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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 - Christmas Eve Communion

GOD BRINGS US TOGETHER

Prelude *Christmas Concerto - VI. Pastorale* (Corelli)

Amy Hendricks & David Hamilton

Introit: 59 VU *Joy to the World* Vs 4

Joy to the world, the Lord is come, let earth receive her King!

***Let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing, and
heaven and nature sing and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.***

Call to Worship (responsive)

Tonight the angels sing in heaven, sing with them.

Glory to God on high!

Tonight the shepherds come to Bethlehem, come with them.

Glory to God on high!

They find Mary and Joseph and the new born child, search with them.

Glory to God on high!

Let us proclaim Jesus the Saviour, our Messiah and Lord.

Glory to God on high, alleluia, amen!

Hymn: 60, VU *O Come All Ye Faithful*

Prayer of Approach (Together)

**Loving God on this holy night we gather, to stand with shepherds
amazed at your glory; to sing with angels, rejoicing in your work;
to wait with Joseph, trusting in your promise;
to sit with Mary, cradling your love. May the good news of
this night inspire us to tell the world of our great joy.
For to us is born a Saviour, the Messiah, the Lord. Glory and
praise to you forever. Amen.**

TO HEAR THE PROMISE

Lighting of the Christ Candles (together)

Tonight is the night for which we have been waiting. The Advent wreath is completed with the Christ Candle in the centre. For unto us a child is given, unto us a Saviour is born and the order of the world will be upon his shoulders. With the birth of Christ our lives are centred, focussed, turned toward God. We light this candle because Christ is the centre of our lives and the light of the world. Amen

Love is a flame that burns in our hearts

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.***

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH SCRIPTURE

Responsive Reading: Psalm 96, page 816 of VU

Old Testament: Isaiah 9: 2-7

Pamela Cunningham

Epistle: Titus 2:11-14

Amy Hendricks

The Holy Gospel: St. Luke 2: 1-20

Anthem: *O Holy Night*

Carolyn Curry

Message:

GOD CALLS US TO RESPOND

Hymn: 57 VU *Oh How Joyfully*

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.

Offertory prayer

Hymn: 74 VU *What Child Is This*

The Communion Liturgy (see insert)

Holy Communion by Intinction

Commissioning and Benediction

Hymn: 67 VU *Silent Night* (Sung by candle light)

Postlude *Christmas Concerto - III. Adagio* (Corelli)

Amy Hendricks & David Hamilton

*The bulletin this Christmas Eve is dedicated to the glory of God and in
loving memory of Pat and Jerry Cunningham
from Pamela, Douglas, and family.*

A warm welcome to everyone who is joining us for worship. May this be a time for us to draw closer to each other and God. 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.

Thanks to Rev. Doug Stewart who is leading our service of worship and to Carolyn Curry, and all the musicians for sharing their gifts of music with us this Christmas Eve.

Greeting this evening are Chad Brazier and Sarah Armstrong

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

A Community Christmas dinner will be held in the hall at St. James United Church, Main Street, Antigonish at 2pm on Christmas Day. Anyone who is looking for a place to go on Christmas Day is welcome to join us and share a meal cooked with love.

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

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.

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

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.'

THE COMMUNION LITURGY

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right that we should praise you,
gracious God, for you created all things.

You formed us in your own image;
male and female you created us.

When we turned away from you in sin,
you did not cease to care for us,
but opened a path of salvation for all people.

You made a covenant with Israel,
and through your servants Abraham and Sarah
gave the promise of a blessing to all nations.
Through Moses you led your people from bondage into freedom;
through your prophets you renewed your promise of salvation.
Therefore, with them, and with all your saints
who have served you in every age,
we give you thanks and raise our voices
to proclaim the glory of your name.

*Holy, Holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
Holy, Holy, holy Lord
God of power and might.*

*Heaven and earth are full, full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest, Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest, Hosanna in the highest.*

Holy God, source of life and goodness,
all creation rightly gives you praise.

In the fullness of time,
you sent your child Jesus Christ,
to share and die as one of us,
to reconcile us to you,
the Mother and Father of us all.

He healed the sick and ate and drank with outcasts and sinners;
He opened the eyes of the blind and proclaimed
the good News of your kingdom to the poor and those in need.
In all things he fulfilled your gracious will.

On the night he was betrayed our Lord Jesus Christ took bread;
and after giving thanks to you, broke it, and gave it to his disciples.
And said, "Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me."
After supper he took the cup of wine; and after giving thanks,
gave it to them, and said, "Drink this. All of you:
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Gracious God, by the death of your child
you have destroyed the power of death,
and by raising him to life you have given us life for evermore.
Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died. Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

Recalling his death, proclaiming his resurrection,
and looking for his coming again in glory,
we offer you, O God, this bread and this cup.
Send your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts,
that all who eat and drink at this table may be one body,
one holy people, a living sacrifice in Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ.
In the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory is yours,
God most holy, now and forever.