

Centennial United Church, Stayner

December 24th, 2011 ~ Christmas Eve



Minister: : All who ponder the wonders of the Eternal being found within the temporal!

Thought of the Week

Birth narratives tell us nothing about the birth of the person who is featured in those narratives. They do tell us a great deal, however, about the adult life of the one whose birth is being narrated. No one waits outside a hospital room for a great person to be born. This is not the way human life works. A person becomes great in his or her adult years, and the significance of that life is celebrated in tales that gather around the moment in which that powerful adult figure entered history."

John Shelby Spong, from Thank God for Evolution, p. 362



As you enter, please remember to put on your name tag.

Text in Bold Type is to be read in unison.

PATH OF CELEBRATION

Welcome and Announcements

"For a child is born to us, upon whose shoulders dominion will rest. This One shall be called Wonderful Counselor, the Strength of God, Eternal Protector, Champion of Peace. This dominion, and this peace, will grow without end, with David's throne and realm sustained with justice and fairness, now and forever."

Isaiah 9:6-7

Hymn 58 "Infant Holy, Infant Lowly"

Lighting the Christ Candle

The first Sunday of Advent started with a bang – the big bang, in fact, as we celebrated the gift of creation with the lighting of our first candle. As the Spirit first breathed love into chaos, blessing us with creation, may this same Spirit breath love into your hearts this night.

[light the first candle]

The second Sunday of Advent celebrated the gift of proclamation. Whether it be John the Baptist, who never shied away from controversy, or modern-day prophets, who still speak out for the rights of the most vulnerable in our community, in our country, in our world, and for the planet itself, proclamation is essential. We learned that you can't just

question authority; you have to speak with it. Speak the truth in love.
Let your light shine!

[light the second candle]

On the third Sunday of Advent, we acknowledged that the earliest recorded mention of Jesus' birth in Galatians 4:4 states simply, "He was born of a woman." This woman cradled him within her body, then cradled him in her arms. She said "Yes" to divine Mystery and "Yes" to scandal in order to bring love to birth. We light the candle to celebrate Mary, the mother of Jesus, and for all who say "Yes" to the mysterious calling of God.

[light the third candle]

Last Sunday, we lit our fourth Advent candle to honour Joseph who went beyond his broken heart to break the rules and care for Mary and her baby as his own. "Don't be afraid," the angel told him, "for God is at work in all of this." We light this candle for Joseph and for all like him, who let love win out over fear, anger, and punitive laws.

[light the fourth candle]

Tonight on Christmas Eve, we hear the poetry of author Madeleine L'Engle, who wrote:

"This is no time for a child to be born,
with the earth betrayed by war and hate
and a comet slashing the sky to warn
that time runs out and the sun burns late.
That was no time for a child to be born, in a land
in the crushing grip of Rome,
honour and truth were trampled by scorn, yet
there did the Saviour make his home.
When is the time for love to be born? The inn is
full on the planet earth,
and by a comet the sky is torn – yet Love still takes
the risk of birth."

Tonight, at last, we light the Christ candle. We celebrate Jesus, who risked living fully to show God's abundant life for all. For Jesus and for all he inspires in us, we light this candle.

[light the Christ Candle]

Hymn 6 "A Candle is Burning" vs. 5

Call to Worship

Welcome to the sounds of Christmas!

The excited voices of children, the rustle of new Christmas outfits, the chatter of families united.

Welcome to the sounds of Christmas!

Songs and words raised in praise for a tiny family with the gift of a child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

Written by Karen Boivin

Gathering, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany 2011-2012, p. 33. Used with permission

Hymn 59 "Joy to the World"

Promise from the Old Testament

Scriptures Isaiah 9:2-7 *Pg. 677 O.T.*

Reflection

Hymn 71 "'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime"

Luke's Account (part 1)

Scriptures Luke 2:1-7 *Pg. 75 O.T.*

Anthem "A Song to the Child"

Reflection

Hymn 46 "Gentle Mary Laid Her Child"

Luke's Account (part 2)

Scriptures Luke 2:8-14 *Pg. 75 O.T.*

Reflection

Hymn 38 "Angels We Have Heard on High"

Luke's Account (part 3)

Scriptures Luke 2:15-20 *Pg. 75 O.T.*

Reflection

Hymn 60 "O Come All Ye Faithful" vs. 1, 3-5

OUR RESPONSE

Presentation of our Gifts and Offering

