Welcome and Acknowledgements

Welcome to Roxboro United Church.
Before we can begin our worship,
we need to acknowledge that the land we live on is God's land.
Called Turtle Island for thousands of years by the people in this region:
Abenakis, Algonquin, Eeyou, Huron-Wendat, Innu, Kanien'kehá:ka, Mi'kmaq
and others, who were and are faithful stewards to the Creator's land.
We worship together today seeking reconciliation, justice and well being
for all the beings, flora and fauna, who live here.
We also acknowledge that the Church has made itself
the gate keeper of the faith,
excluding many for their gender, sexuality and ability.
Roxboro United is an Affirming Ministry of The United Church of Canada
and has made public declaration of the past and ongoing sin of the Church
in denying membership and participation, and openly seeking to dehumanize
those who identify with the 2SLGBTQ+ communities.
At Roxboro you find a place of welcome, sacredness,
affirmation and community.
All are welcome here.
Now we can worship God.

Introduction

Welcome to this special service celebrating the Reign of Christ; the last Sunday of the Church year. We will be telling the story of the life of Jesus, beginning at the resurrection and ending with the story of his birth.

We will also celebrate our call to be disciples of Christ as we honour the first followers of Jesus who embodied his ministry; and recall our own commitment to follow Jesus' way.

Centring Prayer and Candle lighting

Loving God, as we trace the life of Christ,

we know eternal life in his resurrection
we face our mortality in his death, we receive his call to be disciples,
we face temptation with his life living in us,
we are baptized in his spirit in his baptism,
and we are born anew in his birth.

Resurrection

Resurrection is difficult to explain.
The Gospel accounts differ in details.
The real witness to the good news of the resurrection is not found in church
doctrine, but rather in the lives of the disciples both then and now.
Mary Magdalene, in sharing her grief with a gardener,
realizes that she is in the presence of Jesus.
Two disciples meet a stranger on the road
and tell him of the events of Jesus' death, and pour out their souls.
After they listen to the stranger who opens to them the sacred story
and they eat a meal together, their eyes are opened
and they realize that they are in the presence of Jesus;
who then blesses them, disappears, and fills them with hope.
In Jerusalem, after the disciples lock themselves inside for fear of arrest,
Jesus appears to them and tells them to not be afraid.
He then breathes on them, declares 'Peace' and disappears into thin air.
They find the courage to proclaim a life of resurrection.
All of these accounts are simple ways of trying to explain Resurrection;
life beyond death, love beyond hate,
tolerance beyond apathy, inclusion beyond exile.
The early church moved Sabbath from the last day of the week
to the first day; the day of the sun, the day of Resurrection.

Reflection Song — Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Give Thanks **VU179**

The Crucifixion

> When they came to the place called the skull, they crucified Jesus … Jesus said, "Father forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And the people stood by watching, but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, God's chosen one!" The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" Luke 23.33-37

In the taunts of crowd and soldiers, there seems to be bitter truth;
if Jesus is indeed King of the Jews and God's Chosen One,
why was he being crucified on a cross?
The bitterness of their jibes sinks deep into the soul of Jesus.
Could his life have been wasted?
The Gospels of Mark and Matthew record that in his agony
Jesus calls out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"
This sentiment rings true for anyone feeling abandoned.
Still, the church does not see the crucifixion as defeat.
On the cross, Jesus gives the supreme revelation of what he had said
to his disciples:

> "If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life?" Matthew 16.24-26

Jesus chooses reconciliation in his suffering when he says: "Father, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing."
This is the heart of the Gospel; we choose forgiveness over spite, we choose love over hate, we choose life over death.

Reflection Song When The Son Of God Was Dying **VU153**

The Last Supper

During the last last week of Jesus' life, he teaches in the Temple
and upsets many of the authorities.
On the Thursday before the Passover celebration,
Jesus gathers his disciples to prepare for this most holy Jewish meal.
Guests arriving at a home are expecting the custom
of having a servant wash the dust off their feet.
John's Gospel tells us that Jesus takes on the role of the servant
and washes his disciples' feet saying,
"I, your Lord and Teacher, have just washed your feet.
You, then, should wash one another's feet."
During the meal, Jesus takes ordinary bread, made by human hands,
and calls it his body, and then after the meal he takes a cup of wine,
and calls it his blood.
He uses these to point to a new relationship with each other and with God;
one where we embody God's love and where God's Spirit flows through our veins.
When the hour had come, Jesus got up from grace's side,
took off his glory, tied humanity around his heart to cleanse us of our sins.
In the midst of his friends, in the congregation of his enemies,
he kept the promises made to God: to love us to the very end.
Our friend, he welcomed all;
our teacher, he modelled the life of obedience and faith;
our example, he endured the snares of death, that we might have life with God.
Every time we eat the bread, our brokenness is made whole;
every time we drink from the cup, we receive unceasing grace;
every time we come to the table, we remember that mystery called faith:
In remembrance, we mourn Christ's death.
In remembrance, we look to the day of resurrection.
In remembrance, we are aware of his presence.
Now that the hour is come, we ask God:
Send your Spirit upon the gifts we eat and drink.
As you cradle the bread in your gentleness, break it, give it to us,
feed us with your compassion that we might be made whole,
and, in our healing, become servants to the world.
As you take the cup, mingle its juices with your tears of hope,
so we might carry this gift to all.

Communion is shared

Reflection Song — Shout For Joy **VU482**

Jesus enters Jerusalem

On the first day of Jesus' last week, which we call Palm/Passion Sunday,
we find Jesus staying at the home of his friends
Mary, Martha and Lazarus, in Bethany.
In the morning, with his disciples and other pilgrims
who are going to celebrate Passover, Jesus sets out for Jerusalem.
As they walk, crowds of Galilean pilgrims hail Jesus as the Messiah.
They cry out, "Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord."
Jesus goes directly to the Temple and is appalled at what he sees
happening in the Court of the Gentiles.
There are money changers making huge profits
by changing Roman money into Temple currency.
There are merchants selling animals and birds for sacrifice
at huge profits.
The booths of the money changers and merchants belong to Annas,
the High Priest; he makes the profit.
It is exploitation in the name of God
and it is happening in the Gentile Court of the Temple
where the authorities think it doesn't matter.
Jesus is filled with anger at this.
He drives out the merchants and the money changers.
He quotes the prophet Isaiah saying:
"My Temple will be called a house of prayer for all nations."
In other words, God wants justice for all people.

Reflection Song — Hosanna, Loud Hosanna **VU482**

Ministry in Capernaum

Jesus' preaching and healing ministry mainly takes place
in and around the small Galilean city of Capernaum.
Mark's Gospel, which is the oldest of the four in the Bible,
summarizes the message of Jesus in these words:

> "After John had been committed to prison, Jesus came to Galilee announcing the good news about God and saying: 'The right time has come, and the Kingdom of God is near.'"

It is good news for all people – for the poor and the rich,
for the sick and the well, for young and old, for women and men.
It is good news about building your life
on the firm foundation of God's love.
It is good news about how we are part of something greater than we are,
and that we are being reconciled to the world and each other.
It is good news about caring for those
by the side of the road who are hurt.
It is good news about God's peace within us.
It is good news that we are whole persons
and that God wants the world to be whole.
It is the good news that God is with us, alive in the world.
In his first sermon in Nazareth,
Luke's Gospel records that Jesus gave his good news this way:
He stood up to read,
and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him.
He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

> "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because God has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. God has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

To receive the good news, Jesus says we need to repent; to turn around
from our self-centredness and walk with him toward God.
Jesus says he would make every sacrifice to bring all of us
into a loving relationship with God and one another.

Reflection Song — He Came Singing Love **VU359**

Choosing Disciples by the Sea of Galilee

Jesus begins his ministry
by stating that the world is filled with the presence of God.
He attracts many followers
by his message of God's compassion and reconciliation.
Of those followers, the Gospels identify twelve as part of Jesus' inner circle.
They are common people from all walks of life.
The first disciple is Andrew, an uneducated fisherman.
He has a brother named Simon who he convinces to listen to Jesus.
Simon's faith in Jesus' ministry earns him the name Peter,
which means Rock,
and he eventually becomes a great leader of the church in Jerusalem.
Andrew becomes the patron saint of Scotland
after his bones are brought to Scotland by St. Rule where he is shipwrecked.
Women also become central to Jesus' ministry,
although the Church tried to erase their prominence
and voices through the centuries.
Luke's Gospel mentions
that there are women who also followed Jesus as disciples.
Their names are Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna,
as well as "many others."
Matthew's Gospel tells us that Jesus says
that the woman who anoints him at the house of Simon the leper in Bethany
will be remembered where ever the good news is proclaimed.
Today, we hear the call to be Jesus' disciples of The Way.

Reflection Music I Wanna Thank You, Lord *performed by the Band*

Baptism in the Jordan River

Before Jesus begins his ministry,
John the Baptist is preaching in the wilderness along the Jordan river.
John attracts large crowds who come to hear his message of repentance,
and to be baptized in the Jordan.
One day Jesus goes to hear John and asks to be baptized.
At first John resists Jesus' request, but then relents.
When Jesus emerges from the water he hears a voice say:
"You are my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."
At his baptism, God's Spirit equips Jesus to do God's work.
At our baptism, we also hear God call us sons and daughters,
and God's Spirit comes to us and equips us to work for God's promised new world.
Our baptism calls us to live Jesus' way of seeing the world.
So we listen to God's voice say to us:
"You are my beloved, I am pleased with you!"

Reflection Song — Wash Us, God, Your Sons And Daughters (For Adult Baptism) **VU442**

Bethlehem

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke tell us that Jesus was born in Bethlehem
where King David was born; a little town about 12 kilometres south of Jerusalem.
Bethlehem means "The House of Bread" and this is where our Bread of Life is born.
As John's Gospel puts it, the Word became flesh and lived among us.
The Word, which God speaks of through the prophets;
the Word of righteousness, love, holiness, serving and mercy,
is manifested in a human being.
As much as God can be God in human flesh, this happens in Jesus.
Jesus faces disease, ignorance, hunger and temptation,
all through the eyes of God's love.
Jesus shows us that God's love is not limited,
but remains perfect in any circumstances.
We acknowledge that God is born in Jesus,
therefore making all human births special and of high importance.

Reflection Song — Once In Royal David's City **VU62**

Advent: Shaking it up

Advent: the four weeks before Christmas is a time of preparation.
We prepare for a world where God is shaking thing up.
Zechariah, a devout man of God learns that his wife Elizabeth,
who is well past her child bearing years, is pregnant.
He is struck dumb with disbelief.
When his son is born, Zechariah realizes that God is involved
and is shaking things up and he finally speaks.
His first words are his son's name: John.
Shortly after Elizabeth's pregnancy,
a young unmarried girl named Mary discovers she is pregnant.
She sings a song that states that God is involved and is shaking things up.
Her fiancé, Joseph; also a devout man is very troubled by this.
One night, while he dreams, Joseph gets the message
that God is involved and is shaking things up,
so he decides to go through with the marriage
and be the father for the child Jesus.
On the night Jesus is born, shepherds are told of the birth
and they spread the news that there has been a special birth
and that God is involved and is shaking things up.
Sages from the east, who are studying the stars see strange signs.
They realize that God is involved and is shaking things up,
and they begin a long journey
that ends with this young family of Mary, Joseph and Jesus.
As we approach this Advent season,
we open our hearts and minds to the message of the angels:
God is involved and is shaking things up.

Offering

Corporate Confession of Faith

We are not alone, we live in God's world.

We believe in God:
who has created and is creating,
who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh,
to reconcile and make new,
who works in us and others by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:
to celebrate God's presence,
to live with respect in Creation,
to love and serve others,
to seek justice and resist evil,
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,
our judge and our hope.
In life, in death, in life beyond death,
God is with us.

We are not alone.

Thanks be to God.

The Cosmic Christ *John 1.1-5, 10-14*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us,
and we have seen his glory,
the glory as of a father's only son,
full of grace and truth.

Closing Song People Look East **VU9**