



Kensington Presbyterian Church

Blue Christmas

December 20, 2023

WELCOME to worship. We are offering a variety of ways for people to gather. We are welcoming people to worship in person, as well as through Zoom, YouTube, and this printable PDF.¹ If this is how you are worshipping, know that you are not alone... and if you like, you can invite those who live with you to join you, or connect with others through the phone or outside.

If you have any prayer requests, ideas, or just want to talk, please reach out to your elder or Rev. Peter (Peter@Kensingtonchurch.ca)

Announcements

Clicking on or tapping blue text will take you to a web-site

Caroling in the Community: Friday, Dec. 22

6:30 p.m. outdoors

7:00^{ish} indoors

Christmas Eve: Saturday, Dec. 24 at 7:00 p.m.

Christmas Morning: Sunday, Dec. 25 at 9:30 a.m.

Pot-Luck breakfast and singing

NDG Christmas Dinner: Dec 25 from 1 pm to 7 pm

The NDG Community Council is hosting a Christmas Dinner for everyone, free of charge. It will be held at St. Ignatius Church 4455 West Broadway.

Jesus & Java: Thursday, 3:30 pm at Beetz, 5914 Sherbrooke @ Clifton

A casual discussion about life and God

We won't meet (officially) on Dec 28 or Jan 4.

¹ note: that the footnotes are not as thorough as an academic paper.



Contacts

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Creating Space

✦ Invitation

[Those coming in person will receive a stone before we start.]

It's Christmas time - a season that can have laughter, joy, and getting together with loved ones. However, we know it can also be a hard season. It can be a month-long walk down memory lane that leaves us aching. It can be full of people, and leave us feeling disconnected and empty.

...it can be a mix of all this and more.

Psalm 139 says,

- ¹ O Lord, you searched me and you know me.
² You know when I sit and when I rise;
and are familiar with all my ways.
⁴ Like the best of friends,
you know what I'm going to say.
⁸ If I soar to the heavens, You are there;
if I lay in the depths, you are there.
¹¹ If I say, 'Surely the darkness covers me,
and the light around me become night',
¹² even the darkness is not dark to you;
for you can see like it's day.

You can't shock God. We invite you to enter this space, bringing all that you are: your angers, your doubts, your sorrows, your hopes, your prayers, and your memories. Bring them all and simply let them be, for we are in the presence of God.

Let us worship.

🗨️ Call to Worship

Tonight we gather
with friends and with strangers.

We come as we are to God

Tonight we gather
with hopes and with questions.

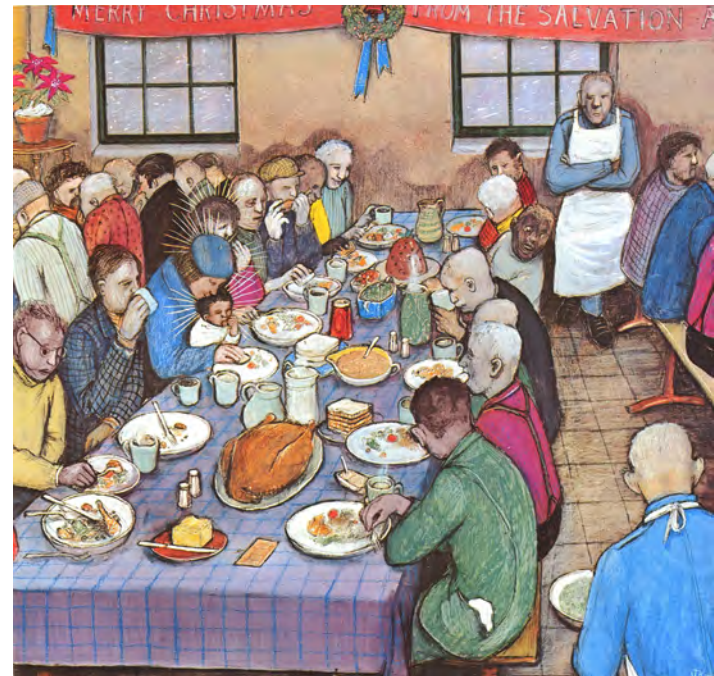
We come as we are to God

Tonight we gather
with doubts and with dreaming.

We come as we are to God

Tonight we come as we are to God.

And God has promised to meet us here.



Northern Nativity: Sally Ann - W Kurelek

🕯️ Lighting Advent Candles

It's not quite Christmas yet. This time before Christmas is called Advent - and it's about waiting for Christ. The promise is that when Christ returns the world will become a better version - the best version - of itself.

To remind us of the coming light, we light the advent candles. They represent hope, peace, joy & love. The middle candle, representing Christ, we leave it until Christmas.

🎵 Hymn: In the bleak mid winter.....pg 6 (145#1-2)

🙏 Prayer²

Lord,
in the beginning
when all was very dark, you said:
'Let there be light.'
And there was light
and life throughout the universe.

And when the human race was exhausted, tired and weary,
in the darkness of anxiety,
confusion and sin,
into that darkness you came
as light in Jesus Christ.
God became a human-being among us all.

Once again it is dark.
Not just dark at night
but dark in ourselves:
dark with doubt,
dark with fear and uncertainty,
dark with confusing and conflicting voices in our ears.

Come, Light of life,
lighten the darkness in our lives
with your mighty word of love.
Lighten our hearts with the joy
of your promised coming.
Lighten our world with the hope
that faith in you still brings.
Amen



Listening

📖 Reading:

The Bible is all about relationships. There's good ones, bad ones - and more often: both. There are times when people are so full of joy that it bursts out of them - and times like this passage.

[Psalms 69](#): 1-3, 13-18



The Hand of God - Yongsung Kim

2 edited: Candles & Conifers, pg 240 by John Harvey

♪ Hymn: Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming #1, 3-4.....pg 7 (151)

📖 The Christmas Story

Christmas is a story of great joy - because there is hard times that need hope, and this story includes both. Listen for both as I retell the story.

Once there was a young woman named Mary. She had recently celebrated her bat mitzva and was engaged to be married to a nice guy named Joseph.

Mary had woken up to an ordinary day. She was helping around the house; daydreaming about her future family with Joseph, when an angel of the Lord appeared. This was quite disturbing. Angels aren't cute. They have tremendous power and whenever they come, people's lives are radically changed. The angel invites Mary to bear God's son. This sounds like an honour, but what about her own dreams of family and children? What about being pregnant, but not with Joseph - this could get her killed. And then there's having the responsibility of raising the Son of God! How could she be expected to do that?

But the angel reassured her, and Mary agreed.

Then when Joseph found out about the pregnancy he felt betrayed. How could she? He'd thought her family was honourable - but now? What was he to do? How could he accept her now with this shame? He'd never get a decent job again. Even if he wanted to, he couldn't support them.

But the angel reassured him, and Joseph agreed.

As the due date was approaching, Joseph had to take his new family to Bethlehem to be counted in a census. Rome wanted a better way to get money out of them - where is God's justice?

When they got there, everywhere was full. There was no room with those distant cousins, no space in the inns. They were about to have a baby, and so very far from home.

Then they found a spot. Behind an inn, they could bed down in the stable. It might be a little drafty, but it was better than the street.

and that's where it happened. That's where the son of God was born. Not quite in the gutter, but in a feeding trough. Definitely not what was deserved or expected. Bu all those who looked at this baby - it brought light into such a troubled time.



Tent City Nativity - Kelly Latimore

Normally we tell this story and focus on the joy, but it is important to remember the hardship in Christmas.

This is full of people who have lost their dreams, have lost their honour, have lost their identity, have lost their independence... and it gets harder as it continues. Soldiers are sent in. Children are killed. The Holy Family become refugees.

✦ Offering our stones

Chances are you have come here because something about this season is hard... like a stone. You may be feeling sharp edges, or smoothed over over time. It can be from something that hurt you, or from a callus formed to protect you. It could probably be described as a loss of one of the advent candles: hope, peace, joy, or love.

What you are feeling may be new, or familiar - like a stone you've been holding forever.

We will now take time to recognize our losses before God:


the loss of a companion in life,
the loss of a family member,
the loss of a pet,
the loss of health,
the loss of a dream,
the loss of trust in a relationship,
the loss of trust in ourselves,
the loss of independence,
even the loss of hope. . .



If there is grief or pain, it is recognized because there was good that has been lost.

Remember the good times,
and recognize the hard times.

I would like to invite you into a time of reflective prayer. You can talk to God, or listen, or simply be. Zoé will provide some music.

During this time I also encourage you to leave your stone on the table and to light one of the candles. It is quite possible to have many weights to give to God at this time. Please feel free to leave more stones and light more candles. . . . 

Going Forth

I would like to share a few short Bible verses.

Readings

[Psalm 147:3](#)

"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."

[Psalm 34:18](#)

"The LORD is close to the Brokenhearted
and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

[Revelation 21:4](#)

"God will wipe every tear from your eye.

There will be no more death, or mourning, or crying, or pain."

This isn't an instant thing, but scripture tells us that one day there will be no more suffering. Tonight, we simply live in a space that acknowledges our loss, remembers God's presence, believes in the promise of the future, and, for now, allows that to be enough. Please join me as we pray to the God who shares in our grief and gives us our love.

Prayer

God of Christmas,

You give us love.

Tonight, as our hearts ache, we ask that you give us comfort.

Flood our minds with memories of love
and fill us with gratitude for all of those moments.

And as we wade through this Christmas season,

help us to catch glimpses of you in the midst of our heartache.

God of light and hope,

Give us peace instead of resentment.

Give us You instead of just a Christmas card image of You.

And, if it is wise,
give it to us sooner rather than later.

Gratefully we pray,
Amen.

♪ Hymn: Silent Night.....pg 7 (154)

✦ coda & Blessing

The Christmas story is full of hard times. There's the loss of dreams, trust, family, jobs, and a home, but it's also about hope, peace, joy, & love.

That's why we celebrate. In the midst of life God comes; present in ways that we can't imagine.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
the love of God

and the companionship of the Holy Spirit
be with you all.

Amen.



F Peter - Gods hope

1. In the bleak mid-winter, fro-s ty wind made moan;
2. Our God, heaven can-not hold him, nor earth sus-tain;
3. An-gels and arch-an-gels may have gath-ered there,
4. What can I give him, poor as I am?

earth stood hard as i-ron, wa-ter like a stone;
heaven and earth shall wel-come him when he comes to reign:
cher-u-bim and ser-a-phem thron-ged the air;
If I were a shep-herd, I would bring a lamb;

snow had fall-en, snow on snow, snow on snow,
in the bleak mid-win-ter a sta-ble place suf-ficed the
but his mo-ther on-ly, in her maid-en bliss,
if I were a Wise Man, I would do my part; yet

in the bleak mid-win-ter, long a-go.
Lord God in-car-nate, Je-sus Christ.
wor-shipped the Be-lov-ed a kiss.
what I can I give him - give my heart.

Words: Christina G. Rossetti (1830-1894) Music: Gustav T. Holst (1874-1934)

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

1 Lo, how a rose e'er bloom - ing From ten - der stem hath
 2 I - sa - iah 'twas fore - told it, The rose I have in
 3 This flow'r, whose fra - grance ten - der With sweet - ness fills the
 4 O Sav - ior, child of Mar - y, Who felt our hu - man

sprung! Of Jes - se's lin - eage com - ing As proph - ets long have
 mind; With Mar - y we be - hold it, The vir - gin moth - er
 air, Dis - pels with glo - rious splen - dor The dark - ness ev - 'ry -
 woe; O Sav - ior, King of glo - ry, Who dost our weak - ness

sung, It came, a flow - 'ret bright, A - mid the
 kind. To show God's love a - right, She bore to
 where. True man, yet ver - y God, From sin and
 know: Bring us at length we pray To the bright

cold of win - ter, When half - spent was the night.
 us a Sav - ior, When half - spent was the night.
 death He saves us And light - ens ev - 'ry load.
 courts of heav - en, And to the end - less day.

Text: German, 16th cent., sts. 1-2, 4; Friedrich L. C. Layritz, 1808-59, st. 3;
 tr. Theodore Baker, 1851-1934, sts. 1-2, alt.; tr. Harriet R. K. Spaeth, 1845-1925, st. 3;
 tr. John C. Mattes, 1876-1948, st. 4

ES IST EIN ROS (Rhythmic)
 76 76 6 76

Tune: *Alte Catholische Geistliche Kirchengesang*, Köln, 1599; setting: Michael Praetorius, 1571-1621

Text and music: Public domain

Ev. 11:1-2; Matt. 1:20-21; Heb. 2:14-15; Luke 2:1-18

Silent Night

1. Si - lent night! ho - ly night! All is calm,
 2. Si - lent night! ho - ly night! Shep - herds quake
 3. Si - lent night! ho - ly night! Son of God,

all is bright round yon vir - gin moth - er and child,
 at the sight: glo - ries stream from heav - en a - far,
 love's pure light ra - diant beams from thy ho - ly face,

ho - ly in - fant so ten - der and mild, sleep in heav - en - ly
 heav - en - ly hosts sing "Hal - le - lu - jah, Christ, the Sav - iour is
 with the dawn of re - deem - ing grace, Je - sus, Lord, at thy

peace; sleep in heav - en - ly peace.
 born! Christ, the Sav - iour is born!"
 birth, Je - sus, Lord, at thy birth.

Words: German, Joseph Mohr (1792-1848), translation, John Freeman Young (1820-1885)
 Music: Franz Gruber (1787-1863)