

This Bulletin is dedicated:

In loving memory of
Ceanne Butt, R.N. (January 23, 1953 – December 27, 2009)
From sisters-in-law Glenda Winsor and Gloria Le Feuvre and
Families.

Happy birthday to
Claire Higdon from Steve O'Dea

December 24, 2023 – Fourth Sunday of Advent

Leading worship: Rev. James Ravenscroft
Leading Music: Amy Dalziel, Bob Rose and Senior Choir
Ushers: Bill and Cindy Pike, Carol and Cliff Smith,
Sharon Seaward, Kennedy and Sara Collins,
Marilyn Adams and Jean Thompson

*Please rise in body or in spirit where there is an *.*

We Come to Worship

PRELUDE

WELCOME: *We share greeting in Innu-aimun, French and Tagalog.*

INTROIT: "The Angel Gabriel" (Traditional Basque Caro)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF LAND AND KINSHIP

We give thanks for the land and the Indigenous peoples who steward it and pledge to be a safer and inclusive space for everyone.

* **HYMN:** "People Look East" (*Voices United 31*)

HONOURING THE GIFT OF LONG NIGHTS

We acknowledge the now shortening night with a time of quiet reflection.

A POETIC WORD: "Still Coming and Already Here"

by Steve Garnaas-Holmes

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

Reader 1: Through the prophets, God promised a Messiah, and in this season, we affirm that God's promise has been kept.

Reader 2: In the birth of a vulnerable human baby, God is most closely identified with us, become Emmanuel, "God with us."

Reader 1: As we light our candle, we affirm that this astounding news of long ago, still astounds us, “God with us” revealed through the courage of Joseph and Mary as they responded to God’s call.

All: Holy One, we thank you for fulfilling your promise first revealed to the prophets through the power of your Spirit. Emmanuel has come, and in your Spirit, we sing your praise. Through the same Spirit, give us courage to live the fullness of your promises as we live your compassion and love. Amen.

REFRAIN: “We Wait for God” (Words: William S. Kervin, 2023; Music: Deborah Park and Tom Reynolds, 2023)

We worship God; the people pray that love will cast out fear.

We wait and watch to work and see the Day of God draw near. We worship God; the people pray, the Day of God draws near.

We Share

OUR LIFE & WORK: *We share what is going on in our faith community.*

OFFERTORY: *There are many ways to share your financial gifts with St. James United Church. There are plates as you enter the church in which to place your offering, you may contribute by pre-authorized remittance (PAR), via e-transfer (email treasurer@stjamesuc.org), sent through the website (www.stjamesuc.org), mailed to the church office or dropped into our secure mailbox. In whatever way you give, the community is grateful.*

* **PRESENTATION HYMN:** *We dedicate our offerings to the word of God’s love as we sing “In the Bleak Midwinter” Voices United 55 v. 4.*

**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.**

We Listen

PRAYER OF AWAKENING

ANTHEM: “The Huron Carol (Jesus Ahatonhia)” (Arr. D. Forrest)

READINGS: *As each reading concludes, please say, “Thank be to God.”*

First Reading: 2 Samuel 7:1-16

Psalms 89:1-4, 19-26 (*please read aloud the bold portions*)

I will sing of your steadfast love, O God, forever;

with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.

**I declare that your steadfast love is established forever;
your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.**

You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one,
I have sworn to my servant David:

**'I will establish your descendants forever,
and build your throne for all generations.'**"

Then you spoke in a vision and said: "I have set the crown
on one who is mighty, I have exalted one chosen from the people.

**I have found my servant David; with my oil I have anointed him;
my hand shall remain with him; my arm shall strengthen him.**

The enemy shall not outwit him, the wicked shall not humble him.

I will defeat his foes and strike down those who hate him.

**My faithfulness and steadfast love shall be with him;
and in my name, he shall be exalted.**

I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers.

He shall cry, 'You are my Father, the Rock of my salvation!'

Second Reading: Luke 2:1-7

ANTHEM: "Rise Up, Shepherd, and Follow" (Spiritual)

REFLECTION FOLLOWING THE READINGS

We Respond

* **HYMN:** "O Come All Ye Faithful" *Voices United* 60, v. 1, 3, 4 and 5
(Please change "this morning" to "that morning" in verse 5.)

INVITATION TO THE TABLE

One: Jesus came to bring God's hope and peace to the world.

All: In table fellowship may we know his joy and his love.

THE GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

One: God is here. **All: God is within and around us.**

One: Open your hearts. **All: We gladly open them to God.**

One: Let us give thanks. **All: It is good to give thanks and praise.**

One: It is good to praise you, God of promise, as we gather on this final Advent morning. We thank you for Jesus: born in Bethlehem, proclaimed by the Baptizer, bearer of good news for the world.

All: We give thanks too for the words of prophets, for the courage of Mary and Joseph, for the song of the angels.

One: With them we raise our own voices in praise:

**All sing: Holy, holy, holy! My Heart, my heart adores you!
My heart is glad to say the words, You are holy God!
Holy, holy, holy. Hosanna in the highest!
Let all creation praise and pray: Save us holy God!**

One: God of hope we give thanks, for the child born to us did not stay in a manger but grew in wisdom and announced your reign. He grew up to heal the tormented, confront the powers, and make present your mercy. Arrested for his witness to your truth, he was put to death; in fulfillment of your promise, you raised him to life.

All: We give thanks for his birth long ago; for his life of hope and teachings of love, teachings lived out profoundly at table.

One: He embodied these teachings on the night before he died. Gathered with his friends, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them saying, "This is my body, given for you."

In the same way he took a cup at the end of the meal, and after blessing it, gave it to them saying, "This is a sign of the new covenant in my life's blood. Whenever you do this, remember me."

God of peace, we remember as we gather around this table, open to your presence as we proclaim the mystery of our faith:

**All: Christ has died, is risen, will come again to meet us;
And walks with us the Way of his love. Holy kingdom, come!**

One: God of wisdom, open our hearts to the presence of your Spirit flowing within us and through these gifts. As you touched Mary and Jesus with Spirit's breath, so fill us with your power.

All: Renew us through this holy meal and send us pregnant with your grace to bear your love to the world.

One: Holy One we give you praise. Creator God, we praise you, through Your Word made flesh, in the power of your life-giving Spirit, now and forever.

**All sing: Holy, holy, holy. Amen we pray, with longing.
Let all creation cry Amen! Holy kingdom, come!**

THE PRAYER OF JESUS (*based on the original Aramaic*):

Radiant One: your Name shines within us, outside us - even darkness shines in you. Create your reign now, that your one desire acts with ours. Grant what we need each day in bread and insight. Forgive our hidden past, our secret shames, as we forgive what others hide. Keep us from forgetfulness, the temptation of false appearances and free us to walk your path with light and joy. For from you arises every vision; to you returns the birthing glory of the cosmos. Amen.

SHARING IN COMMUNION

Everyone is welcome to share communion – all ages, beliefs, identities and life experiences. Come to the front to receive the bread and grape juice (in a glass).

Consume both before returning to your pew. Please let us know if you need the gluten free option. If you're unable to come to the front, someone will bring communion to you.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION *(in unison)*

God of blessing, we give thanks for your grace revealed in Mary's child, experienced anew in bread and wine. Strengthen us as your children called to share the gift of your love. Amen.

We Leave to Serve

* **HYMN:** "Angels from the Realms of Glory" (*Voices United 36*)
(Please change "come and worship" in the refrain to "go and worship".)

BENEDICTION AND SENDING FORTH

One: Go forth in love, in praise of the One we call Emmanuel!

All: We go, blessed in the assurance that God is with us!

POSTLUDE

St. James United Church

Minister:	Rev. James Ravenscroft
Minister Emeritus:	Rev. Dr. Donovan Brown
Music Director:	Amy Dalziel
Associate Music Director:	Bob Rose
Technology Support:	Jake Thompson
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