

# Christ Church Gabriola

A Collaborative Anglican – United Church  
Open to All



## Winter Solstice Service December 21, 2022

*Rev. Karen Hollis*

*Musicians: Dorothy Dittrich & Jacqui Parker-Snedker*

*Whoever you are and wherever you are on life's journey,  
you are welcome here!*

**Welcome & Land Acknowledgement**

*We acknowledge these lands upon which we worship are the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation.*

*Exquisite Darkness*

**Opening Words**

One: The earth turns in its orbit from the point of greatest light and surrenders to the coming darkness . . . exquisite darkness.

**All: In response, shadows begin to lengthen, leaves blaze with colour;**

One: rainy days and frosty nights break down plants until they become one with soil;

**All: cool winds blow and birds migrate from here to there;**

One: nights grow longer, days shorter;

**All: leaves fall and trees stand bare while bulbs sit in the ground, waiting, and the world is still . . . resting . . . listening . . . incubating.**

All: Living beings conserve energy in the growing cold and turn toward the north, toward the ancestors, toward the earth, and look inward.

**Hymn: *Come and Fill Our Hearts***

**MV #16**

Come and fill our hearts with your peace.

You alone, O Lord, are holy.

Come and fill our hearts with your peace, alleluia!

**Centering Stillness**

**Music: *Still***

by Dorothy Dittrich

**Lectio Divina (*Divine Reading*)**

*The text will be read three times – after each reading, you're invited to reflect on the questions below.*

I want to listen deeply enough to hear everything and nothing at the same time and am made more by the enduring quality of my silence. I want to question deeply enough that I am made more not by the answers so much as my desire to continue asking questions. I want to speak deeply enough that I am made more by the articulation of my truth shifting into the day's shape. In this way, listening, pondering and sharing become my connection to the oneness of life, and there is no longer any part of me in exile.

~ Richard Wagamese (*Embers*, p. 23)

First Reading: *Listen for a word or phrase that speaks to you.*

Second Reading: *Connect with an image or emotion that is evoked in the reading.*

Third Reading: *What is the invitation for you?*

**Song: *Sound of Silence***

by Simon & Garfunkel

Hello darkness, my old friend  
I've come to talk with you again  
Because a vision softly creeping  
Left its seeds while I was sleeping  
And the vision that was planted in my brain  
Still remains  
Within the sound of silence  
In restless dreams I walked alone  
Narrow streets of cobblestone  
'Neath the halo of a street lamp  
I turned my collar to the cold and damp  
When my eyes were stabbed by the flash of a neon light  
That split the night  
And touched the sound of silence  
And in the naked light I saw  
Ten thousand people, maybe more  
People talking without speaking  
People hearing without listening  
People writing songs that voices never share  
No one dared  
Disturb the sound of silence  
"Fools" said I, "You do not know  
Silence like a cancer grows  
Hear my words that I might teach you  
Take my arms that I might reach you"  
But my words like silent raindrops fell  
And echoed in the wells of silence  
And the people bowed and prayed  
To the neon god they made  
And the sign flashed out its warning  
In the words that it was forming  
And the sign said, "The words of the prophets  
Are written on the subway walls  
And tenement halls  
And whispered in the sounds of silence"

## Psalm 139

Translation by Lynn C. Bauman

O God you have come searching for me.

You know me inside and out.

You know where I rise up and where I fall.

Before I think them, my thoughts are already clear to you.

The track of my journey you discern ahead of me.

All the pathways my life shall take are known to you.

Indeed before I speak them

the meaning of every word is understood by you.

I am encircled by your presence,

embraced by your hands.

These things I can hardly grasp, O my God,

they transport me to heights beyond myself.

Is it possible, then, to be absent from your presence?

Is there anywhere I could escape your Spirit?

Say I traveled to the limits of space,

or passed beyond this world into death,

in both cases

you would already be there ahead of me.

Suppose I lifted up on wings through the morning's light

and flew to the edges of some distant land or sea,

Even there your hands would be holding mine,

guiding me.

Or if I were to say to myself,

the light around me has turned to night,

surely this darkness will hide me.

Darkness never exists for you.

The night shines as brightly as the day.

Darkness and light to you are both alike.

You have brought together the constellation of my being.

Before I was born your presence was there forming me.

I am grateful to you for the artistry of my own creation.

I realize that I have been carefully crafted by you.

Nothing about me has been hidden from your presence.

While I was quietly being woven together from my own ancient sources,

Knowingly you have shaped the unfinished product even in the womb.

Step by step you have been guiding all the stages of my contemplation, from their beginning to their end.

Your awareness of me is infinite, O my God.

It is limitless.

It transcends everything I know.

Trying to calculate the sum total of your awareness is useless.

It would take an eternal life-span as long as yours.

## Time of Reflection

### Questions for reflection

*Where is your ache for the presence of God?*

*What does God speak to you in the darkness?*

*How might God's presence nourish you in this winter season?*

**Praying with rocks:** select a rock and write a word or phrase that represents perhaps your need for rest or a prayer for an aspect of your life that needs composting/renewal, or something else. You're invited to place your rock on the candle table, or take it with you and place it somewhere outdoors or carry it in your pocket through the winter . . .

or. . .

**Write prayers** and place them in the basket to be read during the Prayers of the People

**Light candles** on the candle table

**Hymn: Take O Take Me As I Am**

**MV #85**

Take, O take me as I am;  
summon out what I shall be;  
set up your seal upon my heart  
and live in me.

## Prayers of the People

### Lord's Prayer

**VU #959**

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil,  
for the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,  
now and for ever. Amen

## *Welcoming the Light*

### **Blessing for the Longest Night**

All throughout these months  
as the shadows  
have lengthened,  
this blessing has been  
gathering itself,  
making ready,  
preparing for  
this night.

It has practiced  
walking in the dark,  
traveling with  
its eyes closed,  
feeling its way  
by memory  
by touch  
by the pull of the moon  
even as it wanes.

So believe me  
when I tell you  
this blessing will  
reach you  
even if you  
have not light enough  
to read it;  
it will find you  
even though you cannot  
see it coming.

You will know  
the moment of its  
arriving  
by your release  
of the breath  
you have held  
so long;

a loosening  
of the clenching  
in your hands,  
of the clutch  
around your heart;  
a thinning  
of the darkness  
that had drawn itself  
around you.

This blessing  
does not mean  
to take the night away  
but it knows  
its hidden roads,  
knows the resting spots  
along the path,  
knows what it means  
to travel  
in the company  
of a friend.

So when  
this blessing comes,  
take its hand.  
Get up.  
Set out on the road  
you cannot see.

This is the night  
when you can trust  
that any direction  
you go,  
you will be walking  
toward the dawn.

### **Rise Up O Flame**

Rise up O flame,  
by thy light glowing.  
Show to us beauty, vision and joy.

by Christoph Praetorius

### **Blessing**

May you abide  
the places in between:  
the thresholds, the passages,  
the spaces of waiting  
and patience and preparing.

by Jan Richardson

May you give yourself  
to the mysteries  
that move us from what was  
toward what is yet to be.

May you know  
the company of the angels  
who come only  
to those betwixt  
and who love  
the liminal places  
and the treasures  
that they hold.

### **Postlude**