



BLUE CHRISTMAS
A SERVICE OF HEALING, COMFORT AND HOPE
Friday, December 19, 2025 at 6 pm



In this season when we are expecting the joy of Christ's coming, some of us are in sadness and pain. For all of us, however, the troubles of the world are ever present as we pray and watch with victims of violence, hunger, illness and disaster — close at hand and throughout the earth. We are called therefore to gather as a whole community, surrounded by love, to listen to God's word; remember God's promises; and to praise God who is the source of all light and hope.

After the service please join us for a light meal in the Parish Hall.

THE GATHERING OF THE COMMUNITY

Hymn 123: *Once in Royal David's City*

IRBY

Cecil Frances Alexander, 1818-1895

Source: *Hymns For Little Children*, 1848

Mrs. Alexander, born in Dublin, was one of the most popular hymn writers of the 19th century. The wife of William Alexander, who became Bishop of Derry, she had written poetry from her childhood and later contributed to a number of hymnals. Her best-known hymn is probably "There is a Green Hill Far Away", although "All Things Bright and Beautiful" might run it close! Today's hymn came to be written because she overheard one of her godchildren complaining about the dreariness of the Catechism. As a consequence, Mrs. Alexander decided to try to explain the basic doctrines of the Christian faith in more interesting and easily understandable ways. This is how she wrote of the Incarnation - Jesus coming into the world as "God made flesh." [More than a century later we still make Christianity dull – something which Jesus never was!]. The melody IRBY was composed by Henry John Gauntlett (1805-1876) for this text. He was involved in the compilation of several hymnbooks and is said to have composed more than 1,000 hymn tunes, as well as

arranging numerous others. He was the first person in 200 years to be awarded the degree of Doctor of Music by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

**Once in royal David's city
Stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a mother laid her Baby
In a manger for His bed:
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little Child.**

**He came down to earth from Heaven,
Who is God and Lord of all,
And His shelter was a stable,
And His cradle was a stall;
With the poor, and mean, and lowly,
Lived on earth our Saviour holy.**

**And our eyes at last shall see Him,
Through His own redeeming love,
For that Child so dear and gentle
Is our Lord in Heav'n above,
And He leads His children on
To the place where He is gone.**

**Not in that poor lowly stable,
With the oxen standing by,
We shall see Him; but in Heaven,
Set at God's right hand on high;
Where like stars His children crowned
All in white shall wait around.**

Welcome & Introduction

Welcome to this Blue Christmas service — a time when we can, with others, acknowledge the "blue" feelings we have this Christmas time and the reasons for them and offer them to God. Soon, we shall be experiencing the shortest day and the longest night of the year. For those who are sad or anxious — those who are suffering because of grief, bereavement, sadness, physical or mental pain, loneliness, or who are carrying any kind of burden, this season has been called then "long dark night of the soul"; it is "the winter of our discontent" in which memories of past experiences and the pain of present experiences can become overwhelming. For some of us, Christmas Day itself is the most difficult; for others, Christmas Eve, or New Year's Eve, or the beginning of another lonely New Year. In this , we recognise that this is not a season of joy for everyone. We

invite you to reflect on the pain, the grief, the loneliness, the emptiness, the sadness — whatever emotion you may be feeling — and offer it to the Christ Child. We pray that you will find hope and comfort in knowing that you are not alone and that you are among people who care.

Leader God did not wait till the world was ready, till nations were at peace.
All **God came when the heavens were unsteady and prisoners cried out for release.**

Leader God did not wait for the perfect time.
All **God came when the need was deep and great. God dined with sinners in all their grime, turned water into wine.**

Leader God did not wait till hearts were pure.
All **In joy God came to a tarnished world of sin and doubt. To a world like ours, of anguished shame, God came and God's Light would not go out.**

Leader God came to a world which did not mesh; to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.
All **In the mystery of the Word made Flesh, the maker of the stars was born.**

Leader We cannot wait till the world is sane to raise our songs with joyful voice, or to share our grief, to touch our pain.
All **God came with love, and we pray that we may feel that love in our hearts today and every day.**

ACT OF RECONCILIATION

Leader I invite you now to answer God's call to be reconciled to one another and to God. Let us put aside discord and conflict, ask for forgiveness, and make peace in the name of the Prince of Peace. Let us pray together:

All: **God of mercy, you hear us when we cry to you to come and save us; touch us now with your healing power.
Help us to lay before you every regret and disappointment;
give us courage to bring to you our grief and pain;
teach us to live together in love with our neighbours,
and pardon us when we have acted against your will.
Encourage us with your love, and guide our feet on the way of peace.
In the name of Jesus, the healer,
who binds all our wounds and forgives our sins. Amen.**

silent reflection

Leader Gracious God, you sent Jesus to bring us life and to be the true light of all people. Help us to live in the light that we may have love for each other, peace within our hearts, and hope for the future. We make our prayer in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Leader And now, as our Saviour Christ has commanded and taught us, we are bold to say:

**All 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,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

CANDLE LIGHTING LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE

Our Candle Lighting will take place during the singing of the Advent hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel". After each verse there will be a pause for a short time of silent reflection.

Hymn 89: *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

VENI EMMANUEL

Latin, 12th century

Translated by John M. Neale, 1818-1866 and Henry S. Coffin, 1877-1954

Source: *Psalterium Cantionum Catholicarum*, 171

Since before the ninth century seven great antiphons (originally "something sung alternately by two choirs") have been used in the Roman liturgy at Vespers to hail the coming of the Messiah. They were sung on successive days, and each of them began with "O", using one of the titles which describe the Messiah in the Bible. Today's hymn - traditionally never sung earlier than December 16 - is founded on five of these antiphons. The tune VENI EMMANUEL descends from a French melody of the 15th century. The composer Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936) quoted the melody to great effect in his "Trittico Botticelliano" for small orchestra (1927).

**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.**

Silent reflection as the first candle is lit.

Leader We light this Advent candle to remember those people who have been loved and lost. We pause to remember their name, their face, their voice. We give thanks for the memory that binds them to us this season which anticipates Christmas.

All **May God's eternal love surround them.**

**O come, Thou Wisdom from on high,
Who orderest 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.**

silent reflection as the second candle is lit

Leader We light this second candle to redeem the pain of loss: the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health. As we gather up the pain of the past, we offer it to you, O God, asking that into our open hands, you will place the gift of peace.

All **Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into your future.**

**O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory over the grave.**

**Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

silent reflection as the third candle is lit

Leader We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember the past weeks, months and for some of us, years of down times. We remember the poignancy of memories, the grief, the sadness, the hurts, the pain of reflecting on our own mortality.

All Let us remember that dawn defeats darkness.

**O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.**

**Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

silent reflection as the fourth candle is lit

Leader This fourth candle is lit to remember our faith and the gift of hope which God offers to us in the Christmas story. We remember that God who shares our life, promises us a place and time of no more pain and suffering.

All Let us remember the one who shows the way and goes with us into our tomorrows.

**O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.**

**Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

silent reflection

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

Old Testament Reading: Selected verses of Isaiah 40.

Words of comfort spoken to God's people in exile long ago still have the power to bring comfort to his people in exile today.

"Comfort, comfort my people" says your God. "Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and call to her that the time of service is ended ... Look up to the heavens! Who made the stars, if not the One who drills them like an army, calling each one by its own name? So mighty is God's power and strength that not one fails to answer. Israel, why then do you complain that our God does not know your troubles or care if you suffer injustice? Our God, the everlasting God, the creator of the farthest parts of the earth, never grows tired or weary. No one can fathom the depths of God's understanding. God gives power to the faint and strength to the powerless. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."

Psalm 139

Leader O Lord, you have searched me and known me.

All **You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.**

Leader You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.

All **Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely.**

Leader You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

All **Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.**

Leader Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?

All **If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in the deepest depths of Sheol, you are there also.**

Leader If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.

All **If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night,"**

Leader even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.

All **For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.**

Leader I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.

All **My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.**

Leader Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.

All **How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!**

Leader I try to count them — they are more than the sand; I come to the end — I am still with you.

All **Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.**

New Testament Reading: Revelation 21: 1-7

John, the author of Revelation, believes that at the end of the age there will be a new heaven and a new earth. God's presence will fill them both, and there will be an end to all pain and suffering.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.' And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.' Then he said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children.

Hymn: *Jesus, Good Above All Other*

QUEM PASTORES

Percy Dearmer, 1867-1936

Source: *Songs of Praise*, 1925

The Reverend Percy Dearmer was at one time Vicar of St. Mary's, Primrose Hill, in London, and was the words editor of 'Songs of Praise', published in 1925 as a collection of hymns "national in character." [The music editor of the hymn book was Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1872-1958, one of England's most famous and best loved composers.] Dearmer also wrote 'The Parson's Handbook' -

nowadays considered somewhat quaint, but very popular indeed in its day. QUEM PASTORES LAUDAVERE is a melody adapted from a German manuscript of 1410, probably by Martin Shaw, 1875-1958, who was the organist at St. Mary's, Primrose Hill, during Dearmer's incumbency. We sang this hymn at Father Michael's induction in September, 2004.

**Jesus, good above all other,
Gentle Child of gentle mother,
In a stable born our Brother,
Give us grace to persevere.**

**Jesus, cradled in a manger,
For us facing every danger,
Living as a homeless Stranger,
Make we Thee our King most dear.**

**Jesus, for Thy people dying,
Risen Master, death defying,
Lord in Heav'n, Thy grace supplying,
Keep us by Thine altar near.**

**Jesus, who our sorrows bearest,
All our thoughts and hopes Thou sharest,
Thou to man the truth declarest;
Help us all Thy truth to hear.**

**Lord, in all our doings guide us;
Pride and hate shall ne'er divide us;
We'll go on with Thee beside us,
And with joy we'll persevere!**

The Holy Gospel: Matthew 11:25-29

When burdens get piled on top of other burdens, the load can crush us. Jesus offers to help carry our burdens and responsibilities.

At that time Jesus said, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.'

HOMILY

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Leader Let us kneel for prayer. Let us pray.
Loving God, we come to you in this Christmas Season, with the pain growing inside us. As the nights have been growing longer, so has the darkness wrapped itself around our hearts. In this season of our longest nights, we offer to you the pain in our hearts, the traumas that some of us cannot put into words. *Silence*
Loving God, hear our prayer,
All: and in your merciful love, answer.

Leader: Compassionate God, there are those among us who are grieving over what might have been. A death or loss has changed our experience of Christmas. Once it was a special day for us too, but someone has died or moved away. Or we have lost a job, a dream, a goal, a cause. We find ourselves adrift, alone, lost.

silence

Loving God, hear our prayer
All: And in your merciful love, answer.

Leader: The Christmas season reminds us of all that used to be and cannot be anymore. The memories of what was, the fears of what may be,

stifle us. All around us we hear the sounds of celebration. But all we experience is a sense of feeling blue. Please be near us this night.

silence

Loving God, hear our prayer
All: And in your merciful love, answer.

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Leader: Release us from our fears and give us rest;
stay with us through days of doubt and sorrow
that we may know your peace.
Keep us in your embrace as we wait for your new creation
and look for the coming of your glorious reign in all the world.

silence

Loving God, hear our prayer
All: And in your merciful love, answer.

Leader: We ask you to hear the prayers we offer in the silence of our hearts,
knowing that you are always more ready to listen than we to pray.

silence

Loving God, hear our prayer
All: And in your merciful love, answer. So be it. Amen.

Hymn 109: *When the King Shall Come Again*

TEMPUS ADEST FLORIDUM

Christopher Martin Idle, 1938 -

Source: *Hope Publishing*, 1982

An Anglican priest, now retired, Christopher Idle was ordained in 1965 and served parishes in Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria; Peckham, Poplar and Limehouse, East London; and North Hartismere, Suffolk. He returned to Peckham in 1995; from then until his retirement in 2003 he worked with local schools and churches (Anglican and Baptist), as well as writing and editing from home, and part-time teaching. He was a member of the editorial groups for 'Psalm Praise' (1973); 'Hymns for Today's Church' (1982); 'Anglican Praise' (1987);

'Sing Glory' (1999); and 'Praise!' (2000). His own hymn texts to date were collected in 'Light upon the River' (1998). He has contributed to some twenty other books including those on evangelism, inner-city church life, and prayer and poetry collections. The tune TEMPUS ADEST FLORIDUM (Latin for “spring has unwrapped her flowers”) is a very familiar one, although not traditionally associated with these words; however, there won't be a single member of the congregation who doesn't recognise it! The melody first appeared in the Swedish *Piae Cantiones*, 1582, which was compiled and edited by Jaakko Suomalainen, a Protestant, and published in Finland by Theodor Petri, a Catholic. This type of interdenominational cooperation was all too rare in those days of violent sectarian strife.

**When the King shall come again,
all his power revealing;
splendour shall announce his reign,
life and joy and healing:
earth no longer in decay,
hope no more frustrated;
this is God's redemption day
longingly awaited.**

**In the desert trees take root
fresh from God's creation;
plants and flowers and sweetest fruit
join the celebration.**

**Rivers spring up from the earth,
barren lands adorning:
valleys, this is your new birth;
mountains, greet the morning!**

**Strengthen feeble hands and knees;
fainting hearts, be cheerful!
God who comes for such as these,
seeks and saves the fearful.
Deaf ears hear the silent tongues
sing away their weeping;
blind eyes see the lifeless ones
walking, running, leaping.**

**There God's highway shall be seen
where no roaring lion,
nothing evil or unclean
walks the road to Zion:
ransomed people, homeward bound,
all your praises voicing,
see your Lord with glory crowned,
share in his rejoicing!**

Leader The act of anointing with oil, a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit and the care of the community, is available to all who long for the healing touch of God's hand to still our troubled minds and to comfort us in pain, sickness or distress. All who wish to be anointed, and to receive the Laying on of hands are invited to come forward now and kneel at the Altar rail.

Prayer over each person:

I lay my hands upon you in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, beseeching him to uphold you and fill you with peace, that you may know the healing power of his love. I anoint you in the name of him who comes to heal the sick and the broken hearted. May the Spirit of the living God refresh you. May Jesus come to you in your need. May God bring you wholeness and give you peace. Amen.

Please return to your seat after the anointing and laying on of hands.

Leader God of glory, your angels sang a new song on the mountains:
Send them once again to comfort us.
Help us to hear the good news they told the earth:
Emmanuel has come. "Light and life to all he brings."
Grant us grace to know Jesus as one of us,
who shared our weakness and died our death
that we might one day live with him.
We ask that even now we may know your life-giving love
and walk in newness of life all our days;
through Jesus Christ, holy Child and Saviour. **Amen.**

Hymn 141: *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear*

NOEL

Edmond Hamilton Sears, 1810 -1876

Source: *Christian Register*, 1849

A Unitarian minister who was heavily involved in the "social gospel", Sears wrote this hymn while he was a pastor in Wayland, Massachusetts. "It came upon the midnight clear" claims two firsts — not only it is the first carol-like hymn from an American poet, it is also the first to include the social dimensions of what it actually means to work for "peace on earth and goodwill towards all." Based on Luke 2:3–14, it is a call for each of us to respond to the song of the angels and send back to heaven the message that we will make peace on earth. Unfortunately, after more than 2,000 years we still cannot report much progress... Arthur Seymour Sullivan (1842–1900) of Gilbert and Sullivan fame, arranged the tune NOEL for these words for his "Church Hymns" in 1874, and it has remained popular ever since.

**It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth,
To touch their harps of gold;
"Peace on the earth, good will to all,
From Heaven's most gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay,
To hear the angels sing.**

**Still through the cloven skies they come
With peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heavenly music floats
O'er all the weary world;
Above its sad and lowly plains,
They bend on hovering wing,
And ever over its Babel sounds
The blessed angels sing.**

**Yet with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong;**

**And we, still waging war, hear not
The love-song which they bring;
O hush the noise, all you of strife,
And hear the angels sing.**

**And you, beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow,
Look now! for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing.
O rest beside the weary road,
And hear the angels sing!**

**For lo! the days are hastening on,
By prophet-bards foretold,
When with the ever circling years
Comes round the age of gold;
When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendours fling,
And the whole world send back the song
Which now the angels sing.**

DISMISSAL & BLESSING

Leader Let us go in thanksgiving for the light of Jesus,
who laid his glory aside, became obedient unto death,
and rose with healing in his wings.
May God give us courage and guide our journeys
that we may bear Jesus' gifts of love and life and hope.
And now may the Lord bless you and keep you;
may the Lord's face shine upon you,
and may he look on you with kindness
and give you peace, now and always. **Amen.**

CHRISTMAS SERVICES AT SPSS

Sunday, December 21 - Advent IV

- 9.00 am Holy Eucharist
10.30 am Sung Eucharist
4.00 pm A Community Carol Celebration
With the St Jamestown Community Choir
The Parish Choir & Church School

Wednesday, December 24 - Christmas Eve

- 5.00 pm Family Eucharist
10.00 pm Choral Eucharist

Thursday, December 25 - Christmas Day

- 10.30 am Sung Eucharist

Sunday, December 28 – Christmas I

- 9.00 am Holy Eucharist
10.30 am Sung Eucharist



St. Peter and St. Simon-the-Apostle

525 Bloor St E, Toronto, ON M4W 1J1

416.923.8714 www.stpeterstsimon.ca www.facebook.com/stpeterstsimons

<i>Incumbent</i>	The Reverend Canon Geoffrey Sangwine
<i>Honorary Assistant</i>	The Reverend Canon Michael Burgess
<i>Rector's Warden</i>	David Carrington, <i>People's Warden</i> – David Rounthwaite
<i>Deputy Wardens</i>	Spencer Higgins, Laurie Sanderson
<i>Director of Music</i>	Mervin Fick
<i>Parish Administrator</i>	Jessy Balendra, ext. 3
<i>Parish Office Hours</i>	Tuesday to Thursday, 9.30 am – 5.30 pm.

Weekly Services

- Sunday 9 am (BCP Eucharist)
10.30 am (1st & 3rd Traditional Eucharist, 2nd, 4th Contemporary, 5th and Evensong as announced)
Wednesday 11.00 am (Holy Eucharist)

We acknowledge that in gathering to worship Almighty God,
we are in the traditional territory
of many First Nations peoples including the Mississaugas of the New Credit,
the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunees, and the Huron-Wendat.

"The earth is the Lord's, and all that therein is, the world and all who dwell therein." Psalm 24.1