



Robertson - Wesley

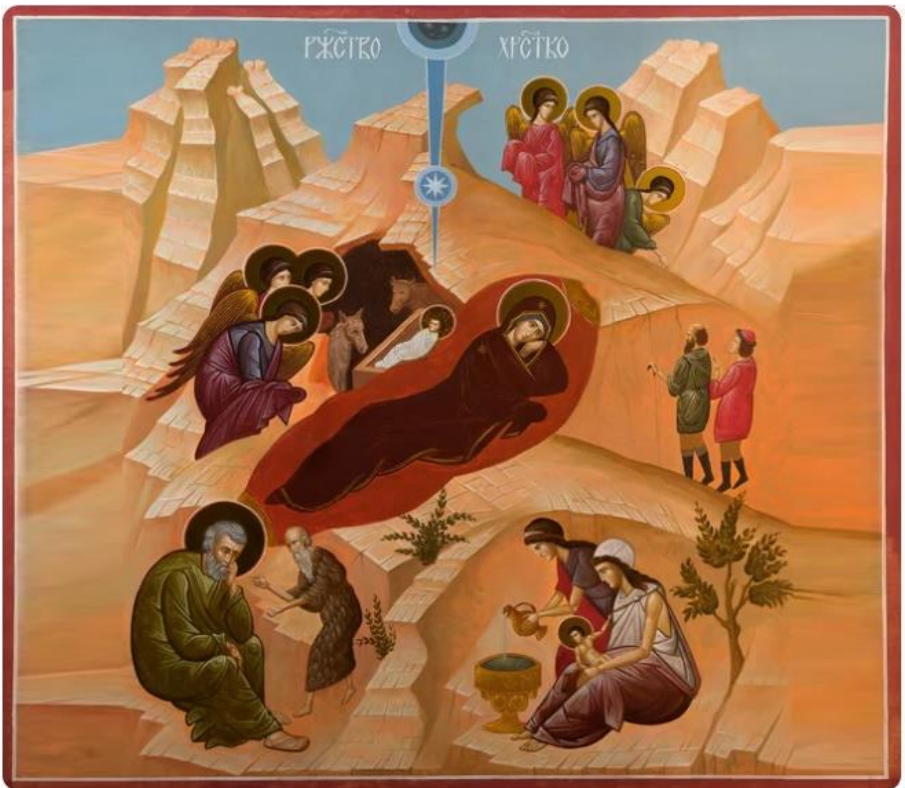
UNITED CHURCH *Spirited*

An Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Canada

2023 December 24

Christmas Eve

10:00 PM



Welcome and Inclusion

We open our hearts and our church family to all people in our community regardless of economic circumstances, sexual orientation, age, gender identity, differing abilities, or ethnicity.

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 center 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

Prelude: *Pastorale* from the “Christmas Concerto”, by Arcangelo Corelli
Beth Levia, oboe; Dr. Allan Bevan, organ

Greeting:

I greet you in the name of God:
Creator, Love Incarnate, and Spirit of Life.
May the hope, peace, joy and love of Christ be with you.
And also with you.¹

Introit: *Peace, Peace*, by Rick and Sylvia Powell arr. by Fred Bock
Choir of Robertson-Wesley; Beth Levia, oboe

Call to Worship:

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth, peace and goodwill toward all.
**For out of God’s own being,
Jesus has come to bring light and love to all people.**
Jesus is Emmanuel, God-with-us,
come to gather our tears and laughter
our work and our play, into God’s loving embrace.
**Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth, peace and goodwill toward all.**²

Carol: *O Come, All Ye Faithful* *Voices United 60*

**O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem:
come and behold him, born the King of angels;
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.**

**God of God, light of light,
lo, he abhors not the virgin’s womb;
very God, begotten, not created:
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.**

**Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;
glory to God in the highest:
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.**

¹ **Celebrate God’s Presence**, United Church of Canada Publishing House, Copyright 2000, Used with permission, page 111.

² Tona Community, Glasgow Scotland, **Celebrate God’s Presence**, United Church of Canada Publishing House, Copyright 2000, Used with permission, page 112.

**See how the shepherds summoned to his cradle,
leaving their flocks, draw nigh with lowly fear;
we too will thither bend our joyful footsteps;
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.**

**Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory given;
word of the Father, now in flesh appearing:
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.**

Advent Wreath Lighting:

This one candle is powerful. Its fragile flame is worth great celebration. This candle's tiny glow declares the birth of our saviour, Jesus. 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.³

Trio: *There Is No Rose*, by Benjamin Britten

Jacqueline Hernandez, Raydene Koch, Claire Rolheiser, soloists

Scripture: Luke 2:1-7

Lesley Verdin

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.

Anthem: *Away in a Manger*, arr. by Walter Pelz

Choir of Robertson-Wesley; Beth Levia, oboe

Reflection: Angels

Rev. Dirk Jessen

Scripture: Luke 2:8-14

Paul Verdin

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were

³ Written by **Elaine Bidgood Sveet**, *First Lutheran, Rugby and Leeds, North Dakota, Gathering*, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany 2023/24, p. 34. Used with permission.

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 Saviour, 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 God favours!”

Carol: *Angels We Have Heard On High*

Voices United 38

**Angels we have heard on high
sweetly singing o'er the plains,
and the mountains in reply,
echoing their joyous strains.
Glo-ria in excelsis Deo!
Glo-ria in excelsis Deo!**

**Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
which inspire your heavenly song?
Glo-ria in excelsis Deo!
Glo-ria in excelsis Deo!**

**Come to Bethlehem and see
Christ whose birth the angels sing;
come, adore on bended knee
Christ, the Lord, the newborn King.
Glo-ria in excelsis Deo!
Glo-ria in excelsis Deo!**

**See him in a manger laid,
whom the choirs of angels praise;
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid,
while our hearts in love we raise.
Glo-ria in excelsis Deo!
Glo-ria in excelsis Deo!**

Reflection: Shepherds?!

Rev. Dirk Jessen

Scripture: Luke 2:15-20

Lesley Verdin

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 they had been told 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.

Carol: *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly*

Voices United 58

**Infant holy, infant lowly,
for his bed a cattle-stall;
oxen lowing, little knowing
Christ the babe is Lord of all.
Swift are winging angels singing,
noels ringing, tidings bringing:
Christ the babe is born for all,
Christ the babe is born for all.**

**Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping
vigil till the morning new
saw the glory, heard the story,
tidings of a gospel true.**

**Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow,
praises voicing, greet the morrow:
Christ the babe was born for you,
Christ the babe was born for you.**

Prayer:

**O God of angel song,
shepherd surprise, stable warmth, and birthing cry:
dawn in our darkness, sing in our silence,
surprise us with wonder and with joy this holy season.
O come to us, Emmanuel.⁴**

Scripture: Matthew 2:1-8

Brian Webb

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, astrologers from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage. When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: And you, Bethlehem of Judea, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel." Then Herod secretly called for the astrologers and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to

⁴ Thomas Harding, found in **Celebrate God's Presence**, United Church of Canada Publishing House, Copyright 2000, Used with permission. page 114.

Bethlehem saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so I may also go and pay him homage.”

Reflection: Astrologers? Wise Ones? Kings?

Rev. Dirk Jessen

Scripture: Matthew 2:9-12

Brian Webb

When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary, his mother; and then knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Carol: *The First Nowell*

Voices United 91 vv. 1-3, 5

**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.**

**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.**

**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.**

Pastoral Prayer:

Rev. Dirk Jessen

O Holy Child of Bethlehem,
be born in us today.

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be 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.**

Grateful Response

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 at the end of the year for donations over \$20 if your name and address are provided.



Offertory Music: *Pastoral Symphony*, by G. F. Handel arr. by James Boeringer
Beth Levia, oboe; Dr. Allan Bevan, organ

Offertory Hymn: *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.**

Offering Prayer:

**Generous God, may these gifts open others
to the gifts you give this Christmas:
the gift of radiant hope;
the gift of peace that passes all understanding;
the gift of joy which knows no bounds;
the love that abides with us always.
With these gifts, we bring ourselves, O God,
in response to the greatest gift of all—
the Babe of Bethlehem. Amen.⁵**

⁵ David Sparks, found in *Celebrate God's Presence*, United Church of Canada Publishing House, Copyright 2000, Used with permission. page 116.

Sharing Candle to Candle the Light of Christ

Sending Carol: *Silent Night*

Voices United 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.

Benediction:

Go now, out into the winter world, to continue the celebration of Christmas. As you go, may your night's rest be full and restorative; may tomorrow's activities bring you the joy of Christmas; may you know and share the deep meaning of Christmas, tonight, tomorrow, and every day of your lives.

Christ is born! Thanks be to God! Amen!⁶

Postlude: *Angelus ad Virginem*, Trad. Medieval Carol arr. by John Fries

Beth Levia, oboe; Dr. Allan Bevan, organ

*As hearts are joined together on this holy night,
may each one be touched by the peace and joy
of the wondrous birth.*

⁶ Written by Bob Root, **Gathering**, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany 2016/17/21, p. 36. Used with permission.

Worship Notes

Thank you to Robertson-Wesley Choir, soloists Claire Rolheiser, Jacqueline Hernandez, Raydene Koch, percussionist David Kelmer, and Beth Levia, oboe for their musical leadership this evening.

The cover image is a Nativity Icon, which reveals Orthodox Christian Theology.

Mary and Jesus: In the middle of the nativity icon are Mary the central, and disproportionately large figure, and Jesus as a baby in a manger wrapped in swaddling clothes. Swaddling clothes represent the complete submission of Christ to the physical conditions governing the human race. Further, his swaddling bands resemble grave clothes and the manger looks very much like a casket, again emphasizing Jesus' mortality.

Setting: The background is an inhospitable world, the world since the expulsion from Paradise. Nonetheless, the earth provides Jesus and Mary with a cave for safety. The animals near the Christ Child watch Him in silent wonder, providing warmth with their breath. Specifically, the ox and the ass are from an Old Testament prophecy: "The ox knows his owner, and the donkey his master" (Isaiah 1:3). A further Old Testament prophecy is represented by the "Jesse Tree" (bottom right) which states: "A shoot shall sprout from the stump (tree) of Jesse and from his roots a bud shall blossom. The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him." (Isaiah 11:1-2). Jesse is the father of the legendary King David who, according to the story told in Luke's Gospel is an ancestor of Jesus' earthly father, Joseph and the reason that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, "the City of David."

Star: The sky salutes Him with a star, the light of wisdom. It also alludes to the magi, foreigners practicing a foreign religion, who followed a star to find and worship Jesus.

Angels: The angels are shown glorifying God, ministering to Jesus and also announcing the Good News to the shepherds.

Women: The women on the bottom right are midwives. This indicates that Jesus was born in the normal way and would have needed washing, as a regular human baby would. The wash basin also resembles a baptismal font.

Joseph: The Righteous Joseph (bottom left) is depicted away from Jesus and the Mother of God. This is because he was not involved in the miracle of the Incarnation of the Son of God, but he was the protector of Mary and Jesus. The old man speaking to him represents the devil bringing new doubts to Joseph. The devil suggests that if the infant were truly divine He would not have been born in the human way with human vulnerability. In the person of Joseph, the icon discloses not only his personal drama, but the drama of all humankind, the difficulty of accepting that which is beyond reason, the Incarnation of God. Still, the halo that surrounds Joseph's head designates him as holy.

Adapted by Rev. Dirk from Orthodox Wiki, December 2023.

Cover Image

Cover image is from dreamstime.com

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

Welcome to Robertson-Wesley

If you would like you can fill out this page, tear it off, and place it in the offering plates at the exits. This form is also available to fill out online at rwuc.org/infocard

Today's Date: _____

Contact Information:

Name: _____

Preferred gender pronouns: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone #: _____

Email: _____

I would like to subscribe to the email newsletter

Yes No

I am new in the community

I am a visitor

I am interested in speaking with a minister

I am considering making this my church

Please put in the offering plate. Thank you

