

ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH

Service of Lessons & Carols – December 31, 2023

Welcome

Acknowledgment of the Land

Announcements

Call to Worship: (inspired by **Psalm 150**)

One: Praise the Lord! Praise God in this sanctuary!

Many: **We give praise for God's surpassing goodness.**

One: Praise God with music and with voice.

Many: **Let all of nature show God's love for this world.**

O Come All Ye Faithful

VU 60 (1, 3, 5)

Prayer of Approach (unison):

Loving God, as we enter this New Year, we are grateful for your presence in all of the years of our lives. We have known joy and sorrow, success and failure in our time and always You have journeyed with us. Time passes quickly and today we give thanks for those things that endure —

the love of friends and family, the wisdom we gain from life experiences, and the knowledge of Your steadfast presence in all circumstances. Bless us, we pray, in the New Year that lies ahead.

Amen

Lighting the Advent Wreath:

One: The symbol of new light has come to our world once again.

Many: **We give thanks for all the lights in our lives.**

One: We light a candle of hope

Many: **Hope for ourselves and for the world.**

One: We light a candle of peace

Many: **Peace within us and among us.**

One: We light a candle of joy

Many: **Joy to our world and joy in our hearts.**

One: We light a candle of love

Many: **Love — God's promise to us and to all creation.**

One: We light the candle of Christ

Many: **The light that leads us into this New Year and beyond.**

Passing of the Peace:

The peace of Christ be with you all.

And also with you.

Hark the Herald Angels Sing **VU 48**

The Service of Lessons and Carols

First Lesson: Genesis 1: 26-28

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear **VU 44 (1, 4)**

Second Lesson: Isaiah 63: 7-9

Away in a Manger **VU 69 (1, 3)**

Third Lesson: Hebrews 2: 10-13

Once in Royal David's City **VU 62 (1, 4)**

Fourth Lesson: Matthew 2: 13-18

Go Tell It on the Mountain **VU 43**

Fifth Lesson: John 1: 1-5, 14

Joy to the World **VU 59 (1, 2, 4)**

Reflection

Responding in Love

Prayers of the People:

God of star and stable, You lead us to wonder and to hope. You gather us together to hear Your promise of love. As we gather, we offer our concerns and our dreams, our hopes and our fears. And we sing...

Musical Response — What Child Is This **VU 74 (1)**

Like the shepherds who sought the stable, we seek Your promise of peace.

We pray for Your people broken by violence, those who live with fear, and those who live without hope. We remember, and we pray for Your peace with justice, hope and compassion. And we sing...

Musical Response — What Child Is This VU 74 (2)

Like the wise ones who dedicated their gifts to the baby, we remember those in need. We pray for those who are lonely, hungry, or forgotten; for those who are ill in body and in spirit; for those who are confused or afraid. We pray for Your joy and love for all Your people. And we sing...

Musical Response — What Child Is This VU 74 (3)

Holy One, You came as a child, offering renewal and hope. May our prayers be a new beginning: for healing, truth and reconciliation. May we embody love in compassion and grace. May we join the angels' songs of peace and joy. And we offer all our prayers for ourselves and for others in the name of Jesus the Christ who taught us to pray... **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, forever and ever. Amen**

Carol Silent Night

VU 67

Benediction and Postlude