

Wolfville and Area Inter-church Council of Churches
Orchard Valley Pastoral Care Team

Christmas In a Lower Key
Christmas Service
December 21, 2022



Be still and know that I am God.

A quiet reflective service of comfort and hope
offered by the
Orchard Valley United Church

Wolfville and Area Inter-church Council of Churches
Orchard Valley Pastoral Care Team

Christmas in a Lower Key

December 21, 2022

Service Participants:

Welcome Rev. Don Sellsted / Rev. Marjorie Lewis
Singing Bowl Allyson Dunfee
Call to Worship/Blessing and Sending Forth..... Vera Burke
Prayer of Approach..... Rev. Scott Kindred-Barnes
Naming our Loss Nancy Harbers
Ceremony of Commemoration Devon Edmonds and L'Arche Home Fires
Losing One We Love..... Rev. Rob Hankinson
Healing and Memory Barbara Aikman
Living with Hope and Love Jean Millett
The Risk of Birth..... Rev. Nicole Uzans
Lighting of Memorial Candles..... Sheila Richardson
Invitation of a Labyrinth Walk..... Joy Waterbury
Prayer..... Rev. Ruth Tonn

Welcome

(Singing Bowl...)

Call to Worship

Lord, it is night. The night is for stillness.

Let us be still in the presence of God.

It is night after a long day.

**What has been done has been done; what has not been
done has not been done; let it be.**

The night is dark.

**Let our fears of the darkness, both in the world and in
ourselves, rest in you.**

The night is quiet.

**Let the quietness of your peace enfold us, all who are
dear to us, and all who have no peace.**

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The night heralds the dawn.

Help us to know your presence in our midst. Help us to know that we are not alone, and in knowing this, may we find strength to look expectantly to a new day, new joys, new possibilities.

In the name of Emmanuel, God with us, we pray.

Amen.

Hymn:

“Don’t Be Afraid” x2

MV #90

**Don’t be afraid. My love is stronger,
my love is stronger than your fear.**

**Don’t be afraid. My love is stronger
and I have promised, promised to be always near.**

Prayer of Approach

We gather this night to remember...

To name those who have been life itself to us.

those who have touched our lives,
glad memories and happy stories,
and love that we hold dear.

We gather in the name of Jesus,
vulnerable as an infant,
joyful and happy as a youth,
wise and caring as an adult.

We gather in the presence of God,
who brings life and light to all,
as all life is precious in God’s sight.

With God, no one is ever alone or forgotten.

So we come and gather in the Spirit of hope and peace.

We worship, in the name of joy and love. Amen.

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Hymn: “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear” VU #44 vs. 1,2,4

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, good will to all,
from heaven's all-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.

For, lo! the days are hastening on,
by prophets seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years
shall come the time foretold,
when peace shall over all the earth
its ancient splendours fling,
and the whole world send back the song
which now the angels sing.

Lighting of Candles and Reflection

Naming our Loss

While we may have moments where we can join others in the hope, peace, and joy of this season, we still know and acknowledge that there is something missing in our lives, in our homes, and in our hearts.

We name our losses before God, the loss of a partner in life, the loss of a well-loved family member, the loss of a friend, the loss of a loved one, the loss of a pet, the loss of health, the loss of a cherished dream, the loss of a job, the loss of our dignity, the loss of self-confidence.

We might be feeling worried, trapped, insecure, adrift, or alone.

We may be grieving what might have been but will not be, or grieving over what used to be but cannot be anymore.

We may simply be in need of a place of quiet and calm in an otherwise busy season.

Whatever may have brought us here
we offer it all to the One born in Bethlehem's stable,
knowing that there is no pain that does not echo in God's heart,
no joy that does not come from God's hand.

We have come to the safety of this place here, tonight, where we can be okay with how we are feeling. We may have come to be with others who feel like we do. We may have come to be present with those of us who could use your strength.

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There is nothing we have to be pressed to just get over. We don't have any obligation to be angry or happy, joyous or sad, scared or strong.

We name our own particular losses in silence before God: moments of memory, the good ones and the hard ones, and reflect on the feelings that are genuinely ours. We pause in the silence and stillness of this time and place ... and we remember ... and we reflect...

Hymn: "Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying" x2 VU #400

Lord, listen to your children praying,
Lord, send your Spirit in this place;
Lord, listen to your children praying,
send us love, send us power, send us grace!

Ceremony of Commemoration

We light a candle in memory of those who gave us birth,
who nurtured us, offered love, and cherished us.

Candle is lit...

**We remember parents,
guardians and grandparents,
and all our family through the ages.**

We light a candle in memory of those
who have been joined to us in the great circle of family.

Candle is lit...

**We remember siblings,
aunts, uncles, and cousins,
those near to us and far away.**

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We light a candle in memory of those who have left us
before we expected, those we hold dear,
and with whom we still walk in our dreams.

Candle is lit...

**We remember children and grandchildren,
those who leaped within the womb
and who danced upon the earth.**

We light a candle in memory of those whom we came to know
through the eyes of love.

We hold sacred the faces and memories of years past,
of those who brightened our days and lit up our lives.

Candle is lit...

**We remember spouses,
dearest loves and closest friends,
who changed our lives forever.**

We light a candle in memory of those who shared in our lives
in many ways, who worked with us
and made our lives more enjoyable.

Candle is lit...

We remember friends and neighbours.

We light a candle for those we do not know, O God,
who, like us, have suffered loss, who live with grief,
who long for peace and justice,
who long for friendship and healing.

Candle is lit...

We remember your people, of every time and place.

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Finally, we leave one candle unlit,
mindful of the great truth of this life,
that in the fullness of time we, too,
will join our loved ones in a realm without sorrow and pain,
in the company of Unending Love.

Candle is lit...

**For these and all your children, we give thanks
for life, hope and courage. Amen.**

Hymn: “Long Before the Night” VU #282 vs. 1&5

Long before the night was born from darkness
Long before the dawn rolled unsteady from fire
Long before She wrapped her scarlet arm around the hills
there was a love, this ancient love was born.
Wakeful our nights and slumbers our morning
Stubborn the grass sowing green wounded hills
As we wrap our healing arms to hold what her arms held
this ancient love, this aching love rolls on.

Listening for God’s Promise

Losing One We Love

Isaiah 40:1, 6–8

Prayer

Verse: Those Hearts That We Have Treasured (VU #494, v. 1)

Those hearts that we have treasured,
those lives that we have shared,
those loves that walked beside us,
those friends for whom we’ve cared,
their blessing rests upon us, their life is memory,

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their suffering is over, their spirits are set free.

Healing and Memory

Psalm 139:7-12

Prayer

Verse: Those Hearts That We Have Treasured (VU 494, v. 2)

They still give hope and comfort,
they did not lose the fight,
they showed us truth and goodness,
they shine into our night.

Remember days of gladness;
remember times of joy;
remember all the moments
that grief can not destroy.

Living with Hope and Love

John 14:1-4, 18-19

Prayer

Verse: Those Hearts That We Have Treasured (VU 494, v. 3)

From hearts that we have treasured,
from lives that we have shared,
from loves that walked beside us,
from friends for whom we've cared,
we've learned to treasure kindness,
we've learned that grace provides,
we've learned to be together,
we've learned that love abides

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The Risk of Birth *by Madeline L'Engle*

*This is no time for a child to be born,
With the earth betrayed by war & hate
And a comet slashing the sky to warn
That time runs out & the sun burns late.
That was no time for a child to be born,
In a land in the crushing grip of Rome;
Honor & truth were trampled to scorn—
Yet here did the Savior make His home.
When is the time for love to be born?
The inn is full on the planet earth,
And by a comet the sky is torn—
Yet Love still takes the risk of birth.*

Lighting of Memorial Candles

You are invited to light a candle on the tray to let the silence of your heart be the light you need. Or feel free to name the person or situation, as the spirit leads you.

**In your pain we are with you.
In your pain God is with you.**

Invitation to a Labyrinth Walk

A labyrinth is an ancient symbol that relates to wholeness. It combines the imagery of the circle and the spiral into a meandering but purposeful path. The Labyrinth represents a journey to our own center and back again out into the world. In this journey we are all on the path, exactly where we are meant to be. A labyrinth has only one path - the way in is the way out. There are no blind alleys. It involves intuition, creativity, and imagery. With a labyrinth there is only one choice to be made. The choice is whether or not to walk a spiritual path.

Song: “Lead Me, God” x2 VU #728 (Refrain 2)

**Lead me, God,
lead me in your righteousness;
make your way plain before my face.**

Prayer

Out of the depths we cry to you, O God:
we come in pain, we come in sorrow
we come in brokenness, we come in sadness
we come in the loneliness.
You hear our cries, O God, you know our pain;
hold us in your tender love.

**God of hope,
give us this night a glimpse of trust and assurance,
a sense of purpose and possibility.
Come into our hearts and our minds,
bringing comfort, health, and peace.
Re-create in us a sense of thanksgiving,**

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in the joy of your love. Amen.

Hymn:

“Silent Night”

VU #67

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 Hallelujah,
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!

Blessing and Sending Forth

We return to the world from which we came:
a world of pain, a world of promise;
the world which God so loved
that the Bethlehem baby was born.
May we listen to the voice of the angel who says, “Fear not.”
May we be filled with the Good News of God,
through the child of Mary and Joseph,

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God's gift of new life for all. Amen.

