

**Mill Woods United Church
December 24, 2021, 7 pm
Christmas Eve**

Worship leader: Rev. Ian Kellogg

Musicians: Bryan LeGrow, Len Penner, Barb Kitagawa, Kitbielle Pasagui

PowerPoint: Elfrieda Penner

Livestreaming: Brian Sampson

Welcome – Ian Kellogg

Lighting of the Christ Candle – Cathy Bayly

as we sing – "Dream a Dream" (all verses) MV #158

Gathering Prayer

Carol: "In the Bleak Midwinter" VU #55

First reading: "God's Christmas Star" Part 1 (read by Kim Boyes)

Carol: "'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime" VU #71

Second reading: "God's Christmas Star" Part 2 (Kim Boyes)

Carol: "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" VU #48

Third reading: "God's Christmas Star" Part 3 (Kim Boyes)

Carol: "What Child is This?" VU #74

Reflecting on the readings: "The Best of the Year"

Carol: "Still, Still, Still" VU #47

Offering Prayer

Special Music: Kitbielle Pasagui

Prayers of the People (includes sung version of the Prayer of Jesus – Wendy's version)

Carol: "Joy the World" VU #59

Blessing

Carol: "Silent Night, Holy Night" VU #67

Extinguishing the candles -- Cathy Bayly

"In the Bleak Midwinter" VU #55 (alt.)

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
in the bleak midwinter, long ago.

Touched by love and wonder, words cannot express
How our hearts are changing, moved by tenderness.
Stand we now in silence, hushed by stars above
Light into the darkness, Holy, wondrous love

In the depths of wisdom, in the still of night,
Lies a moment waiting in our humble plight
May our love bring gladness, deep compassion show.
In the bleak midwinter, may we kindness know.

God's Christmas Star

*adapted from "The Jesus Storybook Bible" by Sally Lloyd-Jones, 2006, ZonderKidz,
adapted from Luke chapter 2 and Matthew 2*

First Reading

That first Christmas night, in amongst the other stars, suddenly a bright new star appeared. Of all the stars in the dark vaulted heavens, this one shone clearer. It blazed in the night and made the other stars look pale beside it.

God put it there when God's child was born – to be like a spotlight. Shining on this child. Lighting up the darkness. Showing people the way.

You see, God was like a new parent, one that couldn't keep quiet about this news. God had been waiting all these long years for this moment, and now wanted to tell everyone.

Second Reading

For the birth of this child, God pulled out all the stops. God had sent an angel to tell Mary the good news. God put a special star in the sky to show where the baby was.

And now God was going to send a big choir of angels to sing this happy song to the world: *Jesus is here! He's come! Go and see him. My little child.*

Now where would you send your splendid choir? To a big concert hall maybe? Or a palace perhaps? God sent his to a little hillside, outside a little town, in the middle of the night. God sent all those angels to sing for a raggedy old bunch of shepherds watching their sheep outside Bethlehem.

In those days, remember, people used to laugh at shepherds and say they were smelly and call them other rude names (which I can't possibly mention here). You see, people thought shepherds were nobodies, just scruffy old riff-raff.

But God must have thought shepherds were very important indeed, because they're the ones he chose to tell the good news to first.

That night some shepherds were out in the open fields, warming themselves by a campfire, when suddenly the sheep darted. They were frightened by something. The olive trees rustled. What was that ... A wing beat?

They turned around. Standing in front of them was a huge warrior of light, blazing in the darkness. "Don't be afraid of me!" the bright shining angel said. "I haven't come to hurt you. I've come to bring you happy news for everyone everywhere. Today, in David's town, in Bethlehem, God's child has been born! You can go and see the baby sleeping in a manger."

Third Reading

Behind the angel the shepherds saw a strange glowing cloud – except it wasn't a cloud, it was more angels... troops and troops of angels, armed with light! And they were singing a beautiful song: **"Glory to God! To God be Fame and Honor and all our Hoorays!"**

Then as quickly as they appeared, the angels left. The shepherds stamped out their fire, left their sheep, raced down the grassy hill, through the gates of Bethlehem, down the narrow cobble streets, through a courtyard, down some step, step, steps, past an inn, round a corner, through a hedge, until, at last, they reached... a tumbledown stable.

They caught their breath. Then quietly, they tiptoed inside. They knelt on the dirt floor. They had heard about this Promised Child and now he was here. Heaven's Son.

The Maker of the Stars. A baby sleeping in its mother's arms. This baby would be like that bright star shining in the sky that night. A Light to light up the whole world. Chasing away darkness. Helping people to see. And the darker the night got, the brighter the star would shine.