

A winter night scene with snow-covered trees and a glowing street lamp. The scene is dimly lit, with the primary light source being a street lamp that casts a warm, yellowish glow. The trees are heavily laden with snow, and the ground is covered in a thick layer of snow. The overall atmosphere is serene and quiet.

St. James
United Church
presents

Blue Christmas Service

December 12
7:00 PM
St. James United Church
330 Elizabeth Avenue

Co-led with United Churches
of the Eastern Avalon Region

“A Blue Christmas”: December 12, 2021, 7:00 PM

Leading Worship: United Church clergy of the NE Avalon

Organist: Bob Rose

Music Leadership: Glen Warren

Words of Welcome: Rev. James Ravenscroft

Hymn: “O Little Town of Bethlehem” *Voices United 64*

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.

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.

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.

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.

Words to Centre Us: Rev. Miriam Bowlby

One: All around us we see the colourful lights of Christmas
and hear the sounds of joyful celebration.

All: But unlike many people at this time of year, for us the colours are muted, the joy muffled by the sadness and pain that wraps around our hearts.

One: As we gather on this night, we feel many emotions: worried, trapped, insecure, adrift or alone; grieving what might have been but will not be, grieving what used to be, but cannot anymore.

All: And so it is good to be here, in this place of quiet and calm. Here we can offer our grief to the One born in Bethlehem's stable, knowing that there is no pain that does not echo in God's heart.

Opening Prayer: Rev. Ettie Gordon-Murray

Solo: "I Wonder as I Wander"

Lighting a Candle to Acknowledge Grief: Rev. Oliver Dingwell

Reading: "You, Darkness" by R. M. Rilke

All sing: *Voices United 62, v.1*

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

Lighting a Candle to Admit Our Fears: Rev. Kathy Brett

Scripture Reading: Adapted from Psalm 55 (A Psalm of Lament)

All sing: *Voices United 62, v.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.
There among the poor and lowly
lived on earth our Saviour holy.**

Lighting a Candle in Search of Consolation: Rev. Bill Mercer

Reading: Matthew 11:28-29

All Sing: *Voices United 62, v.3*

**For he is our lifelong pattern;
Daily, when on earth he grew,
he was tempted, scorned, rejected,**

**tears and smiles like us he knew.
Thus he feels for all our sadness,
and he shares in all our gladness.**

Lighting a Candle for Healing: Rev. Pamela Jones-Fitzgerald

Reading: "The Journey" by Mary Oliver

All sing: (*Voices United* 62, v.4)

**And our eyes at last shall see him,
through his own redeeming love;
for that child who seemed so helpless
is our Lord in heaven above;
and he leads his children on
to the place where he has gone.**

Lighting a Candle for Love: Rev. John Maich

Reflection: Rev. John Maich

Lighting Additional Candles

You are invited to light additional candles in memory of loved ones who have died, as well as for other losses you may have experienced.

Hymn: "In the Bleak Midwinter" *Voices United* 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.

Prayers of the People: Rev. Grant Stuckless

Hymn: "Silent Night, Holy Night" *Voices United 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: Rev. James Ravenscroft

