



O come let us adore Him



CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH HAMILTON

165 Charlton Ave. W. Hamilton, ON L8P 2C8

December 24, 2023 10:30 a.m.

Christmas Pageant 2023

Adapted from 'The Jesus Storybook Bible' and 'Cloth for the Cradle' (Iona Community)

Welcome to Worship at Central this Christmas Eve morning!

Worship Leaders: Rev. Dr. Nicholas Athanasiadis, Dr. Marcus Scholtes and Sara Traficante

Lighting the Christ Candle at Christmas: The Forcier Family

Faith Finders Pageant Players:

Mary - Rachel

Joseph - Neto

Gabriel - Kene

Star - Abigail

Innkeeper - Nathan

Three Magi - Evelyn, Juniper, Violet

Herod - Caspian

Shepherds - Duncan, George, Sam, Tristan, Willa, William

Angels - Alan, Nathan, Kene

Animals - Davis, Eliana, Fisher, Flora, Jack, Lana, Miriam, Poppy

Readers: Abigail, Angus, Darragh, Gregoire, Goerge, Harrison, Kelvin, Neto, Rachel, Ramona, Risa

Musician: Sharon Lee, violin

Youth Choir: Abigail, Audrey, Duncan, Elizabeth, Kelvin, Kene, Nathan, Neto, Rachel, Ramona, Risa

* *Indicates standing, as you are able.*

PRELUDE *Noel No. VIII - L. C. Daquin*

INTROIT – Gloria, Gloria, Gloria Deo by David Ouchterlony (Youth Choir)

*I have no gold, my baby Jesus, I have no wealth, no precious stone;
All I can bring to my Jesus, A King with a manger His throne,
Is Gloria, Gloria, Gloria Deo. King of the whole earth, King of my own!*

*If I had toys, my baby Jesus, Worthy of Thee, with them I'd part;
But I have nothing that's worthy, Lord Jesus, how blessed Thou art.
Sing Gloria, Gloria, Gloria Deo. King of the whole earth, King of my heart!*

*My life I give to you, Jesus, Poor though it is, no longer mine.
What I can do, my Lord Jesus, I promise, my life will be guided by Thine.
Sing Gloria, Gloria, Gloria Deo. King of the whole earth, My King divine!*

WELCOME AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

STATEMENT OF WELCOME AND INCLUSION

OPENING PRAYER

Lighting the Christ Candle at Christmas: Fulfilment

Reader: When the angel Gabriel visited Mary, announcing God's plan for her to conceive and give birth to the Messiah, "Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?'" (Luke 1:34) And yet, only a few months later, Mary sings to Elizabeth, my soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me – holy is his name (Luke 1:46-49).

Reader: We, like Mary, hear God's call to be part of making God's dream for our salvation and flourishing a reality, and we question, "How can this be? I am only..." Yet, like Mary, the "onlys" that make us hesitate are gifts God can and will use as God's love transforms us into bearers of good news.

Congregation: We wait as people who have encountered divine Love that disrupts the status quo and ushers us into abundant life marked by mutual love and peace that flows from the flourishing of all people.

Reader: We light these candles as signs of our shocking hope, our just peace, our fierce joy, and the love that transforms us. May Love grow within us, transforming us into bold witnesses of God's salvation with our voices and our lives. Amen.

(Light the fourth candle of the Advent wreath.)

* HYMN - THE FIRST NOWELL (#136 Verses 1, 2, 3, 5)

*The first nowell the angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay,
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.*

Refrain: Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell! Born is the King of Israel.

*They looked up and saw a star
shining in the east beyond them far,
and to the earth it gave great light,
and so it continued both day and night. (Refrain)*

*And by the light of that same star
Three wise men came from country far;
To search for a king was their intent,
And to follow the star wherever it went. (Refrain)*

*Then entered in those wise men three
Full reverently upon their knee,
And offered there in his presence
Their gold and myrrh and frankincense. (Refrain)*

SETTING THE SCENE:

Everything was ready. The moment God had been waiting for was here at last! God was coming to help his people, just as he promised in the beginning. But how would he come? What would he be like? What would he do? Mountains would have bowed down. Seas would have roared. Trees would have clapped their hands. But the earth held its breath. As silent as snow falling, he came in. And when no one was looking, in the darkness, he came.

THE ANGEL GABRIEL VISITS MARY:

There was a girl named Mary who was engaged to a man named Joseph. One morning, this girl was minding her own business when, suddenly, a great warrior of light appeared - right there, in her bedroom. He was Gabriel and he was an angel, a special messenger from heaven. When she saw the tall shining man standing there, Mary was frightened. "You don't need to be scared," Gabriel said "God is very happy with you! Mary, you're going to have a baby. A little boy. You will call him Jesus. He is God's own Son. He's the One!" "But it's too wonderful!" Mary said and felt her heart beating hard. "How can it be true?" Gabriel asked, "Is anything too wonderful for God?" So, Mary trusted God more than what her eyes could see. And she believed. "I am God's servant," she said. "Whatever God says, I will do."

MARY AND JOSEPH TRAVEL TO BETHLEHEM:

Now, Mary and Joseph had to take a trip to Bethlehem, the town King David was from. But when they reached the little town, they found every room was full. Every bed was taken. "Go away!" the innkeepers told them. "There isn't any place for you." Where would they stay? Soon, Mary's baby would come. They couldn't find anywhere except an old, tumbledown stable. So, they stayed with the cows and the donkeys and the horses.

ADDRESS - '*Cloth for the Cradle*'

During the music, the congregation are invited to the front using the side aisles, to pick up a piece of cloth and help prepare the cradle. Please use the centre aisle to return to your seats.

CHOIR - CLOTH FOR THE CRADLE

Scots traditional/Iona Community
Arr. by J. L. Bell, Words by J. L. Bell and G. Maule

Chorus: Cloth for the Cradle, Cradle for the child, the child for our every joy and sorrow: Find him a shawl that's woven by us all to welcome the Lord of each tomorrow.

- *Darkness and light and all that's known by sight, silence and echo fading, weave into one a welcome for the Son, set earth its own maker serenading.*
- *Hungry and poor, the sick and the unsure, wealthy whose needs are stranger, weave into one a welcome for the Son, leave excess and want beneath the manger.*
- *Claimant and queen, wage earners in between, trader and traveling preacher, weave into one a welcome for the Son, whose word brings new life to every creature.*
- *Wrinkled or fair, carefree or full of care, searchers of all the ages, weave into one a welcome for the Son, the Savior of shepherds and of sages.*

PRAYER:

**Here is a place for you, Lord Jesus.
just as our hands have made it ready,
so make our hearts ready to love and to welcome you.
Be born again, not in a manger, but in us.
Make us your Bethlehem, where God is personal,
and all things and all people are made new. Amen.**

REFLECTION - "FRAGILE GOD"

* **HYMN - O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM (#165 vs. 1, 2, 3)**

*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.*

*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.*

*How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings born 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.*

THE OFFERING

OFFERTORY *Holy Gifts We Offer*

J. Southbridge

* **THE DOXOLOGY AND PRESENTATION OF GIFTS**

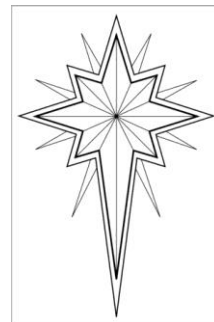
*Praise God from Whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below:
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.*

BABY JESUS IS BORN:

And there, in the stable, amongst the chickens and the cows, in the quiet of the night, God gave the world his wonderful gift. The baby that would change the world was born. His baby Son. Mary and Joseph wrapped him up to keep him warm. They made a soft bed of straw and used the animals' feeding trough as his cradle. And they gazed in wonder at God's Great Gift, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger. Mary and Joseph named him Jesus, "Emmanuel" - which means "God has come to live with us."

THE STAR APPEARS:

That same night, in amongst the other stars, suddenly a bright new star appeared. Of all the stars in the dark vaulted heavens, this one shone clearer. It blazed in the night and made the other stars look pale beside it. God put it there when his baby Son was born - to be like a spotlight. Shining on him. Lighting up the darkness. Showing people the way to him.



ANGELS APPEAR TO SHEPHERDS:

So, He pulled out all the stops. He'd sent an angel to tell Mary the good news. He'd put a special star in the sky to show where his boy was. And now he was going to send a big choir of angels to sing his happy song to the world: He's here! He's come! Now where would you send your splendid choir? To a big concert hall maybe? Or a palace perhaps? God sent his choir to a little hillside, outside a little town, in the middle of the night. He sent all those angels to sing for a raggedy old bunch of shepherds watching their sheep outside Bethlehem. But God must have thought shepherds were very important indeed, because they are the ones He chose to tell the good news to first.

Suddenly, standing in front of the shepherds was a huge warrior of light, blazing in the darkness. "Don't be afraid of me!" the bright shining man said. "I haven't come to hurt you. I've come to bring you happy news for everyone everywhere. Today, in David's town, in Bethlehem, God's Son has been born! You can go and see him. He's sleeping in a manger." Behind the angel they saw a strange glowing cloud - except it wasn't a cloud, it was angels! And they were singing a beautiful song: "Glory to God" Then as quickly as they appeared, the angels left. The shepherds raced down the grassy hill, through the gates of Bethlehem, past an inn, until, at last, they reached a tumbledown stable. The shepherds knelt on the dirt floor. They had heard about this Promised Child and now he was here. A baby sleeping in his mother's arms. This baby would be like that bright star shining in the sky that night. A light to light up the whole world. Chasing away darkness. Helping people to see. And the darker the night got, the brighter the star would shine.

* *HYMN: AWAY IN A MANGER (#149 - Verse 1 nursery children, verse 3 ALL SING)*

*Nursery children: 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.*

*All: Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask you to stay
Close by me forever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care,
and fit us for heaven to live with you there.*

THREE MAGI COME FROM THE EAST:

Far away, in the East, three magi saw the very same star. The star that God had put in the sky when Jesus was born. They knew it was a sign. A baby king had been born. "He's here!" They shouted. "He's here!" They packed up their camels and wrapped gifts for the baby. They brought their most precious treasures of all: frankincense, gold and myrrh. Special, sparkly, lovely-smelling, gleaming things - just right for a king.

THE MAGI MEET JESUS:

Jerusalem was by far the most important city for miles around. That's where a palace would be, and kings are born in palaces. So that's where the three magi went. But they were in for a surprise. They went to see King Herod. Surely, he'd know where this baby was. But he didn't. In fact, he didn't like the sound of a new king. He didn't want anyone to be king, except him. Herod's advisors told the three Magi what was written in their books - what God had said about the baby king: "Go to Bethlehem". That's where you'll find him." The star they had seen in the East started moving again, showing the way, into the little town of Bethlehem, until it stopped right over a little house.

Sure enough, in that little house - there, sitting on his mother's knee - they found him. The baby King. The three knelt before the little King. They took off their rich royal turbans and gleaming, golden crowns. They bowed their noble heads to the ground and gave him their sparkling treasures. To the King God had promised David all those years before.

Please light your candle

* HYMN - SILENT NIGHT (#154 - Verse 1 children, Verses 2 & 3 ALL)

*Faith Finders children: Silent night! Holy night! All is calm, all is bright;
Round yon virgin mother and child, holy Infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.*

*All: Silent night! Holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight;
Glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ the Saviour is born! Christ, the Saviour is born!*

*All: Silent night! Holy night! Son of God, love's pure light;
Radiant beams from Thy holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.*

IT'S YOUR STORY TOO:

But this child was a new kind of king. Though he was the Prince of Heaven, he had become poor. Though he was the Mighty God, he had become a helpless baby. This King hadn't come to be the boss. He had come to be a servant. For anyone who says yes to Jesus. For anyone who believes what Jesus said. For anyone who will just reach out to take it. Then God will give them this wonderful gift: To be born into a whole new life to be who they really are. Who God always made them to be. Their own true selves. God's dear child. Because you see, the most wonderful thing about this Story is - it's your story too!

FINAL READINGS:

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

(Isaiah 9:6)

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

(John 1:14)

CLOSING PRAYER AND BENEDICTION

* HYMN - JOY TO THE WORLD (#153 - verses 1,2,3,4)

*Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive its King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heaven and nature sing.*

*Joy to the earth, the Saviour reigns;
Let us our songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains,
Repeat the sounding joy.*

*No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found.*

*He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love.*

POSTLUDE - Voluntary and Fugue in C Major - Anon. - 18th Century



Welcome to Central this morning!

Your presence with us today and your support of our work means so much. May God bless you richly!

Please stay to enjoy coffee and cookies in the Fellowship Hall following today's worship.

Central Presbyterian Church is here to offer sacred space for worship, a safe space for community groups to gather, and a generous space to **Hamilton Out of the Cold** serving meals to those who need them.

You can choose to support this good work by placing a gift on the offering plate, as you leave the service, through pre-authorized remittance (PAR), donating online, via Interac E-Transfer or cheque. Please send to bookkeeper@cpchamilton.ca, include your envelope # or mailing address for tax receipt purposes. For ways to give, visit cpchamilton.ca/giving

Income Tax Receipts: To have your offering included for 2023 income tax purposes, it must be received at the Church, or postmarked ***no later than Sunday, December 31st***. Please ensure your contact information is up-to-date with your elder or the church office. This is very important in keeping our church records up to date in preparation of the 2023 income tax receipts.

If you would like to get to know Central better, please introduce yourself to an usher and/or spend some time going through our website (www.cpchamilton.ca). If you would like to be added to our email list, please let Helena know (helena@cpchamilton.ca or 905-522-9098).

For any pastoral concerns, please contact the Rev. Lois Whitwell (905-522-9098 x33 or lois@cpchamilton.ca). Central's Prayer Team is available to receive needs in confidence. Contact Pam Carpenter at 905-526-0631 or carpenterfamily@sympatico.ca.

Statement of Welcome and Inclusion Central Presbyterian Church **God's Love Includes Everyone**

We strive to be a welcoming, nurturing, loving, and supportive community unified in Jesus Christ. As an inclusive congregation, we joyfully affirm and honour the diversity of God's creation. Our community is richer when we include people of all ages, gender identities, racial and cultural backgrounds, sexual orientations, abilities, economic circumstances and family configurations. We proclaim this statement of inclusion to all who have experienced the pain of exclusion or discrimination by the church and society. All are invited to join a body of believers, to participate fully in the life, leadership, witness and ministry of Central Presbyterian Church. We acknowledge we are imperfect and in different stages of our faith journey.

No matter who you are, how you identify, whom you love, or where you are on life's journey: know you are welcome here, and you are loved by God.

CPC Statement of Welcome: www.cpchamilton.ca/welcome-statement/



Children's Ministry

Join us Sunday mornings at 10:30 a.m. for Faith Finders, a children's ministry where we grow together in our faith! Children SK to Grade 8 gather for a time of Bible activities, and discussion as we discover our place in God's story!

Nursery

Our staffed nursery is open on Sunday mornings from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. for young children, infants to JK. Faith-based activities for the youngest children. Parents are welcome to visit the nursery with their children before dropping them off.

Youth Ministry

Youth Group Activities for Grades 6 to 12 will resume in January. Please contact sara@cpchamilton.ca if you are interested in participating.



Come Sing With Us . . .

Add your voice to the chorus of praise that lifts our songs in worship at Central! The choir of Central Presbyterian Church seeks singers with good music reading abilities to join our regular weekly ministry. We also welcome additional singers to join us temporarily for special events in the Christmas and Easter seasons.

For information, please contact Dr. Marcus Scholtes, at music@cpchamilton.ca

Central Presbyterian Church – Land Acknowledgement *

We acknowledge with gratitude and respect that Central Presbyterian Church is located on the traditional territories of the Anishnaabek and Haudenosaunee peoples. This land is protected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement to share and care for the lands, air, and waters around the Great Lakes. We further acknowledge this land is covered by the Between the Lakes Purchase, 1792, between the Crown and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We recognize that we must learn about the rich history of this land to better understand our role as residents, neighbours, partners and caretakers. We are all treaty people.

* Our website has a guide explaining the above Land Acknowledgement
<https://www.cpchamilton.ca/land-acknowledgement/>

Christmas Services – Central Presbyterian

Sunday December 24 Christmas Eve

10:30 AM Christmas Pageant

– *Cloth for the Cradle*

8:00 PM Candlelight Communion Service

Sunday December 31 New year's Eve Day

10:30 AM Worship Service

“A Blessing”



Stewardship Moment

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

The Presbyterian Church in Canada presbyterian.ca

Interim Minister – The Rev. Dr. Nicholas Athanasiadis

Minister Emeritus – The Rev. Dr. Alan M. McPherson

Director of Pastoral Care – The Rev. Lois Whitwell

Director of Music Ministries – Dr. Marcus Scholtes

Coordinator of Discipleship – Sara Traficante

Bookkeeper – Michelle Frebald

Office Administrator – Helena Bootsma

Sunday & Special Event Custodian – Geoff French

Nursery Coordinator – Cathy Slattery

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