



An Affirming Congregation of The United Church of Canada

2023 December 31

Christmas 1



When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone,
when the kings and shepherds have found their way home,
the work of Christmas is begun!

Welcome and Inclusion

We open our hearts and our church family to all people in our community regardless of gender identity, differing abilities, ethnicity, economic circumstances, sexual orientation, or age. Many people's lives continue to be devastated by hatred, prejudice, and inequality, therefore we stand with those who are adversely affected by injustice, alienation and oppression.

Welcome to Robertson-Wesley

Please know that in the eyes of God you already belong here and you are welcome to participate in any of the activities of the congregation.

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is Treaty 6 territory, a traditional meeting ground for Indigenous peoples. We acknowledge the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 4, who are of mixed Indigenous & European heritage.

ACCESSIBILITY

There is an elevator located inside the building with the glass door entrance.

Access ramps can be found: inside leading from the lobby to the sanctuary and outside at the rear of the building, leading from the parking lot.

There are accessible washrooms on each floor located near the elevator.



For hearing assistance download the Listen Everywhere app on your cell phone and connect to the R-W network by scanning this QR code. Please bring your own headphones to listen on.

Classic hearing assists headsets are still available from the ushers.

Large print worship bulletins, and hymn books are available from the ushers.

Service animals are welcome, except where food is prepared.

We commit to make R-W a comfortable space for people with cognitive impairment. If you require accommodations related to cognitive functioning please contact the office.

BABY/ CHILDREN'S AMENITIES

People can breastfeed anywhere in the building, should you want more privacy there is designated nursing space in the Millson room, located by the grand piano. Baby changing tables are installed in all washrooms. If you wish to use it, a children's activity centre is set up in the Chapel. There are also activity books available for children. Please ask the usher.

INFORMATION

The ushers located at the entrances are here to help should you have any questions. More information about the church and church activities can be found in the pamphlet racks outside Memorial Hall.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Please do not leave valuables unattended anywhere in the church.



10209 123 St, Edmonton T5N 1N3 780-482-1587
mail@rwuc.org www.rwuc.org

Friends in Christ

Announcements at 10:15 AM

Prelude: *Variations on "Come Your Hearts and Voices Raising,"* Trad.

German Carol melody arr. by Raymond Haan

Dr. Allan Bevan, organ

Embracing Our Spirit

Opening Prayer:

We look forward to the New Year with enthusiasm, loving God.

You know the talents and skills we are resolved to use for good; you will encourage us to use them.

We look forward to the New Year with confidence, loving God.

You have been with us in the hard times and the joys of this past year; we know you will be with us in the year that is to come.

We look forward to the New Year with anticipation, loving God.

We cannot know what the New Year has in store, loving God, but we believe that in all the changes and chances of life you will be a strength to us.

We look forward to the New Year with faith, loving God.

There will be failures, there will be successes.

There will be disappointments, there will be accomplishments.

And the Way of Jesus Christ will be a pattern and an inspiration to us.

(silent reflection)

Words of Assurance:

There may be times when we will forget you in this coming year, O God,

but we know you will not forget us. In prayer and in the reading of scripture, you will be there for us. In the people of this faith community, you will be there for us.

We will respond to your call to faithful action. We will receive your peace, the peace that goes beyond all understanding.

Thanks be to God. Amen.¹

Hymn: *The First Nowell*

Voices United 91

**The first Nowell the angel did say
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
in fields where they lay a-keeping their sheep
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
born is the King of Israel.**

**They looked up and saw a star,
shining in the east, beyond them far;
and to the earth it gave great light,
and so it continued both day and night.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
born is the King of Israel.**

¹ Written by David Sparks, *Gathering*, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany, 2012/13, page 34. Used with permission.

**And by the light of that same star
three wise men came from country far;
to seek for a king was their intent,
and to follow the star wherever it went.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
born is the King of Israel.**

**This star drew nigh to the northwest,
o're Bethlehem it took its rest,
and there it did both stop and stay,
right over the place where Jesus lay.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
born is the King of Israel.**

**Then entered in those wise men three,
full reverently upon their knee,
and offered there in his presence,
their gold and myrrh and frankincense.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
born is the King of Israel.**

**Then let us all with one accord
sing praises to our heavenly Lord,
that hath made heaven and earth of nought,
and with his blood our life hath brought.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
born is the King of Israel.**

Coming into God's Presence

Rev. Karen Bridges

Lighting Christ Candle:

This one candle is powerful. Its fragile flame is worth great pomp and circumstance. This light heralds the coming of Christ. This candle's tiny glow declares the birth of our Saviour, Jesus, the Son of God. Amid the Christmas lights, their glitter and twinkle, shines this light, a welcome to our God who came to earth for you and me. This one candle is powerful. It is the candle of Christ.

God's Holy Word

Prayer of Illumination:

The scriptures proclaim to us the message of your light. Loving and Ever-Present God, shine your light on us so that we may discover and know your will for our lives. **Amen.**²

² Written by Beth W Johnston, **Gathering**, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany 2020/2021, p. 42. Used with permission.

Luke 2:22-40 • Jesus is presented in the temple.

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every first born male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.” Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and what the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God saying, “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.” And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed - and a sword will pierce your own soul too.” There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.

May we hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

Thanks be to God.

Duet: *In the Bleak Midwinter*, arr. by Craig Courtney

Jacqueline Hernandez and Raydene Koch, soloists

Sermon: Acting in faith & being present

Rev. Karen Bridges

Hymn: *Song of Simeon*

Voices United p. 903

**Lord, God, you now have set your servant free
to go in peace as promised in your word;
my eyes have seen the Saviour, Christ the Lord,
prepared by you for all the world to see,
to shine on nations trapped in darkest night,
the glory of your people and their light.**

Grateful Response

Pastoral Prayers

Lord's Prayer:

Rev. Karen Bridges

Voices United p. 921

**Our Creator, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
thy kin-dom 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 that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kin-dom and the power and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

Offering:

Your donations support R-W Church programs and operations, as well as outreach projects and programs in the city and around the world.



You can donate by e-transfer to pay@rwuc.org, cheque, debit/credit by speaking to an usher, pre-authorized remittance, or PayPal by scanning the QR code. Tax receipts are issued for donations over \$20 if your name and address are provided.

Offertory Carol: *In the Bleak Midwinter*

Voices United 55 v.4

**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.**

Prayer of Gratitude:

We bring these gifts - the work of our hands, our hearts, our lives. We pray that they may be used to bring the hope of Jesus Christ to our world in this time and place. Your kin-dom come, your will be done, now and always. Amen.³

Hymn: *Arise, Your Light Is Come*

Voices United 79

**Arise, your light is come!
The Spirit's call obey;
show forth the glory of your God,
which shines on you today.**

**Arise, your light is come!
Fling wide the prison door;
proclaim the captive's liberty,
good tidings to the poor.**

**Arise, your light is come!
All you in sorrow born,
bind up the brokenhearted ones
and comfort those who mourn.**

³ Written by Frances Flook, *Gathering*, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany, 2012/2013, page 41. Used with permission.

**Arise, your light is come!
 The mountains burst in song!
 Rise up like eagles on the wing;
 God's power will make us strong.**

Commissioning:

Let us receive God's grace and be open to God's vision for us for this new year. May the love of God, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the presence of Jesus be with you all. **Amen.**⁴

Postlude: *Variations on "Puer Nobis,"* arr. by David Johnson Dr. Allan Bevan, organ

Questions for Reflection:

How does your faith give you the strength to speak the truth in love?

R-W Report

Next Sunday

Sunday, Jan 7, 2024

Epiphany, Life Passages

Children & Youth: Children begin in the sanctuary, then go to Kids' Church. Youth meet in the youth room at the beginning of the service.

Mark 2:1-22 • Jesus heals and teaches.

Sermon: Needs Emerge

Jesus has just begun his public ministry and from the start it moves at a frenetic pace, reflecting the urgency of his message of God's new world being at hand. Even as the words of his first Sabbath synagogue teaching are reverberating, it becomes apparent that a major need of those who hear him is for healing. The healing called for is profound and multifaceted- spiritual, physical and social. When have you made an intentional new beginning? Was what emerged what you had expected? As Robertson-Wesley United Church begins this year with the intention of being "good news" in our community and world, what urgent needs might be waiting for us as a congregation to meet?

Music: Dr. Allan Bevan, organist, Robertson-Wesley Choir

WEEK AT A GLANCE

Sun Dec 31	Sunday Worship - Sanctuary & Online	10:30 am
	Fellowship - Memorial Hall	11:45 am
Mon Jan 1	Church Closed	
Tues Jan 2	Scripture Reflections - Club Room & Zoom	12:00 pm
Wed Jan 3	Canterbury Worship - Away	10:30 am

ON THE HORIZON

Sun Jan 7	Sunday Worship - Sanctuary & Online	10:30 am
	Youth Discussion - Youth Room	10:30 am
	Kids' Church - Air Room	10:45 am
	Fellowship - Memorial Hall	11:45 am
Mon Jan 8	Spirited Art Studio - Art Studio	7:00 pm
Tues Jan 9	Scripture Reflections - Club Room & Zoom	12:00 pm
	Property Committee Meeting - Room 11	1:00 pm
	UCW - Memorial Hall	1:30 pm

⁴ Written by Sandra Litt, **Gathering**, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany, 2020/2021, page 40. Used with permission.

	DEAP - Club Room	5:30 pm
	Finance Meeting - Club Room	7:00 pm
	Search Team Meeting - Library	7:00 pm
Wed Jan 10	Spirited Art Studio - Art Studio	1:30 pm
	R-W Choir Rehearsal - Sanctuary/Lower Hall	7:30 pm
Thurs Jan 11	Men's Group - Memorial Hall	10:00 am
	Nova Bells - Lower Hall	5:15 pm
	R-W Ringers - Lower Hall	6:45 pm
Sat Jan 13	Community Dinner - Memorial Hall	5:00 pm

R-W News & Notes

SPIRITED ART STUDIO

The Spirited Art Studio will take a Christmas break from **Dec 25 - Jan 4** and will resume **January 8**.

CHRISTMAS BREAK

The Church will be closed from **December 25** to **January 1**, with the exception of Sunday Worship on **December 31**.

MEN'S GROUP

The Robertson-Wesley Men's Group is having its first meeting of 2024, on Thursday, **January 11th**; in Memorial Hall; from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. The agenda will consist of continued discussions as to finalize activities which will be undertaken by the group over the coming five months. All are welcome. Bring snacks if available - coffee will be provided. Any questions call Louis Berlinguette at 780-910-4486.

Worship Notes

The season of Christmas lasts for 12 days after Jesus is born and ends on Epiphany Sunday. During this time we celebrate the gift of love which comes to us in Jesus of Nazareth. In this time we feel the incarnate love of God found in the vulnerability of a child. Did you know that "Jesus" is a Greek form of the Hebrew name "Joshua" or "Jeshua" which means "God saves." When Jesus was born, the people of faith were waiting for a leader to bring justice and peace. At this time in our history we too seek justice and peace. May the birth of Jesus remind us that we need to be part of the change that we seek in this world.

Cover Image

The cover image was taken by Rev. Karen Bridges Dec 10, 2023 at the Pageant. The words come from the hymn "I Am the Light of the World" in Voices United 87. Words written by Jim Strathdee 1967.

Minister of Faith Development and Intergenerational Ministry: Vacant

Minister of Social Justice and Outreach: Vacant

Lead Minister of Congregation and Community Development: Rev. Karen Bridges

Bridging Minister: Rev. Dirk Jessen

Music Director: Dr. Allan Bevan

Office Administrator: Elyse Munro

Facilities Manager: Brad Campbell

Financial Manager: Garth van Herwaarden