December 21 is the longest night, the winter solstice. It marks the shortest day of the year, the official start of winter. Tradition says that nature and all her creatures stop and hold their breath to see if the sun will turn back from its wanderings, if the days will lengthen and the earth will once again feel the sun's warmth. As this darkest day of the year draws near (tomorrow), we come with our honest yearnings seeking the return of light and hope.

Welcome

At the sound of the bell we enter silent into meditation

The bell sounds again, and we sing:

♪ *Wait for the Lord (94)*

Wait for the Lord, — whose day is near. —

Wait for the Lord, — be strong, take heart. — *(repeats)*

From the one who was, who is, and who is to come:

Grace and peace be with you all.

And also with you.

The candles of the Advent Wreath are lit, then we sing a Hymn of Light

♪ **Hope is a star that shines in the night,
Leading us on till the morning is bright.**

Refrain

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.

**Peace is a ribbon that circles the earth,
giving a promise of safety and worth.**

Refrain

**Joy is a song that welcomes the dawn,
telling the world that the Saviour is born.**

Refrain

**Love is a flame that burns in our heart,
Jesus has come and will never depart.**

Refrain

Thanks for the Light

The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it.

The Word became flesh and lived among us,
and we have beheld Christ's glory.

To us a child is born, to us a Son is given.

In the Word was life, and the life was the light of all people.

Psalm 27 (as translated by Lynn C. Bauman)

Let us pray,
Lord God, our light and our salvation,
grant that your servants
who seek your face in times of trouble
may see your goodness in the land of the living,
and that we may be set safely on the rock of our faith,
Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord.

Amen.

We keep a time of silence

First Reading: *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 the nation, 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. His authority shall grow continually, 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.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn 89 *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* v. 1-4

1. **O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.**

Refrain

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.**

2. **O come, O Wisdom from on high,
who order all things mightily;
to us the path of knowledge show,
and teach us in her ways to go.**

Refrain

3. **O come, O come, great Lord of might,
who to your tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times once gave the law,
in cloud and majesty and awe.**

Refrain

4. **O come, O rod of Jesse's stem,
from every foe deliver them
that trust your mighty power to save,
and give them victory o'er the grave.**

Refrain

Second Reading: *Isaiah 40: 1 – 11*

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever. Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn 95 *O Come, Divine Messiah*

1. **O come, divine Messiah;
the world in silence waits the day
when hope shall sing its triumph
and sadness flee away.**

Refrain

**Dear Saviour haste! Come, come to earth.
Dispel the night and show your face,
and bid us hail the dawn of grace.**

2. **O Christ, whom nations sigh for,
whom priest and prophet long foretold,
come, break the captives' fetters,
redeem the long lost fold.**

Refrain

3. **You come in peace and meekness
and lowly will your cradle be;
all clothed in human weakness
shall we your God-head see.**

Refrain

Third Reading: *Matthew 11: 28 – 30*

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.
Thanks be to God.

Hymn 89 *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* v. 5-7

5. **O come, O Key of David, come,
and open wide our heavenly home;
make safe the way that leads on high,
close the path to misery.**

Refrain

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.**

- O come, O Dayspring from on high
and cheer us by your drawing nigh;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight.**

Refrain

- O come, Desire of nations, bind
in one the hearts of humankind;
O bid our bitter conflict cease,
and be for us our Prince of Peace.**

Refrain

Fourth Reading: *John 1: 1 – 5, 14*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.
Thanks be to God.

Hymn 117 *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*

- Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming
from tender stem hath sprung,
of Jesse's lineage coming
as seers of old have sung.
It came a blossom bright
amid the cold of winter,
when half spent was the night.**
- Isaiah 'twas foretold it,
the Rose I have in mind;
with Mary we behold it,
the virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright,
she bore to us a Saviour,
when half spent was the night.**

3. **O Flower, whose fragrance tender
with sweetness fills the air,
dispel in glorious splendour
the darkness everywhere;
true man, yet very God,
from sin and death now save us,
and share our every load.**

Fifth Reading: *John 1: 1 – 5, 14*

An angel went from God to a town called Nazareth to a woman whose name was Mary. The angel said to her, "Rejoice, O highly favoured, for God is with you. You shall bear a child and his name shall be Jesus, the Chosen One of God Most High." And Mary said, "I am the servant of my God, I will live to do your will."

Magnificat — sung — over the page

All:

1.3. My soul pro - claims your
 2. You have cast the might - y

great-ness, O God, and my spir - it re-joic - es in
 down from their thrones, and up lift - ed the hum - ble of

you, heart, You have looked with love on your
 You have filled the hun - gry with

ser - vant here, and blessed me all my life through.
 won - drous things, and left the wealth - y no part.

Great and might - y are you, O Ho - ly One,
 Great and might - y are you, O Faith - ful One,

strong is your kind - ness ev - er - more.
 strong is your jus - tice strong your love,

How you fa - vor the weak and low - ly one,
 As you prom - ised to Sar - ah and A - bra - ham,

hum - bling the proud of heart.
 kind - ness for - ev - er - more.

Reflection

We Pray Together

A bell calls us to silent prayer.

In the silence we bring our hopes, our fears, our heartaches and our concerns to the surface of our thoughts and offer them to God, who is born into the world at Christmas, and into our hearts at every moment.

 *Between Darkness and Light*

Between darkness and light I will always walk
and wherever I will go —
I will o-pen the window of light
and will plant the seeds of love.
I will o-pen the window of light
and will plant the seeds of love. (*repeats*)

As our Saviour taught us, let us pray,

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.

Hymn 120 *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 the earth.

3. How silently, how silently
the wondrous gift is given
as love imparts to human hearts
the blessings of God's 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,
descend 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.

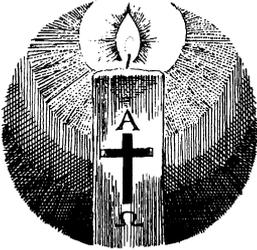
Hymn 119 *Silent Night*

1. 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.

2. Silent night! Holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heav'nly hosts sing Alleluia;
Christ the Saviour is born;
Christ the Saviour is born.

3. 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.

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.
The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.
Amen.



*The Blessing of Peace, The Beauty of Hope,
The Spirit of Love, The Comfort of Faith
May these gifts be yours.*