**Be United Communities of Faith**

**Bridgewater United Church**

**December 24th, 2023 Christmas Eve**

**Minister:** *Reverend Neil McEwen* **Music Ministry Director:** *Barbara Pate*

**West Side United Student Minister:** *Donna Kelly*

**Audio Visual Technician:** *Ewart Morse* **Sound Engineer:** *Liam Wamboldt*

**Greeter:** *Yvonne Hirtle* **Greeter:** *Diane Patten*

*The asterisk (\*) indicates the congregation may stand, as they are able.*

*The print in* ***BOLD*** *is where the congregation participates.*

Prelude

Words of Welcome

**\*Hymn:** **# 48 VU – Hark! the Herald Angels Sing (Verses 1 and 3)**

**Invitation to Worship:**

Night approaches;

**Shepherds lie awake.**

Angels appear,

**Shepherds begin to quake.**

Good news is proclaimed;

**this is no mistake.**

Tonight Jesus is born;

**and we celebrate.**

**Opening Prayer:**

Holy God, we come before you this night.

**To proclaim a steadfast love,**

**an undying care, a risk-taking grace.**

As shepherds watched their fields,

**You guard justice, protect peace,**

**and keep your eyes on your beloved.**

May our worship this night be as such:

**A holy watching, a patient waiting,**

**a faithful presence. Amen.**

**\*Hymn:** **# 60 VU – O Come, All Ye Faithful (Verses 1, 3 and 4)**

Advent Reading: I Will Light the Candles *written by Reverend Richard Bott*

Lighting of the Advent Candles

**Advent Chorus:** **Hope Is A Candle**

Story: No Room *written by Peter H. Riddle*

**Hymn:** **# 58 VU – Infant Holy, Infant Lowly**

Hebrew Scripture Reading: Isaiah 9:6-7 ~ For Unto Us A Child Is Born

Lighting of the Christ Candle

**\*Hymn:** **# 38 VU – Angels We Have Heard on High**

Gospel Scripture Reading: Luke 2:1-20 ~ The Birth of Jesus

Reflection: “God’s Chosen Shepherds”

**Hymn:** **# 67 VU – Silent Night, Holy Night**

Prayer and Prayer of Dedication

Offering

*We offer our gifts of time, talents and treasures each day.*

*Offering plates are located at the entrance of the Sanctuary*

*where you can place your donations as you arrive or as your leave.*

*The Offering Plates are not circulated among the congregation*

*during our Service of Worship.*

Reading: A Christmas Blessing *written by Joyce Rupp*

**Commissioning And Benediction:**

May the joy of Christmas sound in our hearts!

**May the birth-cry of Jesus stir our spirits!**

May God’s love in Christ speak itself anew

in the blessings of this holy day.

**And be with us evermore.**

May it be so!

**Amen.**

**\*Hymn:** **# 59 VU – Joy to the World (Verses 1, 2 and 4)**

Postlude

***CCLI No., 11287624, 20371363***

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***The church bulletins are given to the glory of God,***

***and in loving memory of parents, Ethel and Vincent “Pat” Veinotte***

***and brother, David, a gift of Dawn, Brian, Todd, Jayne and Sophie.***

**A Christmas Prayer**

*As you gather with friends and family,*

*or in the quietness and solitude of your home this Christmas Season,*

*we invite you to offer this prayer silently or aloud.*

*Light a candle if you can and embrace the presence of the God and the Spirit of Christmas in your heart.*

Encouraging God, we pray to be a spark of hope,

for those who need it most this Christmas.

Gentle God, we pray to be a bringer of peace,

a creator of calm in a hectic season.

Celebrating God, we pray to be a reminder of joy,

for this is a time of celebration.

Caring God, we pray to be an embodiment of love,

to follow your teachings to care for each other.

Newly arriving God,

help us live in the spirit of Christmas,

all the rest of the year.

Amen.

*Source: The United Church of Canada Facebook Page /Mission and Service Fund*

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**Deep Spirituality, Bold Discipleship, Daring Justice**

The United Church of Canada is a community of hope, a vibrant and vital church with both purpose and vision. We live in a time of rapid change in religious life, great inequities between peoples, and collective harm to our earth community. Together, we strive towards repentance, repair, and right relations with all peoples and the planet. Living purposefully into this call and vision anticipates becoming the Beloved Community—the ever inbreaking, transforming, reconciling realm of God, Today!

**Vision Statement**

As followers of Jesus Christ, Bridgewater United Church is a church family that values each person as equal and unique loving expressions of God with gifts and talents to share. People of all ages, gender, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, differing abilities, ethnic background, economic circumstance, and those experiencing other barriers that limit inclusion are welcome to fully participate in all our ministries.

**Mission Statement**

To create a vibrant community of followers of Jesus where everyone deeply knows they belong, are cared for, can grow spiritually and actively demonstrate our love in the world and towards one another.

**Core Values**

We value energetic engagement in our:

Spiritual Health

Generosity

Acceptance of all

Responsiveness to the world

Love for God, creation, self, and others

**#APlaceWhereEveryoneBelongs**

**#ChooseLove**

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Church Office Hours ~ Tuesday to Friday ~ 10:00am – 12:30pm

Be sure to like and share our Facebook and YouTube page!

Our Church is a **Nut-Free and Scent-Free Church**