

BETHANY UNITED CHURCH

OF THE EAST DISTRICT, NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR CONFERENCE

Worship led by: Explorer's

Organist: Leslie Forward - **Supply Organists** - Sharon Dean, Ruth Davidge, Louise Drover

Caretaker: Wayne Parsons **Secretary:** Lisa Butt

Clergy: Rev. Beverly (Youth & Christian Education) & Rev. Stephen (Worship & Pastoral Care)

Vesper Service, December 20th 7:00pm

Musical Prelude

(During the musical prelude, lights are dimmed.)

Processional Hymn: "Hope is a Star" VU 7

(During the singing of his hymn, participants come forward to the choir pews. When all are in, lights come on and candles are extinguished.)

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship:

L: Come, children of God, for tonight is a night of prayer and celebration!

Come from near, or come from far!

Come with joy and thanksgiving: come with anxiety and need!

Come as you are, for God is here to welcome you!

P: We come with anticipation, knowing God is here, for tonight is a night of prayer and celebration!

Opening Prayer:

L: Let us join before God in prayer. Let us pray:

All: O Giving God, may we know your loving embrace this night.

L: In each hymn we sing, may we experience your Song of love.

With each prayer we offer, may we know you are listening with compassion, understanding, wisdom and power.

In each Word we hear, may we receive your guidance, inspiration and blessing.

All: O Giving God, may we know your loving embrace this night.

Amen.

Hymn: "I Am the Light of the World" VU 87

(At the end of the hymn, lights are dimmed.)

Scripture Readings:

Isaiah 60: 1-3, 18-19

L: A reading from the book of the prophet, Isaiah.

"Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Violence shall no more be heard in your land, devastation or destruction within your borders; you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise. The sun shall no longer be your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you by night; but the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory."

The Word of the LORD

P: Thanks be to God!

Matthew 5: 1-2, 14-16

L: A reading from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew, reading from Chapter 5.
“When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:
‘You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.’ “

Litany of Candle-Lighting

Introduction:

L: Tonight is a night of prayer and celebration. In the name of Christ, who is the Baby, Jesus, born in Bethlehem, and who is the Light of the World, we light candles.
May each flame remind us of the Light of God in Christ, shining into any darkness.
May each flame fill us with the warmth of God’s loving embrace.
May each flame rekindle in us a desire to share God’s Light in the world.

Candles of Hope:

L: Tonight is a night of prayer. We light this candle, a Candle of Hope, as we pray for those who have no hope. We pray for people without houses or homes. Without jobs or prospects. We pray for people who feel discouraged and downtrodden, who feel they have nowhere to turn, and whose hearts are filled with despair. (*Light candle*)

All: May God in Christ bring Hope

L: Tonight is also a night of celebration. We light this candle, a Candle of Hope, as we celebrate those who live in hope. We celebrate with people who look forward to each new day, and who dream happily about what tomorrow might bring. We celebrate the Hope of the Baby, Jesus, born in Bethlehem: the hope that comes from knowing that, for each new day and tomorrow, God is with us! We are not alone! Thanks be to God! (*Light candle*)

Candles of Peace:

L: Tonight is a night of prayer. We light this candle, a Candle of Peace, as we pray for those who have no peace. We pray for people who fall asleep with the sound of gunfire outside their doors or angry shouts over their heads. We pray for people who live each moment in fear. (*Light Candle*)

All: May God in Christ bring Peace.

L: Tonight is also a night of celebration. We light this candle, a Candle of Peace, as we celebrate those who live in peace. We celebrate with families who work, eat, and play together, with world leaders who commit themselves to dialogue, and with all who listen in love and understanding when disagreements occur. We celebrate the Peace of the Baby, Jesus, born in Bethlehem: the peace which we experience when we follow Christ’s Way of compassion and justice. (*Light candle*)

All: We give God thanks for Peace.

Candles of Joy:

L: Tonight is a night of prayer. We light this candle, a Candle of Joy, as we pray for those who have no joy. We pray for people who were never given a party, or even a work of congratulation of praise. We pray for people whose lives are so filled with struggle, suffering and pain, that they

feel unable to celebrate. (*Light candle*)

All: May God in Christ bring Joy.

L: Tonight is also a night of celebration. We light this candle, a Candle of Joy, as we celebrate those live in joy. We celebrate with children who send and receive party invitations, with world leaders who sign agreements and accomplish goals, with parents and grandparents who joyously welcome a newborn baby. We celebrate the Joy of the Baby, Jesus, born in Bethlehem: the joy of knowing that, with God, life is full, happy, and eternal! (*Light candle*)

All: We give God thanks for Joy.

Candles of Love:

L: Tonight is a night of prayer. We light this candle, a Candle of Love, as we pray for those who share no love. We pray for people who live without comfortable beds or warm hugs and kisses goodnight, without ever having been held or cherished. We pray for those who believe that no one cares, and who are so hardened that they feel unable to care for others. (*Light Candle*)

All: May God in Christ bring Love.

L: Tonight is also a night of celebration. We light this candle, a Candle of Love, as we celebrate those who live in love. We celebrate with young people who feel the tingles of first love, with couples whose love has withstood the ebb and flow of years together, and with friends who listen through both laughter and tears. We celebrate the love shared within families of all forms. We celebrate the Love of the Baby, Jesus, born in Bethlehem: the love of God. Because of Jesus, we know how completely God loves us. Because of Jesus, we are inspired to love in return. (*Light candle*)

All: We give God thanks for Love.

Singing: " Away in a Manger" - all participants

Call to offer our Gifts to God:

L: In thanksgiving, prayer and celebration of ALL that God has given through the Baby, Jesus, born in Bethlehem, let us give in return. May we give with generous and faithful hearts, trusting that God will use our gifts to share Christ's light with the world.

Offertory Hymn: " A Candle is Burning" VU 6 (*For the hymn and prayer, lights are turned on*)

Offertory Prayer:

L: Let us share together in the offertory prayer. Let us pray.

All: We share these gifts, O God, as a reflection of our humble faith. May you receive these gifts, and guide their use. Empowered by your Spirit, may your servants use them to share with others the Light of your Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. We ask your blessing in Jesus' name, saying together: " Our Father, who are in heaven, hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy 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, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen."

Hymn: "Silent Night" VU 67

(*During the prelude for this hymn, lights are dimmed and the congregation is asked to please move into a circle surrounding the pews. Then, as the hymn is sung, we will all light our candles. When passing the flame, please remember to hold all lit candles vertically, and to tip unlit candles only.*)

Blessing and Sending Forth

L: Tonight has been a night of prayer and celebration.

May the prayers and celebrations continue, as we share God's Presence with the world!

Let us go forth with hope, peace, joy and love,

and with the blessing of God, Creator, Christ and Spirit!

All: Amen!

Closing Hymn: "Joy to the World" VU 59 (*For this hymn, lights are turned on*)