

North Kildonan United Church
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Our Mission...

to be an accepting Christian community dedicated to living, sharing and teaching the Word of God.

We respect all aspects of people including race, ethnicity, gender expression, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, age, religion, mental wellness, and ability.

Blue Christmas
December 14th, 2022

**The asterisk invites all to stand, if they are able, and the double asterisk ** indicates when to be seated;
Bold print indicates a congregational response.*

WE GATHER IN GOD'S NAME

"The 'Blue Christmas' service used tonight is based on an order developed and used at The Cathedral Church of Saint Andrew, Honolulu Hawaii."

WELCOME

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT of the LAND

We acknowledge that we meet in Treaty 1 land, the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe, Cree and Dakota peoples, and the homeland of the Metis nation. We are thankful for these first inhabitants, and we commit to working together towards justice, truth and reconciliation.

CALL to WORSHIP

*In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
All things were made by God, and without God nothing came to be.
What came to be through God was life,
and this life was the light of the world.*

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

***HYMN: #64 VU – "O Little Town of Bethlehem"**

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*(Brooks/Redner)
~Joanne Diplock*

**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.**
- 3 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.**
- 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.**

PSALM 23

~Peter Latimer

**The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;
he leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul;
he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
for thou art with me;
thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies;
thou anointest my head with oil;
my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.**

CHOIR ANTHEM: VU #657 – “He Leadeth Me”

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(Gilmore/Bradbury)

~Joanne Diplock

LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE

The first candle is lit by Gay Todd.

We light this first candle to remember those whom we have loved and lost.

We pause to remember clearly, their faces, their voices, their bodies.

We embrace and give thanks for the memories that bind them to us in this season of expectation, when all Creation waits for the Light.

We remember them with love.

May God's eternal love surround them.

A period of silent reflection.

The second candle is lit by Betty Clark.

We light this second candle to remember the pain of loss:

loss of relationships, loss of trust, loss of jobs,

loss of health, loss of faith, the loss of joy.

We acknowledge and embrace the pain of the past, O God, and we offer it to You, asking that into our wounded hearts and open hands

you will place the gift of peace, shalom.

We remember that through you all things are possible.

Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into your future.

A period of silent reflection.

The third candle is lit by Marie Leskovjan.

We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas time.

We pause and remember the past weeks, months, and for some of us years, that have been heavy with our burdens.

We accept and lay before you, God, the sharpness of memory,

the sadness and grief, the hurt and fear, the anger and pain.

We accept and lay before you the ways we feel we have fallen short,

and the times we have spent blaming ourselves, and you, for all that we have suffered.

We accept and lay before you the time we have walked alone, in darkness;

and in knowledge of our own mortality.

We remember that though we have journeyed far,

**and that, while lost, we may have turned away from the light,
the light itself has not failed.**

We remember that though winter be upon us

and though the night be dark,

**with the turning of the Wheel the dawn will come,
and dawn defeats the darkness.**

A period of silent reflection.

The fourth candle is lit by Carol Barrett.

*We light this fourth candle to remember faith,
the gift of light and hope that God offers to us
in the stories of Hanukkah and of Christmas,
which both also began in abandonment, insecurity, and humbleness,
in a time of war and in a poor stable.*

*We remember that the loving God who kept the light shining in the temple
and who came to share this life with us promises us comfort and peace.*

**We remember the One who shares our burdens,
who shows us the way to the Light,
and who journeys with us into all our tomorrows.**

A period of silent reflection.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

*God of wisdom,
we come to you this Christmas Season tired, in turmoil, and in pain.
As the nights have grown longer,
so has darkness grown and wrapped itself around our hearts.
In this season of longest night,
we ask your healing blessings upon all that we carry in our hearts --
sorrow we fear may never end, wounds we cannot even put into words.*

Lord, hear our prayer,

And in your love, answer.

*God of mercy and compassion,
there are those among us who are grieving over what might have been.
Death or loss or terrible hurt has changed our experience of Christmas.
We remember that once it was a special day for us, too,
but someone or something precious has gone away from us in this life.
We have lost a beloved, a job, a goal, a cause, a dream.
We find ourselves adrift and alone.*

*We are weary from the journey, and we have found no room at the inn.
We come to you seeking rest, and peace, and shelter from the storm.*

Lord, hear our prayer.

And in your love, answer.

*God of grace,
in the spirit of the season,
grant us all that we need to comfort us
as we journey through this Christmas season.*

*We ask that you shelter and sustain all those of us,
both here and throughout the world,*

*who wander or want or weep or are heavy laden,
that we may be lifted up in courage
and journey on in your peace.*

Lord, hear our prayer.

And in your love, answer.

God of love,

*in this Christmas Season we embrace and offer up to you
all that used to be which is now lost to us, and cannot be again.*

With celebration all around us,

*memories of what was, and fears of what may be,
weigh heavy on our hearts.*

Please hold us close in your embrace,

be near to us this night, until the light returns and morning comes.

Lord, hear our prayer,

And in your love, answer.

Watch, dear Lord,

*with those who wake or weep this night,
and let your angels protect those who sleep.*

Tend the sick. Refresh the weary. Sustain the dying.

Calm the suffering. Pity the distressed.

We ask this for your love's sake. Amen.

***HYMN: #69 VU – “Away in a Manger”**

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(Kirkpatrick)

Joanne Diplock

- 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 Reader: *Sylvia Banfield*

Luke 2: 1-7

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called

Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

THE LIGHTING of PERSONAL CANDLES of REMEMBRANCE:

All are invited to come forward, while maintaining sufficient distance, to light a candle.

PIANO SOLO:

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~Joanne Diplock

PSALM 121

~Peter Latimer

**I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills,
from whence cometh my help.
My help cometh from the Lord,
who hath made heaven and earth.
He will not suffer thy foot to be moved;
he that keepeth thee will not slumber;
 behold, the God that keepeth Israel
 shall neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord is thy keeper;
 the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.
The sun shall not smite thee by day
 nor the moon at night.
The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil
 and shall sustain thy soul.
He shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in,
 from this time forth and even forevermore.**

PRAYER

**Almighty God,
we thank you for your constant love
 and for the blessings of this day.
We know that even when we cannot see or feel you,
 still you are there.
Help us to remember you
 and to listen for your voice
 in the words of family, friends and strangers.
Kindle our hearts and awaken hope,
 that we may know you
 as you reveal yourself in the world and in our lives.
Let the light of your Holy Spirit
 shine like these candles in the darkness,**

**lighting the way for all who feel despairing, lost or forgotten,
and grant that it may come to dwell so deeply in our hearts
that when we leave this place
it may shine on,
for us and for those we meet along the way. Amen.**

***HYMN: #47 VU – “Still, Still, Still”**

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(Rutter/Cook)

~Joanne Diplock

- 1 Still, still, still: the night is calm and still.
The Christchild in his crib lies sleeping,
angels round him watch are keeping.
Still, still, still: the night is calm and still.**
- 2 Sleep, sleep, sleep: sweet Jesus, softly sleep,
while Mary sings and gently holds you,
safely in her arms enfolds you.
Sleep, sleep, sleep: sweet Jesus softly sleep.**
- 3 Joy, joy, joy; glad tidings of great joy!
For through God's holy incarnation
Christ is born for our salvation.
Joy, joy, joy; glad tidings of great joy!**

CONCLUDING PRAYERS

**Another day will come, O God.
I know not what it may bring forth,
but make me ready, God, for whatever it may be.
If I am to stand up, help me to stand bravely.
If I am to sit still, help me to sit quietly.
If I am to lie low, help me to do it patiently.
And if I am to do nothing, help me do it gallantly.
Make these words more than words,
and give me the spirit of your peace. Amen.**

*O Lord, support us all the day long of this troublous life,
until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes,
and the busy world is hushed,
and the fever of life is over, and our work is done.
Then, in your mercy, give us safe lodging,
a holy rest, and peace at the last,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

THE BLESSING

*The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you;
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you,*

and give you peace, now and forever more. Amen.

***CHORAL BENEDICTION**

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~Joanne Diplock

**May the Lord go with you,
let him take your hand.
Keep his love within you,
until we meet again. Amen.**

POSTLUDE

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~Joanne Diplock