

◆ MELROSE UNITED CHURCH ◆

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◆ December 15, 2016 – 10:30 a.m. ◆

A Light in the December Darkness

MELROSE UNITED CHURCH
◆ Thursday, December 15, 2016 ◆
A LIGHT IN THE DECEMBER DARKNESS

Welcome to this time when we can, with others, acknowledge the “blue” feelings we have at Christmas time. For many who have lost a loved one, or who care for a loved one in distress, this is a time of sharp loneliness. For others, who have lost a relationship, health, a job, or had a financial setback it may be a time of pain, confusion, or fear. This is not a joyous season for everyone. Our prayer is that this time of quiet worship will be a healing blessing.

◆ **GATHERING** ◆

PRELUDE

WELCOME

OPENING HYMN – *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

1. *O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.*

Refrain:

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

2. *O come, O Rod of Jesse's stem,
from every foe deliver them
that trust your mighty power to save,
And give them victory o'er the grave. (Refrain)*
3. *O come, O key of David, come,
and open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery. (Refrain)*
4. *O come O Dayspring from on high
And cheer us by your drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadow put to flight. (Refrain)*

◆ THE SERVICE OF LIGHT ◆

One: Jesus Christ is the Light of the World

All: **A light no darkness can extinguish**

As the Christ Candle is lit we say together—Phos Hilaron—O gracious light
O gracious light, pure brightness of the Gracious God in heaven,
O Jesus Christ, holy and blessed!

Now as we come to the setting of the sun,
and our eyes behold the vesper light,
we sing your praises, O God: Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer.
You are worthy at all times to be sung by happy voices,
O Son of God, O Giver of life, and to be glorified through all the
worlds.

One: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Lighting of the Advent Candles (Hope, Peace, Joy)

1st Voice: We light these candles in thanksgiving for loved ones lost,
for past health and joy that now seems distant.

2nd Voice: We light these candles in prayer, that we will feel God's love
even though at this time we may feel sorrow.

3rd Voice: We light these candles in hope, for the promises of God yet
to be revealed.

All: **Amen.**

One: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe,
Creator of light and darkness.

In this holy season, when the sun's light is swallowed up
by the growing darkness of the night, you renew your promise
to reveal among us the splendour of your glory, enfleshed and
visible to us in Jesus Christ, your Son. Through the prophets you

teach us to hope for his reign of peace. Through the outpouring of his Spirit, you open our blindness to the glory of his presence. Strengthen us in our weakness. Support us in our often stumbling efforts to do your will and free our tongues to sing your praise. For to you all honour and blessing are due, now and for ever.

All: Amen.

◆ PROCLAMATION of the WORD ◆

The First Lesson

A Reading from the Book of Isaiah: 9: 2-7a

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onwards and for evermore.

One: The Word of God.

All: Thanks be to God.

Psalm 42 (Sung together)

*1. As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs after you,
you alone are my heart's desire and I long to worship you.
You alone are my strength, my shield,
to you alone may my spirit yield,
you alone are my heart's desire, and I long to worship you!*

2. *Day and night I cry, my heart is breaking tears my only food;
while my enemies jeer and taunt me,
saying: "Where is now your God?"
You alone are my strength, my shield,
to you alone may my spirit yield,
you alone are my heart's desire, and I long to worship you!*
3. *Why am I so sad, so troubled, why must suffering be so long?
I will hope in you, my God and saviour, praise you with a song!
You alone are my strength, my shield,
to you alone may my spirit yield,
you alone are my heart's desire, and I long to worship you!*

One: Gracious God, nights of distress
we sometimes forget the days of sun and joy.
Even when we do not know your presence,
preserve us from the darkness of despair.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

One: Jesus said, "I am the light of the world.
Those who follow me will not walk in darkness, but will have the
light of life."

All: Come, Lord Jesus, Come.

The Second Lesson:

A Reading from the Gospel according to John: 1: 1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was

not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the father's only begotten son, full of grace and truth.

One: The Gospel of Jesus Christ

All: Thanks be to God.

◆ LIGHTING OF CANDLES ◆

A Prayer for All Souls

All: Creator of all, we pray to you for those whom we love, but see no longer. Grant them your peace, let light perpetual shine upon them, and in your loving wisdom and almighty power, work in them the good purpose of your perfect will; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Those who wish to do so are invited to light a candle: the candle may be lit to remember a loved one, to symbolize a prayer offered for one's self or others, to offer a prayer for the healing of the world. You are invited to come forward to light the candles using the light from the Christ Candle.

A Hymn of Healing and Affirmation — *Dear Weaver of Our Lives' Design*

- 1. Dear weaver of our lives' design whose patterns all obey,
with skillful fingers gently guide
the sturdy threads that will survive
the tangle of our days, the tangle of our days.*
- 2. Take up the fabric of our lives with hands that gently hold;
bind in the ragged edge that care would sunder and that pain would tear,
and mend our ravelling souls, and mend our ravelling souls.*

3. *Let eyes that in the plainest cloth a hidden beauty see
discern in us our richest hues, show us the patterns we may use
to set our spirits free, to set our spirits free.*

A Reading: *Wild Geese*

by Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting –
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

Pastoral Litany

One: In the spirit of this season let us now confidently ask God for
what we need.

We pray, as well, for ourselves as we participate in whatever
way we can this Christmas.

All are invited to offer their prayers aloud or silently

One: God hear our Prayer

All: And in your love answer.

One: For our families and friends that they may know love and
peace and happiness.

All are invited to offer their prayers aloud or silently for families and friends

One: God hear our Prayer

All: And in your mercy answer.

One: For those we have loved who have died. For all the losses that we know, that all may be redeemed by your Easter promise.

All are invited to offer their prayers aloud or silently for those who have died

One: God hear our Prayer

All: And in your mercy answer.

One: For the peace proclaimed by the Christmas angels, to come throughout the whole world.

All are invited to offer their prayers aloud or silently for our region and world

One: God hear our Prayer

All: And in your mercy answer.

One: God of great compassion and love, listen to the prayers of these your people. Grant to all, especially all who are bereaved and saddened this Christmas, the blessing we ask in the name of Christ who taught us to pray together saying:

**All: 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, for ever and ever. Amen.**

◆ **GOING FORTH** ◆

Closing Hymn: *The Day Thou Gavest*

1. *The day thou gavest, Lord, is ended;
the darkness falls at thy behest;
to thee our morning hymns ascended;
thy praise shall hallow now our rest.*

2. *We thank thee that thy church, unsleeping
while earth rolls onward into light,
through all the world her watch is keeping,
and rests not now by day or night.*

3. *As o'er each continent and island
the dawn leads on another day,
the voice of prayer is never silent,
nor die the strains of praise away.*

4. *So be it, Lord; thy throne shall never,
like earth's proud empires, pass away.
Thy kingdom stands, and grows forever,
till all thy creatures own thy sway.*

Closing Prayer (*spoken together*)

**O Lord, support us all the day long,
until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes,
and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over,
and our work is done.**

**Then in your mercy, grant us a safe lodging and a holy rest,
and peace at the last; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Benediction:

One: May the Light of Christ shine through our deepest darkness,
and sustain us on our journey with faith, hope and love;
and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen**

Closing Song (sung together twice)

MV 214

*May God's sheltering wings,
her gathering wings protect you.
May God's nurturing arms,
her cradling arms sustain you,
and hold you in her love,
and hold her in her love.*

Service conducted by:
Margaret Duff, Alex Cann and Philip Gardner

Come and celebrate Christmas at Melrose

Saturday, December 24 -- Christmas Eve

**Family Worship at 7:00 pm;
Holy Communion at 10:30 pm**

Sunday, December 25 at 10:30 a.m.

**Christmas Day worship in the Church Parlour
led by Ted Lowrey, Shari Saunders & Carma McKay**