



An Affirming Congregation of The United Church of Canada

2024 December 22

Sacrament of Communion

Advent 4



**My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour!**

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 community of faith.

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.

ACCESSIBILITY

There is an elevator located inside the building through 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. Accessible washrooms are 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 assist headsets are 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 please contact the office.

There is a sensory-friendly worship space in the Club Room every Sunday, the service is live streamed to the room with reduced lighting and volume.

CHILDCARE AMENITIES

People can breastfeed anywhere in the building, should you want more privacy there is designated nursing space in the Millson room. 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, and there are activity books available from the ushers.

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.

Friends in Christ

Announcements at 10:15 AM

Prelude: *Creator of the Stars of Night*, Sarum Plainsong arr. by Gilbert Martin

Dr. Allan Bevan, organ

Embracing Our Spirit

Introit: *O Come, Divine Messiah*, Trad. French Carol arr. by James Biery

Ilona Bevan, recorder; Choir of Robertson-Wesley

Call to Worship:

We are a people open to anticipation and ready for a celebration.

Behold, the birth of the Christ child is expected.

We are a community of faith that remembers the message of hope, peace, joy, and love that God shared with us all.

Behold, the birth of the Christ child is near.

We are a community inspired to live lives of service and of wholeness.

Behold, the birth of the Christ child will change who we are

in this time of worship and beyond. Let us worship.¹

Candlelighting:

Hymn: *Hope Shines as the Solitary Star*

More Voices 220

Love shines as the solitary star,

Faith is the inner light.

You and I together mirror the Light of Lights,

And illumine the pathway home.

Coming into God's Presence

Hymn: *O Lord, How Shall I Meet You*

Voices United 31

O Lord, how shall I meet you,

how welcome you aright?

Your people long to greet you,

my hope, my heart's delight!

O kindle, then, most holy,

a lamp within my breast,

to do in spirit lowly

all that may please you best.

Love caused your incarnation,

love brought you here to me;

your thirst for my salvation

procured my liberty.

O love beyond all telling,

that led you to embrace
in love all loves excelling
our lost and fallen race.

A glorious crown you give me,
a treasure safe on high,
that will not fail nor leave me
as earthly riches fly.

My heart shall bloom forever
for you with praises new,
and from your name shall never
withhold the honour due.

God's Holy Word

Prayer of Illumination:

Holy God, help us to give voice to the wonderful news: you, yourself are coming to dwell among us! Quicken our imaginations to find new and creative ways to proclaim Christ's coming. **Amen.**²

Scripture:

Arleen Drysdale

Micah 5:2-5a • Out of Bethlehem in Judea will come a leader.

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.

Luke 1:39-45 • Mary visits Elizabeth.

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church,

Thanks be to God.

Anthem: *Ave Maria* by Allan Bevan

Ilona Bevan, Jacqueline Hernandez, soloists

Ave Maria, gratia plena

Dominus tecum.

Benedicta tu in mulieribus,

Et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus.

Sancta Maria, Mater Dei,

Ora pro nobis peccatoribus

Nunc et in hora mortis nostrae.

Amen.

Hail, Mary, full of grace;
the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women;
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, mother of God,

Pray for us sinners

Now and at the hour of our death.

Amen.

Sermon: *The love of God found in companionship.*

Rev. Karen Bridges

Hymn: *To a Maid Whose Name Was Mary*

Voices United 14 vv. 1-4

**To a maid whose name was Mary,
the angel Gabriel came.**

**"Fear not," the angel told her,
"I come to bring good news,
good news I come to tell you,
good news, I say, good news."**

**"For you are highly favoured
by God the Lord of all,
who even now is with you.
You are on earth most blest,
you are most blest, most blessed,
God chose you, you are blest!"**

**But Mary was most troubled
to hear the angel's word.
What was the angel saying?
It troubled her to hear,
to hear the angel's message,
it troubled her to hear.**

**"Fear not, for God is with you,
and you shall bear a child.
His name shall be called Jesus,
God's offspring from on high.
And he shall reign forever,
Forever reign on high."**

Grateful Response

Pastoral Prayers

Rev. Karen Bridges

Response: God of Love, **hear our prayer.**

Lord's Prayer: *A Paraphrase*

Voices United p. 916

**Eternal Spirit,
Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be.
Parent of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:
The hallowing of your name echo
through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed
by peoples of the world!
Your heavenly will be done
by all created beings!
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom
sustain our hope and come on earth.
With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
now and for ever. Amen.**

A Gratitude Minute

Sylvia Duffus

Offering:

Your donations today 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: *O Ancient Love*

Voices United 17 vs. 4

**O suffering love, that bears our human weakness;
O boundless love, that rises with the morn;
O mighty love, concealed in infant meekness:
O living Love, within our hearts be born,
O living Love, within our hearts be borne.**

Offering Prayer:

The gifts we give and the love we share reflect our Advent journey:

A journey of hope: we will not give in to apathy or despair. A journey of peace: we will not resort to words or actions that harm or hurt. A journey of joy we will live out in shared happiness and support. A journey of love, where we see Jesus in friend and stranger.

Bless these gifts, and bless our journeys, that the needs of this community of faith may be met and the needs of the world gently touched. **Amen.**¹

Solo: *Come Unto Him*, by G. F. Handel arr. Neil Jenkins

Raydene Koch, soloist

Sacrament of Holy Communion

All who worship with us today, regardless of age or church membership, are invited and welcome to partake in this sacrament. For people who worship online, please prepare whatever is available in your house, a cracker, bread, muffin, and juice, wine, or water. People in the sanctuary will be offered bread and grape juice. There is a gluten free option available.

All journeys begin with careful preparation: what to take, what to leave behind, thoughts of who we will meet along the way and what we will see. Our journey today to the manger begins with careful preparations made on our behalf: bread and wine made ready so that we might have food that lasts as we venture out in faith once more, knowing where we want to go but not sure how we will get there. And so we come to the table: a place of welcome and hospitality for all. It is a table for those who are just beginning the journey, as well as for those well along its dusty pathways. It is for those who are clear about their direction, as well as for those who are putting one foot in front of the other, not sure where they are going. It is for those of great faith and those who struggle to have any at all. It's for each of us and for all of us together. And we are welcome here because we gather at Christ's invitation. So come to his table and set your sights on Bethlehem.²

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to God.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

We give you thanks, God of peace and promise. Through the words of your prophets and the faith of your followers you prepare the way of our redemption and bring hope to birth. And though we often grow weary of waiting, your signs call us to keep watch for that day when all things shall be made new. In assurance of this hope, we join with all the company of heaven and earth to give you praise:³

Holy, Holy, Holy:

Voices United pp. 942-943

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might;
Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might;
Heaven and earth are full, full of your glory!
Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest.**

Remembering Jesus at Table:

As we gather at this table, we remember that on the night before he died, Jesus had supper with his friends. He took a loaf of bread, thanked you as we have thanked you, broke the bread, and gave it to them, saying: "Take, eat. This is my body, given for you. Each time you do this, remember me." Then, he took a cup, and after giving thanks, passed it to his friends, saying: "Drink. This cup is the promise of God. Each time you drink from this cup, remember me."⁴

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of our faith:

Memorial Acclamation:

Voices United p. 943

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Send, O God, your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts, that all who share in this bread and cup may be the body of Christ: light, life, and love in the world.⁵

Memorial Acclamation:

We praise you, eternal God, through Christ your Word made flesh, and in the power of your life-giving Spirit, now and forever.

Great Amen: **Amen, amen, amen, amen.**

Voices United p. 943

Sharing the Bread and the Cup

Meditation: *Nativity Carol*, by John Rutter
piano

Dr. Allan Bevan,

Prayer after Communion:

O Lord, we thank you for the nourishment you have given us in the person of Jesus Christ. To know him is an exciting experience. To accept him is a sacrificial experience. To love him is to love one another. To glimpse into the Bethlehem stable once again is to experience your constant presence in our lives.

Thank you for Jesus Christ. Thank you, O God, for the opportunity to serve you. Amen.⁶

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

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

**O come, O Wisdom from on high,
who orders all things mightily;
to us the path of knowledge show,
and teach us in her ways to go.**

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

**O come, O come, great God of might,
who to your tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times once gave the law
in cloud, and majesty and awe.**

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

**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.**

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

**O come, O Dayspring, from on high,
and cheer us by your drawing nigh,
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight.**

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Commissioning:

Go forth from here, ready to be surprised by God and open to let God use you in surprising ways. May the example of the strength and faith of Mary sustain you, nurture you, and inspire you. Above all, may your days be blessed by love so that you may bless those around you, bringing the light of God's mercy into the world. Amen.

Question for reflection:

How does this story and the pending birth of the chosen one help us receive the love that is given by those around us?

How do we help draw people out of isolation and into community?

How will the love of God be shared in what we say and do?

R-W Report

Next Sunday, Dec 29, 2024

Christmas 1

Children and Youth: Children and Youth are encouraged to worship with their families this Sunday..

Scripture: Colossians 3:12-17 • Clothe yourselves with compassion.

Luke 2:41-52 • The boy Jesus learns at the temple.

Sermon: What is to come? What does it mean?

We, like Mary, do not always understand completely what the prophets foretold. We like the people in the temple and the disciples who come later in Jesus' ministry do not always understand the significance of what Jesus is teaching us and showing us in his words and actions. We begin the journey with Jesus here on earth by first clothing ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. What virtue do you identify with most? How will you use this gift to bring God's message here on earth?

Music: Dr. Allan Bevan, organist

WEEK AT A GLANCE

Sun Dec 22	Sunday Worship	Sanctuary & Online	10:30 am
	Fellowship	Memorial Hall	11:30 am
	Blue Christmas	Sanctuary	7:00 pm
Tues Dec 24	Christmas Family Style	Sanctuary	4:00 pm
	Christmas with a twist	Sanctuary	7:00 pm
	Candlelight Christmas	Sanctuary	10:00 pm
Wed Dec 25-27	Church Closed for Christmas		

ON THE HORIZON

Sun Dec 29	Sunday Worship	Sanctuary & Online	10:30 am
	Fellowship	Memorial Hall	11:30 am
Dec 30 - Jan 1	Church Closed		

Volunteer Opportunities

CHRISTMAS EVE USHERS

If you are interested in greeting people, handing out bulletins, and other duties on Christmas Eve, please sign-up indicating at which service you would like to usher. Don't worry if you have never done this before you will be working with others who can mentor you in this role.

110TH ANNIVERSARY VOLUNTEERS

Robertson-Wesley United Church is celebrating its 110th anniversary with two celebratory events on **January 18**. Volunteers are needed for both the afternoon tea and the evening cocktail party. There's lots of different positions available so sign up at rwuc.org/volunteer

R-W News & Notes

HOURS

The Church will be closed **December 25-27**, and **December 30 - January 1**.

BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE OF HEALING

Tonight at 7:00 pm. Christmas is a holy time that is not always happy. It brings up so many memories that heighten our feelings of grief or sadness, pain or loneliness. This is a service of quiet reflection, remembrance and peace. We hope that this service will bring a sense of peace in this sacred season with quiet music, scripture, silence and candle light.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

This year there will be three services on Christmas Eve, Wednesday **December 24**. All services will be in person and live streamed online.

4:00 pm Family Celebration: An interactive celebration

7:00 pm Christmas with a Twist: A candlelit experience

10:00 pm Choral Candlelight: The birth of Jesus with songs of joy for the Holy night with the choir of Robertson-Wesley.

110TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Join Robertson-Wesley United Church in celebrating its 110th anniversary with two celebratory events on **January 18, 2025**. Our hope and goal is to bring people from the wider community into this amazing and beautiful building, so invite your friends and neighbours!

Brewing Blessings: 110 Years of Community. A classic afternoon tea, featuring savoury and sweet delights from 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm. Feel free to wear your best Sunday hat! Tickets are \$25

Spirit and Spirits: Celebrating 110 Years. Come learn about the history of the church on a tour of the building. Followed by a cocktail party with drinks, hors d'oeuvres, live music, and a silent auction featuring items from businesses in the community. 6:30 - 9:00 pm. Tickets are \$45.

Drink tickets will be available for purchase at the event. We recommend bringing cash if you can. Tickets can be purchased on eventbrite at RW110.eventbrite.ca or from the church office in January.

JUSTICE NEWS AND UPDATES

Do you want to hear about affirming, indigenous, eco/climate, racial or other justice related events and conversations - at R-W and beyond? As the new Social Justice and Outreach Ministries coordinator, Peter is looking to compile emails of interested folks for a variety of different topics. Send them an email (p.graham@rwuc.org) to indicate what areas you are keen on and let's start this transformative work together! Also, stay tuned in the new year for more details and information on the announcement boards in Memorial Hall.

SPIRITED ART STUDIO

The Spirited Art Studio will be on holiday break **Dec 23, 25, 30 and January 1**. If you want to receive updates, email spiritedartstudio@rwuc.org.

PARKING REMINDER

The Optometrist's Clinic at 12318 Jasper Avenue and McElheran's have donated their parking on Sunday Mornings for R-W use. The Optometrist's Clinic parking spaces are located directly north of their building, across the alley from McElheran's and kiddy corner from the Fire Hall. If you are able, consider parking at the Optometrist's or McElheran's, to provide more close parking space for persons with mobility concerns. There is also underground heated parking in the Mercury Building to the west of the church which can be accessed in the alleyway between Evolve gym and the Mercury Building.

In the Community

NO ROOM IN THE INN: YESS

2024's No Room In the Inn Campaign is supporting Youth Empowerment & Support Services (YESS) to replace the roof on their Whyte Ave. facility in Edmonton. YESS's Whyte Avenue Facility houses their Youth Support Centre (YSC). The YSC is an evolution in youth care and crisis management. Materials for this campaign can be found at these links: [2024 No Room In the Inn brochure/YESS information/ 2024 Campaign Invitation](#).

Worship Notes

The season of Advent marks the beginning of the Christian Liturgical Year. This is a time of preparation, waiting, expectation and longing as we await the coming of Christ in the form of a baby. In this season the colour blue symbolizes new life and new beginnings. You will notice that the paraments (the cloth on the pulpit and the communion table are blue). You will also notice that there are 3 blue candles, a pink candle and a white candle in the Advent Wreath. Each Sunday we light a candle to help us mark the next step on the journey to Bethlehem. Each candle represents a different theme: hope, peace, joy and love. The white candle is lit at Christmas in honour of Jesus, (the pink candle is joy).

Cover Image

Cover image by Stefan Schwehofer from Pixabay.com in Dec 2023. Words from Luke 1:46b-47

Lead Minister of Congregation & Community Development: Rev. Karen Bridges
Faith Development & Intergenerational Ministries Coordinator: Kevin Guenther Trautwein
Social Justice & Outreach Ministries Coordinator: Peter Graham
Music Director: Dr. Allan Bevan
Office Administrator: Elyse Munro
Facilities Manager: Brad Campbell



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Endnotes

1. Written by Bill Steadman, **Gathering**, A/C/E 2018/19, p. 30. Used with permission.
2. Written by David Sparks, **Gathering**, A/C/E2018/19, p. 35. Used with permission.
3. **Celebrate God's Presence**, 10001
4. **Celebrate God's Presence**, 14D009
5. **Celebrate God's Presence**, 14Oa002
6. Written by Jim Hendry, **Gathering**, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany 2010/11, p. 33. Used with permission.