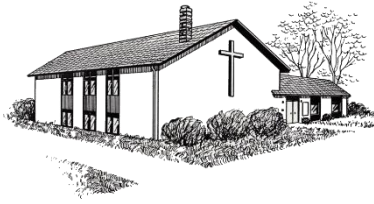


North Kildonan United Church
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Minister: *Rev. Susan Reed*
Pianist/Choir Director: *Joanne Diplock*
Office Administrator: *Wilma Fehr*
Property Manager: *Heinz Goetz*

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.

December 31st, 2023
First Sunday after Christmas

The asterisk invites all to stand, if they are able. **Bold print indicates a congregational response.*

GATHERING TO WORSHIP GOD

PRELUDE *(Music played with permission under license #A-620529 One License)*

~Joanne Diplock

WELCOME

A warm welcome is extended to all, especially those who are worshipping at North Kildonan for the first time or who have returned after an absence. Your presence both enriches us, and this time of celebration together.

LIFE and WORK of the CHURCH FAMILY

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT of the LAND

We acknowledge that long before settlers from other lands came to the territory, where today we gather to worship, the people of Canada's First Nations held this place as a sacred trust.

Under the terms of Treaty One, we now share the responsibility of caring for the earth, and sky and water where, along with the Metis people of Manitoba we pledge to create a sacred space of welcome where all might find a home.

LIGHTING of the CHRIST CANDLE

*The light shines in the deepest night
and the night has not overcome it.*

LIGHTING of the PEACE CANDLE

As we light this candle, we pray for peace:

**peace in our hearts,
peace in our homes,
peace in our world.**

As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Prince of Peace,

O God, we pray for peace. Amen.

CALL to WORSHIP

Praise the Living God! Praise God from the heavens:

Sun and moon and shining stars, praise the Living God!

Praise God's Holy Name,

**whose word speaks all things into being,
who is present in the expanse of the universe,
and in the voices of children.**

Praise the Living God, our rescuer and deliverer,

**whose wonder is found in the heavens and in all creation,
who comes in innocence, and with mercy.**

O God, our light, our beauty, our rest:

*With the appearance of your Son you have brought us
into your new creation.*

**Form us into your people, and root our lives in you;
through Christ, the Living Light.**

INTRODUCTION to the OPENING HYMN

*The Hymn, "Twas in the Moon of Wintertime", was written in the Huron language by Jesuit priest Father Jean de Brébeuf in 1643 with the title *Jesous Ahatonhia* ("Jesus, he is born"), and set by him to an old French tune, "*Une Jeune Pucelle*" ("A Young Maid"), this is considered the first Canadian carol. It is considered a national treasure and has been celebrated on a set of Canadian postage stamps. In re-telling the story of the Nativity, Father de Brébeuf used symbols that could be easily understood within the culture of the Hurons; it is said that the hymn entered the tribe's oral tradition.*

Tragically, Father de Brébeuf and his companion Father Gabriel Lallemant were brutally tortured and murdered March 16, 1649 when the Iroquois wiped out the Jesuit mission and drove the Hurons from their homeland. Many Hurons escaped to Quebec where the carol re-emerged and was translated into English and French.

*The carol has been included in the hymn books of both the Anglican Church of Canada and the Methodist Church. It has also been frequently recorded in recent years. The song was included as "*Jesous Ahatonia*" on Burl Ives's 1952 album *Christmas Day in the Morning* and was later released by Ives as a single with the title "*Indian Christmas Carol*." Canadian singer Bruce Cockburn and Tom Jackson have both recorded renditions, as have many other artists.*

Brébeuf was born March 25, 1593 at Condé-sur-Vire, Normandy, France, a son of farmers. He became a Jesuit in 1617, joining the Order at Rouen. He was ordained in 1622, and in 1625 he sailed to Canada as a missionary. On his arrival, he lived with the Huron natives near Lake Huron, learning their customs and language, of which he became an expert; it is said that he wrote the first dictionary of the Huron language. Although the missionaries were recalled in 1629, Brébeuf returned to Canada in 1633. He is a patron saint of Canada, and his feast day is October 19th. Many Jesuit schools

are named after him, such as College Jean-de-Brebeuf, Brebeuf College School and Brebeuf High School.

Brébeuf was canonized in 1930 with seven other missionaries, known as the Canadian Martyrs.

***OPENING HYMN: VU #71 – “’Twas in the Moon of Wintertime”**

(Brébeuf/Cabena)

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~Joanne Diplock

- 1 'Twas in the moon of wintertime,
when all the birds had fled,
that mighty Gitchi Manitou
sent angel choirs instead;
before their light the stars grew dim,
and wandering hunters heard the hymn:
 Jesus your King is born,
 Jesus is born,
 in excelsis gloria.**
- 2 Within a lodge of broken bark
the tender babe was found,
a ragged robe of rabbit skin
enwrapped his beauty round;
but as the hunter braves drew nigh,
the angel song rang loud and high: R**
- 3 The earliest moon of wintertime
is not so round and fair
as was the ring of glory on
the helpless infant there.
The chiefs from far before him knelt
with gifts of fox and beaver pelt. R**
- 4 O children of the forest free,
the angel song is true,
the holy child of earth and heaven
is born today for you.
Come, kneel before the radiant boy,
who brings you beauty, peace, and joy: R**

OPENING PRAYER

God of glory,

your splendor shines from a manger in Bethlehem,

*where the Light of the world is humbly born
into the darkness of human night.*

Open our eyes to Christ's presence in the shadows of our world,

*so that we, like him, may become beacons of your justice,
and defenders of all for whom there is no room. Amen.*

INTRODUCTION to the HYMN

In 1865, the famous preacher and abolitionist Phillip Brooks rode on horseback from Jerusalem to Bethlehem and participated in the Church of the Nativity's Christmas Eve celebration. In response to his experience there, he wrote the now-famous carol "O Little Town of Bethlehem," which was first performed by the children's choir of his church a few years later. Unlike many Christmas carols, the lyrics of this reflective and hopeful song are set in the present tense rather than the past. The author's experience of wonder and awe are palpable and cover the seemingly great distance between the birth of Christ then and our experience of it now.

***HYMN: VU #64 – "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.

LISTENING FOR AND REFLECTING ON GOD'S WORD

Scripture Reader: Donna Price

Psalm 34

*I will bless the LORD at all times;
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
My soul makes its boast in the LORD;
let the humble hear and be glad.
O magnify the LORD with me,
and let us exalt his name together.
I sought the LORD, and he answered me,
and delivered me from all my fears.
Look to him, and be radiant;
so your faces shall never be ashamed.
This poor soul cried, and was heard by the LORD,
and was saved from every trouble.
The angel of the LORD encamps
around those who fear him, and delivers them.
O taste and see that the LORD is good;
happy are those who take refuge in him.
O fear the LORD, you his holy ones,
for those who fear him have no want.
The young lions suffer want and hunger,
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.*

Luke 2: 8-14

*In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,
'Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favours!'*

Words of Response:

Let us hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

Thanks be to God! Amen.

INTRODUCTION to the HYMN

(Copyright 2008, Richard Niell Donovan)

The hymn, "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks", was written by Nahum Tate (1652-1715) and Nicholas Brady (1659-1726). Tate was the son of an Irish clergyman, who fancied himself a bit of a poet. The son, Nahum, became an accomplished poet, and was appointed Poet Laureate of England by King William III. He wrote not only as a poet but as a playwright, and many of his works were produced onstage. He is reputed to have been a drunkard and spendthrift who died in poverty.

Brady was an Anglican clergyman and poet who supported the Revolution of 1688, which brought King William III to the throne.

Tate and Brady collaborated on a Psalter entitled New Version of the Psalms of David, which they published in 1696 to replace an earlier Psalter that had been published in 1562. The Psalter by Tate and Brady was adopted by the Anglican Church and endured as the standard work for the singing of psalms for more than a century.

Tate and Brady published a supplement to their Psalter in 1700. That supplement included this carol, "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks." This carol is based, not on a psalm, but on Luke 2:8-14 — Luke's Christmas story. The tune, "Harmonia Sacra," is an adaptation of an aria from George Frederick Handel's opera, Siroe.

***HYMN: VU #75 – "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks"**

(Tate)

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~Joanne Diplock

- 1 While shepherds watched their flocks by night
all seated on the ground,
the angel of the Lord came down,
and glory shone around.**
- 2 'Fear not,' said he, for mighty dread
had seized their troubled mind;
'glad tidings of great joy I bring
to you and humankind.**
- 3 'To you in David's town this day
is born of David's line
a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord;
and this shall be the sign:**
- 4 'The heavenly babe you there shall find
to human view displayed,
all meanly wrapped in swaddling bands,
and in a manger laid.'**

- 5 Thus spake the seraph; and forthwith
appeared a shining throng
of angels praising God, who thus
addressed their joyful song:
- 6 'All glory be to God on high,
and to the earth be peace!
Good will to all from highest heaven
begin, and never cease.'

RESPONDING TO GOD IN PRAYER AND ACTION

PRAYER of CONFESSION

Loving Christ, we confess that we do not always share the Good News.

**We have heard the message time and again and
have let it grow stale.**

We know we need You, but we don't know how we need You.

**We want to turn away from empty phrases and worn-out platitudes,
but we know in our heart that we need You.**

*We need Your salvation, redemption and healing in our lives
from where we have gone astray and where we have been hurt.*

**Help us to live into Your full embrace,
so that we can fully share Your grace,
healing and love with those who are hurt,
those who have gone astray,
those who feel so far gone from Your love.**

*Forgive us when we have closed off our hearts
instead of allowing them to break.*

**Forgive us when we have said nothing
in order to avoid saying the wrong thing.**

*Forgive us when we have been too afraid of being looked down upon
instead of sharing the story of our faith.*

**Guide us with the wisdom of Anna and Simeon,
who were unafraid to praise You and
to share the Good News of Your Son, Jesus the Christ. Amen.**

INTRODUCTION to the HYMN

One of the most uplifting of the ancient carols, "Good Christian Men, Rejoice" is the product of two men who were persecuted for their religious convictions, endured and died in relative obscurity, never accepted by the church they loved. Though both vowed to serve the Lord and take the message of salvation to a lost world, both probably believed they had accomplished little of lasting value as they struggled to follow their call. For Heinrich Suso and John Mason Neale, nothing could have been farther from the truth.

Heinrich was largely insulated from a world where only a precious few did more than endure each passing day. Poverty and disease were everywhere. The aptly named Dark Age was a time of cruelty, prejudice, and despair. A separation of people into social classes meant the very small, elite branch had almost everything and the rest of society had nothing.

Sadly, there was no movement between classes; if you were born without means, you were doomed to live and die that way. And if you were born, for every laugh there were a thousand cries.

Suso, who could have risen through his family ranks to a ruling status in his native land, instead chose to be a servant. Accepting a call to the priesthood, he became a Dominican monk. If all he had done was serve in parish, he would have probably remained unknown. Yet in 1326, the priest felt moved to write the Little Book of Truth, a vibrant defense of progressive thinking in the church. In his work, Suso justified taking the gospel and opening it in a way that would bring hope, compassion, and understanding to the common people. But instead of being held up as a man who truly understood the message that Jesus had brought to the earth, the priest was tried for heresy.

Rather than still his voice, Suso felt a call to continue what he saw as a divine war. A year later, the unrepentant monk continued his battle with figures of authority by penning the Little Book of Eternal Wisdom. Unlike most religious books of the time, this one was essentially a practical work written in simple language. It wasn't for clerics or professors, it was for the common people. This was a radical concept. Who would dare think that simple people would have an interest in understanding God and the message he brought to the world in the form of Christ?

Unable to control the priest and afraid that his radical thinking might cause a revolt, in 1329 the Pope condemned Suso. Eventually the German King exiled him. Suso fled to Switzerland. For a man born of noble blood, exile was the ultimate humiliation. Over the course of the next few years, the well-meaning priest suffered vicious persecution and slander. Yet, even in the face of death threats, he refused to turn this back on the church, his calling or his desire to share the gospel with the masses.

Wanting to bring joy to the practice of the Christian faith, Suso preached of the happiness he found in walking with God. Many wondered how such a reviled man could find such blessing in life. He explained that God gave him peace and inspiration during every walking hour, and even while he rested. It was during the latter that the priest was given a vehicle to carry his message to the people.

One night, Suso found himself immersed in a dream so real that he became a part of it. In his day the priest saw countless angels not only singing, but dancing. He listened as they sang, and eventually joined with them in "an ecstatic dance." When he awoke, he not only remembered the dream in vivid detail, but also recalled the words and the music. Feeling led by divine guidance, Suso picked up a quill and in and recorded "Good Christian Men, Rejoice" to paper. Until his death in 1366, he continued to reach the common man with this song and its message.

'Good Christian Men, Rejoice' Was as radical a hymn as Suso's thinking was progressive. Christian music of that era was usually solemn, based totally on Scripture, and never written in the common language. Suso had broken all three rules. His song embraced the joy of being a believer and enjoined a spirit whole any child could understand. Although it was not immediately accepted by the church itself, the German people quickly and enthusiastically took the song to heart. They believed that just as Suso had been a priest to the common people, his song was a song for them as well.

It would be more than 150 years before the carol inspired by a priest's dream found its way to print, but just because it wasn't published didn't mean that the song didn't inspire other writers in Germany – including Martin Luther – to compose hymns in the common language for the common people. Suso's radical thinking became part of the primary foundation for a revolution in the way most people viewed their relationship with Christ. Even the Catholic church would come to realize that the priest had been right, and in 1831 the Pope canonized Heinrich Suso.

***HYMN: VU #35 – "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice"**

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(Neale/Smith)
~Joanne Diplock

- 1 Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice!
Give ye heed to what we say: News! News!
Jesus Christ is born today.
Ox and ass before him bow,
and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today! Christ is born today!**
- 2 Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice!
Now ye hear of endless bliss: Joy! Joy!
Jesus Christ was born for this!
He hath opened heaven's door,
and we are blest forevermore.
Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!**
- 3 Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice!
Now ye need not fear the grave: Peace! Peace!
Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all
to gain his everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!**

AN INVITATION to SHARE

*In the gifts of word and song,
we hear the story of your gift of life, O God.*

*Here, we offer what we can of ourselves,
we who are part of that same story.*

Offertory Music *as the offerings are collected*

~Joanne Diplock

***Offering Hymn: VU #541 – "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow" (Ken)**

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~Joanne Diplock

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
praise God, all creatures high and low;
give thanks to God in love made known:
Creator, Word and Spirit, One.**

***The Dedication of our Gifts**

**Receive these gifts, God of All,
for the work of your kingdom.
May our words become witness,
and our witness become work,
for your people, in your world. Amen.**

PRAYERS of THANKSGIVING and CONCERN

*As you have drawn us to your cradle of wondrous love, O God,
draw us together in this place, that we might
pray for your people and your world.*

*Today, we give you thanks for the gift of your child, Jesus Christ,
who in birth, life, death, and resurrection revealed
your unending love for all people and opened to us
the purpose and promise of life together.*

*We give thanks also for the gifts of this season:
hope for the vision of justice you promise, even in the midst of despair;
for peace within and among your people, even in the midst of conflict;
joy found in reunion and celebration, even amid the challenges of this life;
and love, with the power to transform and heal all things,
even in the midst of brokenness.*

*We pray for those who still long for these, your gifts, God of Love:
for those who will spend this season alone or anxious...
for those who grieve an empty place at the table this year...
for those who are ill, in body or in spirit...
for those in hospital and in care...
for those who endure the terror of conflict and oppression...
for those who will go hungry this day,
and who long for the simplest of creation's gifts...
for your people and your world, we pray, O God.*

*Let us listen to the angels' song again, your song of love for this world.
Move us to return that song in what we say and do,*

*that we may be instruments of your hope and peace and joy and love.
We pray these things in the name of Jesus, who became the Christ,
and who taught us when we pray to say:
At this time, let us say together the prayer that Jesus taught us...*

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

SENT INTO GOD'S WORLD

INTRODUCTION to the HYMN

*John Wesley Work, Jr., may not have originated the Negro spiritual "Go, Tell It on the Mountain," but he can take credit for the fact that we still sing it every Christmas. As the son of a church choir director, Work grew up in Nashville loving music. Even though he earned his Master's in Latin and went on to teach ancient Latin and Greek, his first love continued to be music, and he went on to become the first African-American collector of Negro spirituals. This proved to be a daunting task for Work because they were passed down orally, from plantation to plantation; very few were ever written down. But Work proved up to the challenge, publishing his first book, *New Jubilee Songs as Sung by the Fisk Jubilee Singers*, in *Songs of the American Negro*, six years later. It was in this second volume, published in 1905, that "Go, Tell It on the Mountain" first appeared. The original singers of the song fulfilled the same important task the angels gave the shepherds that first Christmas night outside of Bethlehem, proclaiming, "that Jesus Christ is born!" And thanks to John Wesley Work, so can we.*

***HYMN: VU #43 – "Go Tell It on the Mountain"**

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(Work II)

~Joanne Diplock

**Go, tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and everywhere.
Go, tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born.**

- 1 While shepherds kept their watching
o'er silent flocks by night,
behold, throughout the heavens
there shone a holy light. R**
- 2 The shepherds feared and trembled
when lo, above the earth
rang out the angel chorus
that hailed our Saviour's birth! R**
- 3 Down in a lonely manger
the humble Christ was born,
and God sent our salvation
that blessed Christmas morn. R**

***BLESSING and SENDING FORTH**

*Go now and embrace the new time which God has given us.
Recognize Christ in friend and stranger,
and as Christ has been gracious to you,
so be gracious to those in need.
And may God dwell with you as your God.
May Christ be your food and drink
and give you pleasure in your work.
And may the Spirit be your beginning and end
and hold all your times in her loving embrace.
We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
In the name of Christ. Amen.*

***CHORAL BENEDICTION**

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(Price/Besig)

~Joanne Diplock

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

POSTLUDE *(Music played with permission under license #A-620529 One License)*

~Joanne Diplock