Prelude Ann Boudreaux

Call to Worship (from Thom Shuman)

**One:** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**Many: And also with you.**

**One:** It is in the watching, and in the waiting  
**Many: that we hear the promises made so long ago.**  
**One:** It is in the questions, and in the hoping  
**Many: that we give thanks every time we hear the glad news**.  
**One:** It is in the coming, and in the going  
**Many: that we welcome the One who is our Delight, our Joy.**

Hymn *“O Come, O Come Emmanuel”* (v. 2)

Advent Candlelighting

**One:** Advent is a time to watch.

**Many: We watch in hope for the Lord; O come, Emmanuel.**

**One:** During Advent we watch for hope in the midst of despair.

**Many: We watch in hope for the Lord; O come, Emmanuel.**

**One:** During Advent we watch for forgiveness in the midst of rebellion.

**Many: We watch in hope for the Lord; O come, Emmanuel.**

**One:** During Advent we watch for peace in the midst of conflict.

**Many: We watch in hope for the Lord; O come, Emmanuel.**

**One:** During Advent we watch for the presence of God in the midst of a fallen world.

**Many: We watch in hope for the Lord; O come, Emmanuel.**

*Candle Lighting*

This morning we light two candles. The first candle reminds us that Advent is a time of waiting. We wait in anticipation for God to fulfill every promise set forth in the Bible. The second candle reminds us that Advent is also a time of watching. We watch with expectant eyes, trusting that God is active, present and constantly at work, leading all of creation toward the plan of redemption. As we light the second candle, we ask for faith to watch for God’s presence and open eyes to see all that God is doing.

*We Sing the Refrain*

Unison Prayer

**God in heaven, as we learn to wait in faith, help us now to watch in expectation. Open our eyes that we might see the ways you are at work around us, within us, and through us. Amen.**

Children’s Message

Hymn *Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence* (v. 2)

Lesson from the Hebrew Bible Malachi 3:1-4

Hymn  *Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates* (v. 2)

Lessons from the Gospels Luke 1:68-79 and Luke 3:1-6

Sermon  *“* Preparing for the Gift of Grace”Pastor Lisa

Hymn  *Come Thou Long Expected Jesus* (vs. 2)

Prayers of the People *(sharing of joys and concerns)*

Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer *(debts and debtors)*

Invitation to Give

Offertory Anthem*“I Need a Silent Night”* Amy Grant

I've made the same mistake before Too many malls, too many stores  
December traffic, Christmas rush It breaks me till I push and shove

Children are crying while mothers are trying To photograph Santa and sleigh  
The shopping and buying and standing forever in line What can I say?

Chorus: I need a silent night, a holy night  
To hear an angel voice through the chaos and the noise  
I need a midnight clear, a little peace right here  
To end this crazy day with a silent night

December comes then disappears Faster and faster every year  
Did my own mother keep this pace Or was the world a different place?

Where people stayed home wishing for snow Watching three channels on their TV  
Look at us now rushing around Trying to buy Christmas peace

Chorus

What was it like back there in Bethlehem  
With peace on earth, good will toward men? Chorus

Prayer of Dedication (From David S. Bell)

**Gracious and Giving God, we once again prepare for the birth of your chosen Son. Through the voices of prophets and preachers, you have been heard in the driest deserts and the steepest valleys. Open our hearts and our minds so that we may hear your salvation story anew. Giving this money is a worshipful gesture of our unending alleluias to you. We dedicate this offering to your Kingdom work. Amen.**

**The Sacrament of Communion**

(resources for Communion from Alydia Smith, Program Coordinator, Worship, Music, and Spirituality, General Council Office of the United Church of Canada)

INVITATION

CONSECRATION

SHARING OF THE BREAD AND CUP

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

**We thank you, God, for breaking into our world and pouring into our lives and our experiences. We thank you, God, for this meal of thanksgiving**

**and the stories of love, grace, and hope that it tells. Amen.**

Benediction

Recessional Hymn #101 (TNCH) *Comfort, Comfort Ye My People*

“Comfort, comfort all my people; tell of peace," thus says our God.  
"Comfort those whose hearts are shrouded, mourning under sorrow’s load.  
Speak unto Jerusalem of the peace that waits for them;  
tell them that their sins I cover, and their warfare now is over."

For the herald’s voice is crying in the desert far and near,  
bidding us to make repentance since the realm of God is here.  
Oh, that warning cry obey! Now prepare for God a way;  
Let the valleys rise in meeting and the hills bow down in greeting.

Straight shall be what long was crooked, and the rougher places plain.  
Let your hearts be true and humble, for Messiah’s holy reign.  
For God’s glory evermore shall be known o’er all the world;  
And all flesh shall see the token that God’s word is never broken.