

# Fourth Sunday of Advent: Love

Wesley Uniting Church, Forrest  
19 December 2021 – 10:45 am

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## Gathering the People

**Prelude**

**Welcome & News**

**Acknowledgement of Country**

**Greeting:** May the peace of Holy One, Holy Three be with you all:  
**And also with you.**

**Call to worship**

Dorothy McRae-McMahon

Sounds like angel voices of hope,  
borne high in the winds of life,  
kindnesses earthed on unlikely city streets,  
and a clear moment of grace in a person passing by:  
**All these are heralds of a love yet to come.**

Touches of gentle care in the centre of stony harshness,  
and insights of wisdom in gatherings of humble people,  
ground claimed for justice in deserts of our apathy  
and laughter springing true, alongside moments of our tears:  
**All these are heralds of a love yet to come. Thanks be to God!**

**Introit:** *This is the Truth Sent From Above* (with slight alterations)  
*soloist Elsa Huber*

This is the truth sent from above  
The truth of God, the God of love;  
Therefore don't turn me from the door,  
But hearken all, both rich and poor.

For at this season of the year,  
Our blest redeemer did appear,  
And here did live, and here did preach  
And many thousands he did teach.

Thus he in love to us behaved,  
To show us how we must be saved;  
And if you want to know the way,  
Be pleased to hear what he did say.

Traditional English, arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958),

**Prayers of praise and confession: 'God with us' & 'Growing together'**  
John van de Laar

**Sing: TiS 316**

O little town of Bethlehem,  
how still we see you lie!  
Above your deep and dreamless sleep  
the silent stars go by;  
Yet in your dark streets shining  
the everlasting light,  
the hopes and fears of all the years  
are met in you tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary;  
and gathered all above,  
while mortals sleep the angels keep  
their watch of wondering love.  
O morning stars, together  
proclaim the holy birth,  
and praises sing to God the King  
and peace to all on earth.

How silently, how silently  
the wondrous gift is given!  
So God imparts to human hearts  
the blessings of his heaven.  
No ear may hear his coming;  
but in this world of sin,  
where meek souls will receive him, still  
the dear Christ enters in.

O holy child of Bethlehem,  
descend to us, we pray;  
cast out our sin and enter in,  
be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels  
their great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us,  
our Lord Immanuel.

English traditional, arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)  
Text by Phillips Brooks (1853-1893)  
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## **Waiting: Love**

**Sing: TiS 317** *singing what we're waiting for*

Love came down at Christmas,  
Love all lovely, Love divine;  
Love was born at Christmas,  
star and angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead,  
Love incarnate, Love divine;  
worship we our Jesus:  
but wherewith for sacred sign?

Love shall be our token,  
love be yours and love be mine,  
love to God and neighbours,  
love for please and gift and sign.

Reginald Morris (1886-1948)  
Text by Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)  
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## **Litany of the wreath : love**

In the beginning was the Word –  
spoken and breathed,  
a promise made and kept.

**Trust the good news –**

**God's promise is true!**

the Word was in the beginning,  
and through him all things come into being.

**Eternal and near at hand,**

**already and not yet,**

**God's promise is the foundation of all life.**

Trust in God!

Wait with faith, giving voice to Christ's love for all.

God sent a star to light the way to love,  
as we wait, may love lead us to God again.

*The word 'love' is hung*

## **Enter the Story**

### **From the prophets: Micah 5:1-5a**

Now you are walled around with a wall;  
siege is laid against us;  
with a rod they strike the ruler of Israel  
upon the cheek.

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,  
who are one of the little clans of Judah,  
from you shall come forth for me  
one who is to rule in Israel,  
whose origin is from of old,

from ancient days.  
Therefore he shall give them up until the time  
when she who is in labour has brought forth;  
then the rest of his kindred shall return  
to the people of Israel.  
And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD,  
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.  
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great  
to the ends of the earth;  
and he shall be the one of peace.

If the Assyrians come into our land  
and tread upon our soil,  
we will raise against them seven shepherds  
and eight installed as rulers.

**Anthem:** *People look East*

People look East. The time is near  
Of the crowning of the year.  
Make your house fair as you are able,  
Trim the hearth and set the table.  
People look East, and sing today:  
Love the Guest is on the way.

Furrows be glad. Though earth is bare,  
One more seed is planted there:  
Give up your strength to nourish,  
That in course the flower may flourish.  
People look East, and sing today:  
Love the Rose is on the way.

Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim  
One more light the bowl shall brim,  
Shining beyond the frosty weather,  
Bright as sun and moon together.  
People look East, and sing today:  
Love the Star is on the way.

Angels announce to man and beast  
Him who cometh from the East.  
Set every peak and valley humming  
With the Word, the Lord is coming.  
People look East and sing today:  
Love the Lord is on the way.

Besançon carol, arr. Barry Ferguson (b. 1942)

### **The Story: Matthew 1:18-25**

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and they shall name him Emmanuel',  
which means, 'God is with us.' When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

*Response:* Your Word, O Lord, is a lamp to my feet.  
**And a light to my path.**

### **Preaching**

### **Sing: TiS 305**

Let earth and heaven combine,  
their voices all agree,  
to praise in songs divine  
the incarnate deity,  
our God contracted to a span,  
incomprehensibly made Man.

Unsearchable the love  
that has the Saviour brought;  
the grace is far above  
our own or angels' thought:  
enough for us that God, we know,  
our God is manifest below.

He deigns in flesh to appear,  
wildest extremes to join;  
to bring our vileness near  
and make us all divine:  
and we the life of God shall know,  
for God is manifest below.

Make perfect first in love,  
and sanctified by grace,  
we shall from earth remove,  
and see his glorious face:  
then shall his love be fully showed,  
and we shall then be lost in God.

'The Parish Choir', 1851, text by Charles Wesley (1707-1788)  
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## **Sent into the World**

### **Dedication of offerings**

### **Intercession – 'Prayer of assurance: God is here'**

### **Sing: TiS 270**

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry  
announces that the Lord is nigh:  
come then and hearken, for he brings  
glad tidings from the King of kings.

Then cleansed by every heart from sin;  
make straight the way for God within;  
prepare we in our hearts a home  
where such a mighty guest may come.

For you are our salvation, Lord,  
our refuge and our great reward;  
without your grace we waste away  
like flowers that wither and decay.

To heal the sick stretch out your hand,  
and bid the fallen sinner stand;  
shine forth, and let your light restore  
earth's own true loveliness once more.

To him who left the throne of heaven  
to free us all, let praise be given;  
and praise be to the Father done.  
and Holy Spirit, Three in One.

Melody adapted from 'Musikalisches Hand-Buch' chorale  
by William Havergal (1793-1870)  
Text trans. by John Chandler (1806-1876)  
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## Commissioning and Blessing: 'What really is'

**Postlude:** *The Secrets of Trees*

Carolyn Morris



Liturgist & Preacher: Rev Dr Sarah Agnew  
Music Coordinator & Choir Conductor: Jade McFaul  
Organist: Elijah Lim | Wesley Music Scholars: Zoë Loxley Slump (Oboe);  
Elsa Huber (Soprano); Martin Magill (Bass); Elias Yuan (Tenor)  
Bible Reader: Chris Chenoweth

Image: 'Difficult Journey - Transition to Bethlehem', Uhde, Fritz von, 1848-1911  
<https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=56747>

Litany of the wreath. Words by Teri Carol Peterson (*Winter*, Wild Goose, 2016)  
adapted by Sarah Agnew (2020)  
Prayers by Sarah Agnew, unless otherwise stated.

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