



Thornbury, Ontario
Grace United Church
Bold. Nurturing. Liberal. Christian.

December 21, 2025

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Find this service at www.graceunitedthornbury.ca/live

Leading us today in Worship:

Guest Minister: Rev. Dr. Brian Goodings

Director of Music: Dr. Christopher Burton

Lay Reader: Shirley Woolner

Leader: regular font ~ All: bold font ~ Sung words: bold italics.

Asterisk * Indicates when the congregation may stand if able.

Scripture for meditation: Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14b)

We Gather Together in Community

PRELUDE:

"Pastorale" from "Messiah" G.F. Handel

"A Stewardship Second:"

*Why do you give? God gives because God loves the world so much.
How does your giving expand love?*

WELCOME:

Love

(The first three candles are lit.)

Today we kindle the Advent candle of Love.

(The remaining blue candle is lit.)

**We welcome the warmth that lightens the winter chill, the
warmth of passionate embrace, the warmth that comes
from the heart of God.**

Come, Holy Stranger, messenger of love on this Advent
journey: welcome us as we welcome you.

We receive the light of love.

SONG: VU #82 “A Light Is Gleaming” (chorus only)

***A light is gleaming, spreading its arms throughout the
night,***

living in the light.

***Come share its gladness, God’s radiant love is burning
bright,***

living in the light.

**OUR COMMITMENT to SAFER SPACE & ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
of the LAND:**

*We believe all people are made in the image of God and are
entitled to dignity and respect. At Grace United Church we try
to offer a safer, inclusive and generous space for all who are
seeking a faith community. We offer full participation of
people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, all races,
ages and abilities in the life and work of the ministry.*

*Grace United Church is situated on the traditional territory of
the Saugeen Ojibway Nation. We acknowledge that they are
the first stewards of this land and we respect their histories and
past and present cultures. We will work to recognize and
remove barriers to reconciliation.*

CALL to WORSHIP:

Even though we are in the Officially-Optimistic-Season of
the Christmas-Shopping-Extravaganza...

For many these are the days of heavy clouds that stifle the
sunlight.

The world is burdened by grayness and the endless
recitation of gloomy news.

everywhere, everywhere.

PRAYER of APPROACH:

Emerging God, in the deepest time of the year,

There arises the star of morning, of birth.

The herald of a new day you are making,

A day of great joy dawning in yet faint shafts of light and
love.

**There are whispers of peace in the stillness,
Fresh breezes of promise stirring, winter chickadees
chirping of life,**

An Advent baby's cry of need and hope.

In this time there is still candle-confidence that the
darkness can never overcome even the smallest light.

Your Christmas courage stirs and waits to be born in us.

***HYMN: VU #8 "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"**

**1 Lo, how a rose e'er blooming from tender stem hath
 sprung,
of Jesse's lineage coming, as seers of old have sung.
 It came a blossom bright,
amid the cold of winter, when half spent was the night.**

**2 Isaiah 'twas foretold it, the Rose I have in mind,
 with Mary we behold it, the virgin mother kind.
 To show God's love aright
she bore for us a Saviour when half spent was the night.**

Lighting the Children's Lantern

Theme Conversation: Theotokos

We Listen Together

SCRIPTURE READINGS:

In Scripture God calls us by name...

Older Testament Psalm 80-part 1, VU #794

Refrain:

Your face, God, shine on us and give us peace.

Shepherd of Israel, hear us,

you who lead Joseph like a flock,

you who are enthroned amidst the cherubim.

Shine forth before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh,

stir up your might, come and save us.

Refrain:

Your face, God, shine on us and give us peace.

God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your
people's prayer?

**You have fed us with the bread of weeping,
and given us tears in plenty of drink.**

You have made a mockery of us to our neighbours
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.

Let your hand rest on the one at your right hand,
on the one you have made strong for yourself.

**Then we will never forsake you;
give us life, and we will call on your name.**

Refrain:

Your face, God, shine on us and give us peace.

Gospel Reading Matthew 1: 18-25

(New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition)

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. But just when he

had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

"Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us."

When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

RESPONSE:

HYMN: VU #1 "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" V.1

*O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lowly exile here
until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

ANTHEM:

"Good Christian Friends, Rejoice"

SERMON: "Miss Interpretation?" Rev. Brian Goodings

***HYMN:** MV #79 "*Spirit, Open My Heart*"

Refrain:

**Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving,
Spirit, open my heart.**

1. God, replace my stony heart
with a heart that's kind and tender.
All my coldness and fear
to your grace I now surrender.

Refrain:

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving,
Spirit, open my heart.

2. Write your love upon my heart
as my law, my goal, my story.
In each thought, word, and deed,
may my living bring you glory.

Refrain:

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving,
Spirit, open my heart.

3. May I weep with those who weep,
share the joy of sister, brother.
In the welcome of Christ,
may we welcome one another.

Refrain:

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving,
Spirit, open my heart.

We Respond to God's Word

INVITATION to the OFFERING:

God's Kin(g)dom is all about love. Love for God. Love for neighbour. Love for yourself. Just like God gave God's-self to be with you, in Jesus, what better way for you to show

love than to give? Your resources. Yourself. When you give generously to this congregation and to the Mission and Service of the United Church, you help love to expand.

PRAYER of DEDICATION of OUR OFFERINGS:

O God, may gifts given here today, and those we have given by PAR [or on-line, or by e-transfer] help to expand love: love across the world, love within our homes, and love within ourselves. Amen.

Dedication VU #540

***Grant us God the grace of giving,
with a Spirit large and free,
That our selves and all our living
we may offer faithfully.***

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Mail: Grace UC, 140 Bruce St. S. PO Box 219, Thornbury, ON N0H 2P0
or **Offering Plate at the back of the sanctuary.**

Tap your debit card at the door of the church, or Donate to Grace United Church Thornbury through **CanadaHelps.org**. Our account is set up with them now and it is easy to register. Tax receipts are given automatically at the time of giving.

Care, Prayer, Share

Memories & Blessings Tree

PASTORAL PRAYER &The LORD'S PRAYER: (VU 910)

What's up at Grace?

We Begin our Service in the Name of Christ!

***CLOSING HYMN:**

VU #73 "The Virgin Mary Had a Baby Boy"

- 1 The virgin Mary had a baby boy,
the virgin Mary had a baby boy,
the virgin Mary had a baby boy,
and they say that his name is Jesus.
He come from the glory, (clap, clap)
he come from the glorious kingdom.
He come from the glory, (clap, clap)
he come from the glorious kingdom.
Oh, yes! believer! Oh, yes! believer!
He come from the glory, (clap, clap)
he come from the glorious kingdom.**
- 2 The angels sang when the baby was born,
the angels sang when the baby was born,
the angels sang when the baby was born,
and they say that his name is Jesus. R
He come from the glory, (clap, clap)
he come from the glorious kingdom.
He come from the glory, (clap, clap)
he come from the glorious kingdom.
Oh, yes! believer! Oh, yes! believer!
He come from the glory, (clap, clap)
he come from the glorious kingdom.**
- 3 The shepherds came where the baby was born,
the shepherds came where the baby was born,
the shepherds came where the baby was born,
and they say that his name is Jesus.
He come from the glory, (clap, clap)
he come from the glorious kingdom.
He come from the glory, (clap, clap)
he come from the glorious kingdom.
Oh, yes! believer! Oh, yes! believer!
He come from the glory, (clap, clap)
he come from the glorious kingdom.**

***COMMISSIONING:**

Our service now continues as we go forth into the world
which God loves.

Let us do so remembering that life is short, and we do not
have too much time to gladden the hearts of those who
travel the way with us.

So be swift to love and make haste to be kind and just.

Now may the blessing of God: Creator, Christ, and ever-
present Spirit be with us all this day and forevermore.
Amen.

***Benediction: HYMN: VU #60**

“O Come, All Ye Faithful” v.1

1 ***O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
come and behold him, born the King of angels;
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.***

POSTLUDE:

“Lo, He Comes With Clouds Descending”

***“There has been only one Christmas - the rest are
anniversaries.” ~ W.J. Cameron***

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Call to Worship & Prayers: Rev. Dr. Brian Goodings

Quotation: W.J. Cameron

HYMNS and SUNG VERSES:

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Prelude: "Pastorale" from "Messiah" G.F. Handel

Anthem: Good Christian Friends, Rejoice" Words: 14th century, trans John Mason Neale Music: German melody, harm. Gary Alan Smith 1988

Postlude: "Lo, He Comes With Clouds Descending" English Melody, 18th Century, arr. by C. Burton