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Our Mission as a congregation: *Love the Lord Your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy and love your neighbour as yourself. (Mark 12:19-21 MSG)*

December 24, 2023- Fourth Sunday of Advent

GOD BRINGS US TOGETHER

Prelude *Ave Maria* (Bach/Gounod) Amy Hendricks

Welcome and Announcements

Introit: (33 MV Jesus Came Bringing Us Hope)

Jesus came bringing us love, Jesus came bringing us love

Jesus came bringing us love, Hallelujah, forevermore

Call to Worship (responsive)

Let every tongue give praise to God.

Let us proclaim that God is with us,

Let us rejoice in our worship;

Let us praise the God of love.

Prayer of Approach (together)

O God, we thank you

that Jesus showed your love for every person—

infant and child, young and old,

sick and healthy, strong and weak,

rich and poor, stranger and friend.

Come to us in this holy season,

and give us love in our hearts for all people. Amen.

Hymn: 38 VU *Angels From the Realms of Glory*

Lighting the Advent Candle (see back of bulletin)

Children's Story and Lord's Prayer

Hymn: 69 VU *Away in a Manger*

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH SCRIPTURE

Responsive Reading: Luke 1:46b-55 (p 898 VU)

First Reading: 2 Samuel 7:8-11, 16

Diane Theuerkauf

Second Reading: Romans 16:25-27

Brenda Rose

Gospel: Luke 1:26-38

Anthem *Hodie Natus Es*

Choir

Sermon: "What Do You Want for Christmas?"

GOD CALLS US TO RESPOND

Hymn: 46 VU *Gentle Mary Laid Her Child*

Offertory Sentence and Prayer

Offertory Response (In the Bleak Midwinter 55 VU verse 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.

Prayers of the People

Hymn: 62 VU *Once in Royal David's City*

Commissioning and Benediction

Choral Benediction (Glory to God in 124 MV)

Glory to God in the highest and peace to God's people on earth.

Glory to God in the highest and peace to God's people on earth.

Postlude

A warm welcome to everyone who is joining us for worship. May this time help you draw to closer to God and your neighbour. We recognize that we gather in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People, and we seek to be good neighbours to the First Nations.

Greeting at this door this morning is Diane Theuerkauf

There is no coffee time after church this morning

The poinsettia at the front of the church is placed in loving memory of Jean and Walter Barkhouse by the Barkhouse family.

The bulletin this Christmas Eve is dedicated to the glory of God and in loving memory of Douglas Adams by his family

DECEMBER 24, 2023
Fourth Sunday of Advent (Focus: Luke 1:26–38)

O God, we light the fourth candle of Advent.
(With the first three candles burning, the fourth candle is lit.)

We hear the message your angel Gabriel and witness the faith of Mary. She was bold and chose to trust and have faith in your grace.

Mary was a young, strong, spiritual woman. Even though her life was not easy, she heard God's voice and said yes. Her song was a prayer that would uplift those who were downtrodden. Her lyrics shattered the proud and called the world to change. She would bear within her the promised child, Jesus, the Light of the World. This Advent, we hear God's call and answer in faith.

Revealing God, visit us and fill us with your Spirit. Give us courage to carry your light into the injustices and shadows of this world. Open within our lives the way for Jesus to be seen by others, Amen.

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



THIS WEEK AT ST. JAMES

Sunday, December 24

10:30 am Fourth Sunday of Advent Worship
4:00 pm Christmas Eve at St. David's
7:00 pm Christmas Eve Family Service at St. James
9:00 pm Christmas Eve Communion at St. James

Monday, December 25

2-4 pm **Christmas Dinner** St. James Church Hall.
Volunteers and donations are appreciated.
Please contact Brenda 902 872-0960 brendaleehopps@gmail.com
or Daniel danconnected@hotmail.com for more information.

Thanks to everyone who shared their gifts and time to enrich our church services through Advent and Christmas. Many voices and talents have combined in this season of hope and joy to help us celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

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The latest issue of Connections, our congregational newsletter is available in print in the Narthex and online at www.stjamesuc.com. Thanks to all who contributed and to Sarah and Chad for the great pictures and formatting.

Social Justice Calendars for 2024 are now available and can be found in the Narthex.

Advent Food Drive – Huge thanks to everyone who participated in this year's Advent Food Drive! Lots of good food was collected and distributed to folks who, more than ever in this season, need it.

The end of the year is fast approaching. The last day that donations of cheques and cash to St. James will be credited to your 2023 tax receipt is December 31, 2022 at noon following morning worship. Donations via eft (eft@stjamesuc.com) or online (www.stjamesuc.com) can be made at anytime day or night.

Your Social Justice Committee wishes you all a wonderful Christmas

and a very Happy 2024! Acts 20:35: "In every way I've shown you that by labouring like this, it is necessary to help the weak and to keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus, for He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

United Church Calendars There's a few 2024 Calendars still available. If interested please contact Sheryl Chapman 902 863-6409

"The Years Go By", "It's Later than you Think": Many do not know or remember our son Gordon. Some may remember Festivals of Faith in Halifax. Gordon and children will be at the Cape in January. We invite you to an Open House on Saturday, January 6th at 1pm. We look forward to seeing you. For more information call Betty Webber 902 863-1301.

Come try Meditation. It's every Tuesday at 3 pm in the Meeting Room. Maybe it's your New Year's resolution to find some stillness in your days, resuming on Tuesday January 9th. All are welcome! Call Fran if you want more background or have questions. 902 863 3546

THOUGHTS FOR CHRISTMAS

"Are you willing to believe that love is the strongest thing in the world – stronger than hate, stronger than evil, stronger than death – and that the blessed life which began in Bethlehem nineteen hundred years ago is the image and brightness of the Eternal Love? Then you can keep Christmas."

~ Henry Van Dyke

"I am not alone at all, I thought. I was never alone at all. And that, of course, is the message of Christmas. We are never alone. Not when the night is darkest, the wind coldest, the world seemingly most indifferent. For this is still the time God chooses."

~ Taylor Caldwell

"Want to keep Christ in Christmas? Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, forgive the guilty, welcome the unwanted, care for the ill, love your enemies, and do unto others as you would have done unto you."

~ Steve Maraboli

Scriptures for Next Sunday

Isaiah 61:10-62:3 • Galatians 4:4-7 • Luke 2:22-40