

The United Church of Canada
Lennoxville United Church

St Francis Manoir & Grace Village & Manoir Stanstead

A service of Advent meditation for at home

December 2021: Christmas

Grounding Prayer

(Take a deep breath, center yourself within the love of God)

God, You are present, may I/we be transformed by this encounter.

Opening Prayer:

Gracious God, you guided the holy family to Bethlehem, refugees who had been turned away from hospitality, yet found shelter in a lowly stable. We come to you with the same humility, despite our baggage and uncertainty about what lies ahead. You welcome us into your sanctuary, reminding us that we are loved. We come to you within our human frailty, just as Jesus entered the world as an infant, guarded by shepherds and extolled by angels. We are strengthened by your presence today, in the week that lies ahead and throughout our lives. Amen.

Advent Wreath & Lighting the Christmas Candle

Wonder. Whisper. Wait. Waken. Wonder. Whisper. Wait. Waken. (one candle is lit) With the wise ones...

we wonder. (one candle is lit) With the shepherds...

we whisper. (one candle is lit) With Mary and Joseph...

we wait. (one candle is lit) With the Christ child...

we waken! With all who come to the stable,

no matter who we are, no matter where we come from,

no matter where we're heading... we celebrate Christ's light, born again into the world! Glory in excelsis deo!

Glory to God in the highest! Alleluia. Alleluia! ALLELUIA!

Hymn: A Candle is Burning (VU6) (tune Away in a Manger)

We honour Messiah with Christ-candle's flame.

Our Christmas Eve candles glad tidings proclaim.

O come, all you faithful, rejoice in this night,

As God comes among us, the Christian's true light.

Prayer of Illumination:

Open our hearts, O God. Open our eyes. Open our lives. As we hear the scripture today and as we see the message acted out, open us to the message of Christmas. Help us to live that message all year.

Amen.

A Reading from the Gospel of Luke 2:1-20

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 Savior, 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 favors!”

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.

The Living Word, I listen with my heart, my mind and my spirit.

Prayers of the People:

Compassionate God, I humbly come before you trusting in your deep love for all your children, and your deep love for me. I thank you for your gifts in my life (pause to reflect on your blessings). I am faced with challenges and struggles, and so I ask for your courage and strength (pause and reflect on your concerns). I know that you hear me when I call, and I ask that you remind me that you are with me in the challenges and joys of living. Inspire me with your love and empower me with your hope. I pray using the words Jesus gave to his disciples;

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your Name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Blessing & Commissioning

May the God of wonder, God of light, God of soaring majesty and humble simplicity lead us on our journey in this world. May God proceed into our hearts, reminding us of God’s love for us as revealed by Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayers by:

OP: Aaron Palmer, Gathering A/C/E 2014-2015 (Year B), 37.

AWL: Richard Bott, Gathering A/C/E 2014-2015 (Year B), 61-62.

PI: Beth W Johnston, Gathering A/C/E 2014-2015 (Year B), 30.

BC: Gill Le Fevre, Gathering A/C/E 2020-2021 (Year B), 39.