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# Order of Service

*Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> December 2023*  
Fourth Sunday of Advent



Welcome to South Croydon United Church  
**United Service with St Paul's URC**

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This morning's service is being led by: **Rev'd Martin Knight**

## Notices

### Call to Worship

#### **COME, GOD-WITH-US:**

*Who braves our rejection and hurt,  
who holds us in acceptance and love.*

#### **COME, GOD-FOR-US:**

*Who whispers in our ears  
that each of us are beloved children.*

#### **COME, GOD-UNDER-US:**

*Who cradles us in arms that never grow weary;  
whose lap has room for all.*

#### **COME, GOD-OVER-US:**

*Who watches in the long silence of our night,  
that we might rest in peace.*

#### **COME, GOD-BESIDE-US:**

*Who steadies us when we falter,  
who lifts us up when we fall.*

#### **COME, GOD-BEHIND-US:**

*Who picks up all the faded dreams we drop along the way,  
and patchworks them into hope.*

**CAROL: 180 O COME, O COME, IMMANUEL**

*(omit vs.3)*

## Lighting the 4<sup>th</sup> Advent Candle    Love

Leader:        *A candle burns, the third marker of our Advent journey.  
As we continue, may we travel expectantly,  
with the joy of the Shepherd's.*

*As we continue,*

All:            **GOD, EMMANUEL, GUIDE OUR FOOTSTEPS**

Sing:          **None can see God above;  
Jesus shows how to love;  
thus may we Godward move,  
joined as sisters, brothers,  
finding him in others:  
    *Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring!*  
    *Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!*  
    *When he comes, when he comes,  
    who will make him welcome?***

*(Tune: 'Theodoric' 178 Singing the Faith)*

## *Blue Christmas*

**Reading:     Luke 2: 1-7**

At that time Emperor Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Roman Empire. <sup>2</sup>When this first census took place, Quirinius was the governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>Everyone, then, went to register himself, each to his own hometown.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to the town of Bethlehem in Judea, the birthplace of King David.

Joseph went there because he was a descendant of David. <sup>5</sup> He went to register with Mary, who was promised in marriage to him. She was pregnant, <sup>6</sup> and while they were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have her baby. <sup>7</sup> She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger—there was no room for them to stay in the inn.

## **CAROL: 217 SILENT NIGHT**

**Reading: Luke 2: 8-20**

<sup>8</sup> There were some shepherds in that part of the country who were spending the night in the fields, taking care of their flocks. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone over them. They were terribly afraid, <sup>10</sup> but the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid! I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people. <sup>11</sup> This very day in David's town your Savior was born—Christ the Lord! <sup>12</sup> And this is what will prove it to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

<sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great army of heaven's angels appeared with the angel, singing praises to God:

<sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased!"

<sup>15</sup> When the angels went away from them back into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us."

<sup>16</sup> So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and saw the baby lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When the shepherds saw him, they told them what the angel had said about the child. <sup>18</sup> All who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said. <sup>19</sup> Mary remembered all these things and thought deeply about them. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds went back, singing praises to God for all they had heard and seen; it had been just as the angel had told them.

**CAROL: 221 WHILE SHEPHERDS WATCHED  
THEIR FLOCKS BY NIGHT**

*Moving to Hope*

**CAROL: 204 IN THE BLEAK MIDWINTER**

**Litany of Remembrance and Hope**

*We light this first candle to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember, however dimly, their faces and their voices. We embrace and give thanks to you for the memories that bind them to us in love.*

**REFRESH, RESTORE, RENEW US, O GOD,  
AND LEAD US INTO LIGHT.**

*We light this second candle to remember the pain of loss: loss of relationships, loss of trust, loss of jobs, loss of health, loss of faith, loss of joy. We acknowledge and embrace the pain of the past, O God, and we offer it to you.*

**REFRESH, RESTORE, RENEW US, O GOD,  
AND LEAD US INTO LIGHT.**

*We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember the past weeks, months and even years that have been heavy with burdens. We hold them before you now.*

**REFRESH, RESTORE, RENEW US, O GOD,  
AND LEAD US INTO LIGHT.**

*We light this fourth candle to remember the gift of light and hope that God offers to us at Christmas, which also began in abandonment, insecurity, and darkness. We remember the One who shares our burdens, who knows our condition, and who himself is the Light of all people.*

**REFRESH, RESTORE, RENEW US, O GOD,  
AND LEAD US INTO LIGHT.**

## **River**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2S-EE\\_TO-pl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2S-EE_TO-pl)

**by Ben Platt**

*It's coming on Christmas  
They're cutting down trees  
They're putting up reindeer  
And singing songs of joy and peace  
Oh, I wish I had a river  
I could skate away on*

*But it don't snow here  
It stays pretty green  
I'm going to make a lot of money  
Then I'm going to quit this crazy scene  
I wish I had a river  
I could skate away on*

*I wish I had a river so long  
I would teach my feet to fly  
Oh, I wish I had a river so long  
I would teach my feet to fly*

## Passing the Peace

### Prayers

#### *The Lord's Prayer*

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,  
Source of all that is and that shall be,  
Father and Mother of us all,  
Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!  
The way of your justice be followed  
by the peoples of the world!  
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!  
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope  
and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.  
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.  
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.  
From trials too great to endure, spare us.  
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.

For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,  
now and for ever.  
Amen.

### **Offering & Dedication**

**CAROL: 190 ANGELS, FROM THE REALMS  
OF GLORY**  
*(omit vs.5)*

### Sending forth & Blessing

## **Where are you Christmas**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRqjFcP\\_aw0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRqjFcP_aw0)

***by the Piano Guys and Sarah Schmidt***

*I feel you Christmas  
I know I've found you  
You never fade away,  
The joy of Christmas  
Stays here inside us  
Fills each and every heart with love.  
Fill your heart with love.*



The **Methodist** Church 

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