

NEW YEAR'S EVE

Northampton Presbyterian Church

Watch Night Service

December 31, 2023

4:00 PM

*“Grant us grace, O God,
to begin this year in your faith
and to continue it in your favour,
that being guided in all our doings
and guarded all our days,
we may spend ourselves in your service
and finally, by your grace,
attain to the glory of eternal life;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.”*

~ W E Orchard, 1877-1955



PRELUDE

Quiet Peace

*During the Prelude, the light is carried into the sanctuary and all
candles on the Advent wreath are lit.*

WELCOME

Peterson

RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP

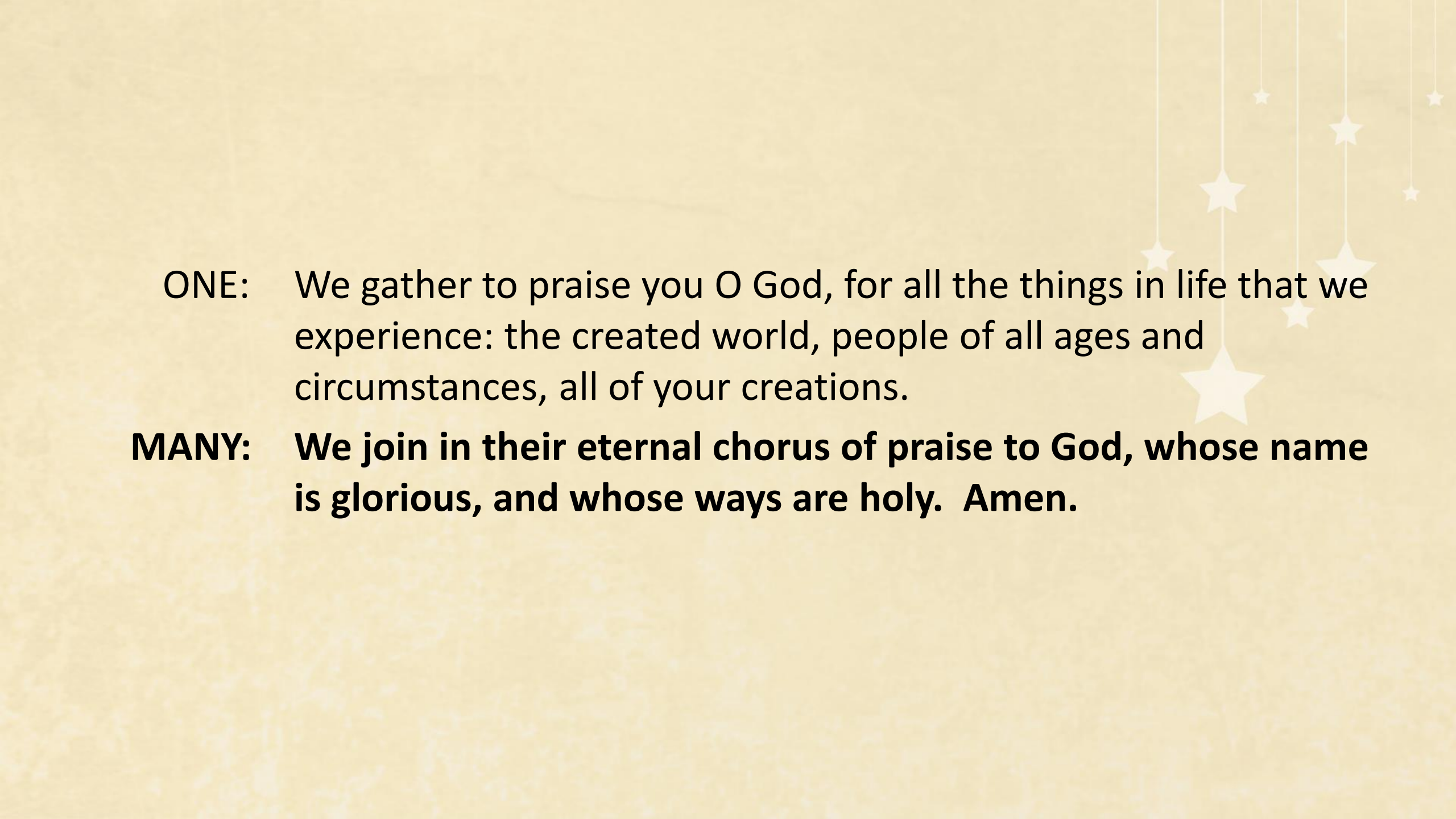
(From Psalm 148)

ONE: We gather to praise you O God, for all the things we can see, and sometimes understand: the sun, moon and stars, the clouds and changing weather.

MANY: We join in their eternal chorus of praise to God.

ONE: We gather to praise you, O God, for all the things that we cannot see or understand: all heaven's angels, outer space, and the skies above us.

MANY: We join in their eternal chorus of praise to God.



ONE: We gather to praise you O God, for all the things in life that we experience: the created world, people of all ages and circumstances, all of your creations.

MANY: We join in their eternal chorus of praise to God, whose name is glorious, and whose ways are holy. Amen.

HYMN

'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime

UNE JEUNE PUCELLE

A decorative graphic in the top right corner of the page. It consists of several white, five-pointed stars of varying sizes. Each star is attached to a thin, vertical white line that extends upwards towards the top edge of the page, giving the impression of stars hanging from above. The stars are scattered across the right side of the page, with some larger stars and some smaller ones.

**'Twas in the moon of wintertime,
When all the birds had fled,
Great Spirit, Lord of all the earth
Sent angel choirs instead.
Before their light the stars grew dim
And wandering hunters heard the hymn:
Jesus, your king, is born;
Jesus is born. In excelsis gloria.**

**Within a lodge of broken bark
The tender babe was found.
A ragged robe of rabbit skin
Enwrapped his beauty round.
But as the hunter braves drew nigh
The angel song rang loud and high:
Jesus, your king, is born;
Jesus is born. In excelsis gloria.**



**The earliest moon of wintertime
Is not so round and fair
As was the ring of glory on
The helpless infant there.
The chiefs from far before him knelt
With gifts of fox and beaver pelt.
Jesus, your king, is born;
Jesus is born. In excelsis gloria.**



**O children of the forest free,
The angel song is true:
The holy child of earth and heaven
Is born today for you.
Come, kneel before the radiant boy
Who brings you beauty, peace, and joy.
Jesus, your king, is born;
Jesus is born. In excelsis gloria.**



A READING FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

Isaiah 61:10-62:3

A RESPONSIVE PRAYER OF CONFESSION

ONE: Lord Jesus, yours are the seasons and the ages. Give us a new heart and a new spirit:

MANY: Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

ONE: Jesus Christ, you are the beginning and the end of all that is, including our lives. Make a new beginning with all of us:

MANY: Christ, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.

ONE: Lord Jesus, you breathe your Spirit on all creation. Make our old world new again:

MANY: Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

ONE: Have mercy on us, Lord, and let your forgiveness and love come down on us day after day.

MANY: Lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

We pause for a moment of silent, personal confession.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE AND PARDON

(Revelation 21:1-6)

ONE: Behold: there is a new heaven, a new earth and a new city, where the river of life flows, where the tree of life bears fruit in every season. This heaven, this city, this river, this tree are a vision of your life reborn, restored, and renewed.

MANY: **Thanks be to God!**

RESPONSE: HYMN

He Came Down

He came down that we may have love;

He came down that we may have love;

He came down that we may have love;

Hallelujah forevermore.



HE CAME DOWN

**He came down that we may have light;
He came down that we may have light;
He came down that we may have light;
Hallelujah forevermore.**



**He came down that we may have peace;
He came down that we may have peace;
He came down that we may have peace;
Hallelujah forevermore.**



**He came down that we may have joy;
He came down that we may have joy;
He came down that we may have joy;
Hallelujah forevermore.**



A READING FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT



Luke 2:22-40

GATHERING UP THE FRAGMENTS

*You are invited to write on the **white paper** those things you are leaving behind from the past year and bring them forward, dropping them in the bowl. The pastor will offer a word of blessing and we will sing the first verse of “All Through the Night.”*

**Sleep, my child, and peace attend thee
All through the night;
Guardian angels God will send thee
All through the night.
Soft the drowsy hours are creeping,
Hill and vale in slumber sleeping,
I my loving vigil keeping,
All through the night.**





*You are invited to write on the **blue paper** your dreams for the coming year and bring them forward, leaving them in the basket.*

The pastor will offer a word of blessing and we will sing

“All Through the Night,” verse 4:

**Sleep, Star of Faith the dark adorning,
All through the night;
Leads us fearless toward the morning,
All through the night.
Though our hearts be wrapped in sorrow,
From the home of dawn we borrow,
Promise of a glad tomorrow,
All through the night.**



PRAYER AT THE THRESHOLD

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

HYMN

Gentle Mary Laid Her Child

**Gentle Mary laid her child
Lowly in a manger;
There He lay, the undefiled,
To the world a stranger.
Such a babe in such a place,
Can he be the Savior?
Ask the saved of all the race
Who have found his favor.**

TEMPUS ADEST FLORIDUM

A decorative graphic in the top right corner of the page. It consists of several white, five-pointed stars of varying sizes. Each star is attached to a thin, vertical white line that extends upwards towards the top edge of the page, giving the impression of stars hanging from above. The stars are scattered across the right side of the page, with some larger stars and some smaller ones.

**Angels sang about his birth;
Wise men sought and found him;
Heaven's star shone brightly forth,
Glory all around him.
Shepherds saw the wondrous sight,
Heard the angels singing;
All the plains were lit that night,
All the hills were ringing.**



**Gentle Mary laid her child
Lowly in a manger;
He is still the undefiled,
But no more a stranger.
Son of God, of humble birth,
Beautiful the story;
Praise his name in all the earth;
Hail the King of glory!**



A RESPONSIVE READING

Seeing God's Salvation

ONE: Simeon saw God's salvation in a little child: a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to the people Israel.

MANY: We too long to see God's salvation: healing for broken bodies, hope for broken lives, light for those in the darkness of war, warmth for those in the chill of fear. We long to see the glory of angels, peace on earth, good news for all. Harbingers of joy, glimpses of grace on earth as it is in heaven.

ONE: Simeon saw God's salvation in a little child: Radiant light, glory streaming down stretching across the centuries to us today.

MANY: Our eyes can see God's salvation too: healing for broken bodies, hope for broken lives, light for those in the darkness of war, warmth for those in the chill of fear.

ONE: Open our ears to hear good news of peace today. Open our eyes to see glimpses of your grace in enemy and friend.

MANY: Open our lips to sing with joy. Open our lives to bear fruit for your reign, on earth as it is in heaven.

ONE: Like Simeon, we have seen God's salvation.

MANY: And his name is Jesus.

HYMN

Of the Father's Love Begotten

**Of the Father's love begotten,
Ere the worlds began to be,
He is Alpha and Omega;
He the source, the ending he,
Of the things that are, that have been,
And that future years shall see,
Evermore and evermore!**

DIVINUM MYSTERIUM

A decorative graphic in the top right corner consisting of several white stars of varying sizes hanging from thin white vertical lines against a light beige background.

**By his Word was all created;
He commanded; it was done:
Heaven and earth and depths of ocean,
Universe of three in one,
All that sees the moon's soft shining,
All that breathes beneath the sun,
Evermore and evermore!**



**O that birth forever blessed
When the Virgin, full of grace,
By the Holy Ghost conceiving,
Bore the Savior of our race,
And the babe, the world's Redeemer,
First revealed His sacred face,
Evermore and evermore!**



**This is he whom seers in old time
Chanted of with one accord,
Whom the voices of the prophets
Promised in their faithful word.
Now he shines, the long-expected.
Let creation praise its Lord,
Evermore and evermore!**



**O ye heights of heaven, adore him.
Angel hosts, his praises sing.
Powers, dominions, bow before him,
And extol our God and King.
Let no tongue on earth be silent;
Every voice in concert ring,
Evermore and evermore!**



**Christ, to thee with God the Father,
And, O Holy Ghost, to thee,
Hymn and chant and high thanksgiving
And unwearied praises be,
Honor, glory, and dominion,
And eternal victory,
Evermore and evermore!**



RESPONSIVE BENEDICTION

ONE: Loving God, now your servants may go in peace, just as your word has promised;

MANY: For our own eyes have seen your salvation made ready with everyone looking on, a revealing light for outsiders, and a glory for all your faithful people.

ONE: Grace mercy and peace, from the Creator, Savior and Counsellor, be with you now and ever more. Amen!

POSTLUDE

Auld Lang Syne



Scottish Folk Song

WORSHIP NOTES:

The History of Watch Night:

The Indigenous, Moravian, and Methodist histories of Watch Night have been less well-known than the African/African American practice that commemorates the slaves who waited for the Emancipation Proclamation to take effect. But there is a long history of Watch Night observances for thousands of years prior to 1862.

The actual beginnings of the celebration in America trace back to the Iroquois Confederacy and its week-long Cold Moon or Midwinter Festival in January. This celebration is a spiritual tradition that is thousands of years old, observed not only by the Iroquois but also by the Kwakiutl in the Pacific Northwest and even by some Southwest US groups.

To this older celebration, Americans have added the Moravian concept, which is the next advent of the celebration on the timeline, followed by the Traditions of John Wesley and the Methodist Church, and finally, American slaves awaiting the Emancipation Proclamation to take effect with a vigil on Freedom's Eve on December 31, 1862.

Although the practice began in the Pacific Northwest millennia ago, the Iroquois Confederacy Midwinter Ceremony is held in January after December's Full Cold Moon. That the ceremony occurs in both places is a marker for migration of the Native North Americans of the northwest lands to the eastern woodlands over thousands of years.

When the Pleiades and the Big Dipper becomes clear at night just overhead and the moon is full, the new spiritual year begins. Some groups wait for the new moon to occur, but the new year's celebration lasts six to nine days. Some activities last for 48 hours, creating a Watch Night vigil. This New Year's celebration is about dreams for the future and the release of fulfilled dreams of the past. It is also about the triumph of good over evil.

Both the Kwakiutl of Vancouver Island, BC and the six nations of the Iroquois in the American Midwest and East and Canadian East celebrate with huge masks of the animal founders of their tribal groups and clans. The male dancers who wear the outsized masks are often called Uncles or Big Heads. They announce the new year feast or potlatch and invite the community and guests to participate. On the west coast, this is done in a plank house or "Big House", while in the east, it is done in the longhouse.

The Uncles of the group perform the Stirring of the Ashes, stirring old cooking fires and lighting new fires in thanksgiving for what the Creator provided in the past year in hopes of more blessings in the new year. A series of dances are performed during the celebration week, including a Feather Dance, Founders' Dance (see photos above), and sometimes a Bear Dance. The latter dance is an opportunity to ask for blessings and cure of sickness among the community; stories are told of past healing as well.

At the end of the six to nine days of bringing in the new year, a speaker summarizes the past year and hopes for the new year. Often, a new tribal or clan council has been elected and are inducted into service.

Excerpted from an article written by Patty Inghish MS (author) from USA and Asgardia, the First Space Nation on December 21, 2016, updated on November 9, 2023 and posted on Owlcation: Watch Night December 31, Built on Thousands of Years of Diverse Traditions - Owlcation

The **Call to Worship** is written by Joan Stott, and posted on The Timeless Psalms.

<http://www.wesleychurchgeelong.net>. © 2012 Joan Stott – "The Timeless Psalms" RCL Psalm Year B, used with permission.

The **Prayer of Confession** is posted on Liturgy Alive: Models of Celebration.

The **Liturgy of Assurance** is adapted from a prayer by Christine Sine on Godspace. <http://godspace-msa.com> and posted on the website of the Irricana United Church.

<http://irricanaunited.efirehose.net/Jan%206%2013%20Epiphany.pdf>

The **Prayer at the Threshold** is written by Jan L. Richardson in Through the Advent Door: Entering a Contemplative Christmas and posted on Prayers and Creeds. <http://prayersandcreeds.wordpress.com>

The **Reading** is written by Dr. Sheila Klassen-Wiebe, Associate Professor of New Testament at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The **Benediction** is written by Bruce Prewer and posted on Bruce Prewer's Homepage.

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