



ST NICHOLAS
ANGELICAN CHURCH, BIRCH CLIFF



Quiet Christmas

A candlelight service of hope and peace
in the midst of a busy season.



Thursday, December 12, 2024
7:30pm

Welcome to St. Nick's!

Whether you're here virtually or in-person, for the first time or the hundredth time, it's a blessing to have you praying with us this evening. Our sidespeople are the friendly people at the back of the church who can help you with anything you need. Everything you need today is in this leaflet. We hope you'll participate as you feel comfortable.

Washrooms



Our washrooms are downstairs, which you can get to by the staircase near the left-side chapel, or by the elevator, also in the chapel. For help with the elevator, speak to one of our sidespeople.

Accessibility

If you need extra space for a walker or wheelchair, our sidespeople will show you to the accessibility pew near the front of the church. If you need communion brought to you in your pew, let one of the sidespeople know.



Better Sight and Sound

Large-print copies of this leaflet are also available: just ask a sidesperson. If you have difficulty hearing, we have audio-assistive devices that will help you hear the service better.

Territorial Acknowledgment & Commitment to Reconciliation



We acknowledge that the land on which our parish sits is the traditional territory of the Wendat, the Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Mississaugas of Scugog, Hiawatha and Alderville First Nations and the Métis Nation. This territory was the subject of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. The treaties that were signed for this particular parcel of land are collectively referred to as the Williams Treaties of 1923. We also recognize, and pray for the continual grace to honour the enduring presence of Indigenous peoples on this land.



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The Gathering of the Community

Prelude *Sonata in D minor* No. 6, Op. 65 Finale (Felix Mendelssohn)

Words of Welcome

Presider: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

People: **And also with you.**

Carol ***O Come, O Come Emmanuel*** (vv.1, 2, 6, 7)
As you're able, you're invited to stand

**O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear.
 *Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel,***

**O come, O Wisdom from on high, who orders all things mightily;
to us the path of knowledge show, and teach us in its ways to go
 *Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel,***

**O come, O Dayspring, come and cheer our Advent by thy drawing near!
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night and death's dark shadow put to flight;
 *Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel,***

**O come, desire of nations, bind in one the hearts of humankind.
Bid all our sad divisions cease and be for us our Prince of Peace.
 *Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel,***

Opening Prayer

Presider: God of all glory and compassion, at your touch the wilderness blossoms with fullness of life. In the quiet of these lengthening nights, grant us perseverance and patience, and raise our heads in expectation, so that we may yearn for the coming day of the Lord and stand with joy before your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

All: **Amen.**

Liturgy of Readings and Light

You may remain seated for all readings and prayers.

Reading: Isaiah 40:1-8

Reader: A reading from the prophet Isaiah

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries out: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken. 'A voice says, 'Cry out!' And I said, 'What shall I cry?' All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand for ever.

Lighting of the First Candle

Officiant: As the days grow shorter in this season of Advent, we come before God with all that troubles us, yet trusting, as people in every age, in the promise of the prophets that God will hear us in times of joy and in grief alike.

And so we light this candle as a sign of remembrance and hope: our remembrance of those who have died, whom we see no longer, and our hope in the promise we have of God's comfort in these holy days ahead.

The candle is lit.

Presider: Let us pray. *[a time of silence is kept]*
Loving God, send your blessing on all people who have lost loved ones. May we know your peace, even in the midst of our grief of those whom we have loved. Help us, though we miss their physical presence, to trust in their spiritual closeness. Give us the grace to meet these Christmas days with strength, both cherishing the past, and looking to the future. Look with compassion on those who feel unreconciled with those they have lost, and help them to uphold to you in prayer those words that were left unsaid.

Holy God, we thank you for memories of happy times, and those beloved people that bring us comfort and encouragement; help us to see in their compassion your healing grace in our lives.

God, in your mercy.

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Reading: Luke 1:46-55 (The Magnificat)

Reader: 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.'

Lighting of the Second Candle

Officiant: In this busy season, we feel the stress of expectations that are hard to meet, and the pulls on our time and energy, and the sense of scarcity that rules our world; yet in the light that shines through this season is an everlasting peace that requires nothing of us but faith.

And so we light this candle as a sign of the peace that calms our anxious souls; the peace that God holds out to us in the midst of a swiftly changing world; the peace of God that starts as a tiny spark, and fills us from within.

The candle is lit.

Presider: Let us pray. *[a time of silence is kept]*

Loving God, give us a steady faith to get us through challenging times. We pray for all those who find it difficult to enjoy the celebration of Christmas because the demands of the world placed on their shoulders. Help them and us to find our rest in you.

When confronted by the expectations of others, give us a spirit of peace. When we feel the pressure we put on ourselves, take from us the burdens that weigh us down. When there doesn't seem to be enough to go around, help us to share in the abundance you offer us.

Holy God, you lift up the lowly, and fill the hungry with good things: fill us with your peace that passes all understanding, and reverse the fortunes of this

world, so that the meek may be exalted, the hungry be fed, and your grace be known to all those who long for your healing and liberating grace.

God, in your mercy.

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Carol *It Came upon the Midnight Clear* (Common Praise #141, verses 1, 2 & 5)
As you're able, you're invited to stand

**It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, to all good will from heaven's most gracious king!"
The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing.**

**Still through the cloven skies they come with peaceful wings unfurled,
and still their heavenly music floats o'er all the weary world;
above its sad and lowly plains they bend on hovering wing,
and ever o'er its Babel sounds the blessed angels sing.**

**Yet with the woes of sin and strife, the world has suffered long;
beneath the angel strain have rolled two thousand years of wrong;
and we amid our wars hear not the words they bring:
O listen now, and still your strife, to hear the blessed angels sing.**

**For lo, the days are hastening on, by prophets seen of old
when with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold:
when the new heaven and earth shall own the Prince of Peace, their King,
and the whole world send back the song which now the angels sing.**

You may be seated as the service continues.

Reading Romans 8:31, 35, 37-39

Reader: What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Lighting of the Third Candle

Officiant: In this season of joy, some of us feel the pain of a world mired in division, conflict, and the hardness of heart we sometimes experience - yet we trust that nothing will separate us from the love of God, a love which is made known in the birth of Jesus Christ.

And so we light this candle as a sign of the joy we long for in this life; the joy of being set free from all that holds us captive in body, mind or spirit; the joy of God's Spirit being breathed into this world, made real in our lives, tending to a wounded world.

The candle is lit.

Presider: Let us pray. *[a time of silence is kept]*

Loving God, we turn to you when life seems uncertain and unkind; we pray for those who have lost the comforts of peace and security in their lives; for families divided by broken relationships and unspoken hurt, that they may seek paths of peace; for communities divided by hatred, that they may grow in understanding; for people powerless in the face of trial, that they may see your love is still at work.

Bring to us the joy we long to see in a reconciled world: the joy of people and loved ones at peace, the joy of justice made real, and the joy of God's love breaking into our lives.

Help us to trust that your love guides us through our days, and hold out to us the joy that we are inseparable from your grace and mercy; in the birth of Jesus Christ, born into a broken world to make it whole, may we be comforted, and renewed in the power of your Holy Spirit, the source of all our joy and hope.

All God, in your mercy.
Hear our prayer.

Reading Luke 2:1-20

Reader 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.

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!'

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Lighting of the Fourth Candle

Officiant In this season where we share the good news of great joy for all people, we remember that Christ was born into a world much like ours – a world of fear and longing, but also hope and wonder.

And so we light this candle as a sign of the love God has for this world, and for us. As the flames of these candles spread without giving up their own light, may we be reminded of the light of angels, the light of hope, the light of love that radiates from the Christ child, never diminishing as it grows.

The candle is lit.

Presider Let us pray. *[a time of silence is kept]*

Loving God, be with us in our loneliness. Be with us in those thoughts and feelings that linger deep within. Shed your joyful light in the darkest corners of our being, and give us wisdom to see each other's sorrows, and to comfort one another.

Comfort those who are shut-in; uphold and support those who minister to the sick and the dying; the homeless, the hungry, and those imprisoned, whether by bars or by the demands of this world. Sustain all those who live a life of love to ease the isolation of others.

Holy God, we pray for all those we love, and we thank you for the love we have in our lives. We ask forgiveness for when we have been hurtful rather than loving. Guide us through our envy, anger and discouragement.

Make us all your children, O God, and help us to see our relationship with all humanity; and grant that the barriers that stand between your people may be shattered, and your love fill the whole earth, lightening every dark place.

God, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

All

Carol *O Little Town of Bethlehem* (Common Praise #121)
As you're able, you're invited to stand

**O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see the 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 the earth.**

**How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given
as God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his 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.**

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.

Homily Fr. Andrew

Carol: *In the Bleak Midwinter* (Common Praise 122, verses 1, 2 & 4)
As you're able, you're invited to stand

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
snow had fallen snow on snow, snow on snow,
in the bleak midwinter, long ago.

Our God, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain;
heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign.
In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed
the Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

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.

An Advent Responsary

Officiant The light shines in the darkness

All **And the darkness did not overcome it.**

Officiant Christ, our Hope, you come to us with promises of renewal and life. You are the light that guides our steps and the dawn that breaks each new day.

All **Come, Lord Jesus, come and be our hope.**

Officiant Christ, our Peace, you calm our restless hearts and speak stillness to the world. You are the light that brings calm where there is anxiety, and healing where there is hurt.

All **Come, Lord Jesus. Come and be our peace.**

Officiant Christ, our Joy, you gladden our hearts with your presence among us. You are the light that shines with beauty and delight, even in the darkest night.

All **Come, Lord Jesus. Come and be our joy.**

Officiant Christ, our Love, you are the gift that never ends, the light that cannot be diminished. You dwell with us and within us, and your love renews the whole world.

All **Come, Lord Jesus. Come and be our love.**

Officiant Restore us, O Lord God of hosts;

All **Show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.**

Officiant Show us your mercy, O Lord,

All **And grant us your salvation.**

Officiant Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

All **Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.**

Presider Let us pray.

A closing prayer is offered.

All **Amen.**

An Advent Blessing

Presider May the God of peace make you perfect and holy, and hold you safe and blameless in spirit, soul and body.

All **Amen.**

Presider May Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, shine upon you, scatter the darkness from before your path, and make you ready when he comes in glory.

All **Amen.**

Presider May the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, keep you steadfast in faith, joyful in hope and constant in love.

All **Amen.**

Presider And the blessing of God almighty, the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier be upon you and remain with you always.

All **Amen.**

Carol **Silent Night** (Common Praise #119)

**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.**

**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.**

**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.**

Dismissal

Officiant Let us bless the Lord.

All Thanks be to God.

Postlude Chorale Prelude on '*Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen*' (Johannes Brahms)

Assisting in tonight's service:

Readers Jan Main, Michael Braley, Cheryle Pollock

Officiant Sara Fornoff

Presider & Preacher Fr. Andrew MacDonald

Sidespeople Stephanie Ford, Joan Pantlin



Christmas Eve
4:00pm Family Xmas Service
10:00pm Midnight Mass

Christmas Day
10:30am
Carols & Communion

Sunday December 29
10:30am
Lessons & Carols

 **Christmas
at St. Nick's**