GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO

Christmas Eve through the eyes of shepherds and angels

La Sainte Nuit vue par les bergers et les anges

directed by ✧ dirigé par
Joel Peters

Paroisse ✧ Ascension of Our Lord ✧ Parish

Sunday, November 30, 2025 at 2pm ✧ Dimanche, 30 novembre 2025 à 14h

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Words of Welcome from our Pastor

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

Today, November 30th is the Feast of Saint Andrew, the first disciple to be called by Jesus, and the first apostle to announce that he had found the Messiah, the Anointed One.

Today as well, is the First Sunday of Advent, the four-week season observed by Christians around the world in preparation for Christmas. It is a sacred period of prayer, penance and reflection as we make ready our hearts and homes for the Nativity of the Lord.

How appropriate that we celebrate these two liturgical occasions, the Feast of Saint Andrew and the beginning of Advent, with a concert, featuring pieces of music and carols devoted to the recalling of what God has done for us in sending His Son Jesus to reveal the hope and promise of salvation.

We are grateful to Joel Peters, Choir Director at Ascension of Our Lord Parish, and our accomplished Ascension Choristers for devoting so much time in preparing, what I believe will be an enjoyable afternoon of music. Thank you also to the musicians who will perform with the Choir, and all those parishioners and friends who have contributed financially and supported their efforts. We are grateful to all of you for attending our concert this afternoon.

Happy Saint Andrew's Day and have a truly uplifting Advent season!

Respectfully,
Father L. Mac Eachen,
pastor

Photo by Monika Ag

Concert Description

"Silence more lovely than music." An intriguing notion. These are the words Clive Sansom writes in the second stanza of his poem The Shepherd's Carol (1945). His scene is one of serenity—quiet hills, a stillness so complete that he dares to call it lovelier than music itself.

I find myself asking: How could silence be more lovely than music? Something feels incomplete. What was happening before? Were the sheep unruly? Were the shepherds overwhelmed? Surely the loveliness of the silence lay not in the silence alone but in the relief it brought. And nothing lasts. Soon, "a voice from the sky" disturbs the frosted meadows with the message of "God being born." The silence sets the scene for the ordinary to become extraordinary.

And still, I can't help but think that Sansom suggests silence as an opposite to music. For me, silence is essential to music. Before the first violin note, it is the quiet of the concert hall that invites the sound in. And often, after a moving performance, the hall falls silent—no applause, no movement. It is a silence born of awe: an entire symphony heard, grasped, felt, and somehow understood in the moment after the final chord dies away.

In this sense, the silence is more lovely than music because it allows the message to be heard: the message of Gloria in excelsis Deo: "Glory to God in the highest! Today is born a savior." And perhaps the silence after the message could also be said to be more lovely than music, as it allows the essential moment of reflection, of decision to carry the message to others.

Message is what unites the lowly shepherds and the terrifying angels: both become messengers, bearers of tidings of great joy. Today's program highlights their perspectives as witnesses of the Nativity—from Rutter's rousing depiction of the angels to Chilcott's serene setting of Sansom's poem, to selections from Handel's ever-endearing Messiah.

Joel Peters,

Director of Music and Organist

Photo by Joel Peters

Concert Program

Berceuse à Pierre, op. 61 nº 6	Rachel Laurin (1961-2023)
Joy to the World!	George Friedrich Handel (1685-1759)
The Shepherd's Carol	Bob Chilcott (b. 1955)
Prelude and Fugue in C major, BWV 545 [1]	Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
Huron Carol [2,3,4]	attr. Jean de Brébeuf (1593-1649)
Karácsonyi bölcsődal (trad. Hungarian Christmas lullaby)	arranged by Lajos Bárdos (1899-1986)
Angels' Carol	John Rutter (b. 1945)
The Inn Keepers Carol [5]	Richard Warner (1908-1983)
L'Adieu des Bergers à la Sainte Famille	Hector Berlioz (1803–1869)
Christmas Time is Here *(Collection)*	Vince Guaraldi (1928-1976)
Gloria In Excelsis Deo [4,2]	Joel Peters (b. 1988)
Angels we have heard on High	traditional
Pifa (Pastoral Symphony)	George Friedrich Handel (1685-1759)
Recit: There were shepherds in the Field [4]	
Recit: And lo, the Angel of the Lord [4]	
Recit: And the Angel said unto them [4]	
Recit: And suddenly there was an Angel [4]	
Chorus: Glory to God [4]	
Solo: Rejoice Greatly [2]	
Chorus: Hallellujah	

Sing with us!

SOLOISTS

[1] Jonathan Niemi (organ)
[2] Kathryn Riopel (soprano)
[3] Normand Marc Croteau (baritone)
[4] Emma Battel (soprano)
[5] Noah Gabriel (baritone)

Sing with us!

JOY TO THE WORLD

1. Joy to the world; the Lord is come;
Let Earth receive her King;
Let ev'ry Heart prepare him room,
And Heav'n and nature sing.

2. Joy to the Earth, the Savior reigns,
Let men their Songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains,
Repeat the sounding joy.

3. He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness,
And wonders of his love.

HURON CAROL

All verses sung by Soloists

Refrain: *(Audience and Choir)*
1. 3. Jesus your King is born
Jesus is born, In Excelsis Gloria!
2. 4. Cette étoile marchante,
Jésus est né, In Excelsis Gloria!

ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH

1. Angels we have heard on high,
Sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains.

Refrain:
Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

2. Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
Which inspire your heavn'ly song?
[Refrain]

3. Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing.
Come, adore on bended knee
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.
[Refrain]

Please turn your device on silent.
Thank you!

Basilica of Budapest, Hungary
Photo by Monika Ag

Joel Peters – Music Director & Organist

Photo by Joel Peters

Composer and organist Joel Peters hails from Waldheim, a small town in Saskatchewan.

The music of Joel Peters is performed throughout Europe and North America and is published by Firehead Editions and H.T. FitzSimons Company. His compositions and improvisations include works for piano, voice, strings, trumpet, humming pedestrian, organ and electronics. In 2018 he won the international composition, Marilyn Mason Award in Organ Composition given by the American Guild of Organists for his piece entitled Eine Wolke Nahm Ihn Weg. In 2022, he premiered Stille und Sein, commissioned by patrons of the Canadian International Organ Competition.

As a soloist, Peters has appeared at numerous festivals, including the Montreal Bach Festival, Les Amis de L'Orgue at the Maison Symphonique with the SMCQ, and most recently Saskatoon Saskatchewan as guest artist with the North Sky Chorale.

Among other prizes and awards, Peters received the Public's Choice award at the Concours OSM Manuvie (2016). In 2014, he graduated with a Master of Music in organ performance from McGill University studying with Hans-Ola Ericsson and in 2017 with an Artist Diploma. He received perfect scores from the jury members for his final Artist Diploma recital at L'Oratoire St. Joseph, premiering his own composition: Dyptich for the Baptism of our Lord.

He is co-artistic director and co-founder of Earth World Collaborative, a creative force generating new music, art, film and literature through collaboration.

Since May 2021, Joel is currently Music Director and Organist at Ascension of Our Lord in Westmount.

Choir Members

SOPRANO
Emma Battel*
Roselyn Grant
Olivia Tse

ALTO
Kathryn Riopel*
Monika Ag
Stephanie Doyle
Hisako Egan
Jean Enright
Patricia Smith
Sonia Struthers
Clara Schulze
Lucia Vizcaino

TENOR
Daniel Ginga*
Eamon Egan
Mishael Eusebio
André Garneau
Donat Taddeo

BASS
Noah Gabriel*
Joseph Blain
Normand Marc Croteau
Christopher Keene
John Palumba
Tim Wilfong

* section leads

Cello – Jessica Korotkin
Violin II - Noemy Gagnon-Lafrenais
Violin II - Etienne Pemberton

Viola - Mayu Egan
Timpani - Parker Bert
Harpsichord/Organ - Jonathan Niemi
Trumpet - Félix Gauthier

Organ/Piano/Conductor - Joel Peters

We would like to thank our fantastic section leads for their support throughout the year!
Interested in joining our choir? Contact Joel Peters at music@ascensionofourlord.ca

Photo by Monika Ag

McGill University Voice students – Section Leads

Samantha Gaetz Photography

Emma Battel is a soprano from Kingston, Ontario. She earned her Bachelor of Music at Western University, graduating with the Gold Medal in Music for Honours Performance Voice. Emma received her Master's of Music at McGill University in 2024 with Dr. Tracy Smith Bessette where she then completed a Post-Graduate Artist Diploma in 2025. Her performed roles include Blanche (Dialogues des Carmélites), Cendrillon (Cendrillon), and Donna Elvira (Don Giovanni).

In the 2025 season, Emma presented excerpts from Mozart's Le Nozze di Figaro as Countess Almaviva through TGIF Opera with the Kingston Youth and Community Orchestras. She was recently a finalist in the 2025 Toronto Mozart Vocal Competition. Emma can be heard alongside her sister Sophia Battel as part of their soprano/cello sister ensemble Battel Duo. In her free time, Emma enjoys walking her Montréal neighbourhood, playing with her cat Oscar, and reading. This is Emma's fourth year as the soprano section lead at Ascension. She is grateful to Joel Peters and Ascension choir for welcoming her to Montréal with their generosity and wit.

Photo by Stephanie Sedlbauer

Kathryn Riopel is a soprano from Elk Grove Village, IL. She holds a Bachelor of Music in Voice & Opera Performance and Bachelor of Arts in Dance from Northwestern University. While at Northwestern, she was a section leader in the Northwestern University Marching Band (Drum Line), choreographer and director of several Dance Department productions, member of the Opera Projects for Undergraduate Singers (OPUS) and Renaissance Singers, and soprano in the Bienen Contemporary and Early Vocal Ensemble under the baton of Donald Nally. She relocated to Montreal, QC in 2022 and earned the Master's of Music in Voice & Opera Performance at McGill University in 2024, studying with Dominique Labelle.

Recent credits include the title role in Jéhanne (Opera Quest Victoria), Handel's Semele (Opera McGill), Madame Z (lead role) in Brother 12: A Rock Opera, and soprano/alto soloist at Ascension of Our Lord Church in Westmount, Montreal QC. She was a semi-finalist in the prestigious Wirth Vocal Prize Competition at McGill University in March 2024 and finalist in the Opera Birmingham Competition in April 2025. She sang the role of Aphrodite in the April 2025 world premier of the Sapphic Passion, a new oratorio developed by Sapphonix Collective (a queer multidisciplinary arts collective based in Montreal, QC). She enjoys performing a wide range of repertoire including Baroque/early music, oratorio, opera, art song, musical theater, and choral works.

McGill University Voice students – Section Leads

Daniel Ginga is a Moldovan American tenor born in Wisconsin, raised in Washington D.C. and educated in Canada. He completed his Bachelor's of Music at McGill University in 2024, studying under Stefano Algieri. He would go on to obtain a performance diploma from McGill before starting his Master's program in Fall 2025.
At McGill he participated in several opera productions, as both an Assistant Stage Director and as a member of the choir for several years. The Ascension Choir has been his favorite job to date, and he is grateful for the wonderful experience it's been.

Photo by Joel Peters

Photo by Ellix Cain

American-Canadian Baritone Noah Gabriel (he/they) is a vibrant singer and performer based in Montreal, Quebec. He began performing in high-caliber youth choirs across Canada, and has moved on to singing in professional choirs across Quebec and the United States. Noah is starting a Masters of Early Music Performance at McGill University and continues to perform in leading Early Music ensembles, orchestral choirs, and will be making their chorus debut with the Opera de Montreal in the spring. Outside of performance, they love making coffee, cooking, and playing games with friends.

Jonathan Niemi is an organist and pianist from Niagara, Ontario. He began organ lessons at the age of 13 with Dr. Judy Congdon of Houghton University, where he spent two years of his undergraduate degree in organ performance. At Houghton, he also studied piano under Dr. William Newbrough and played in the Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Theodore Kuchar. He has since transferred to the Schulich School of Music at McGill University and is studying organ with Dr. Isabelle Demers. Jonathan claimed first place in the AGO Regional Competition for Young Organists in Buffalo, NY. and was a finalist in the 2023 AGO Quimby Regional Competition for Young Organists in Bronxville, NY. Since then, he has performed in both solo and joint recitals in Rochester, Houghton, and Buffalo, NY, as well as throughout Niagara Ontario.

Photo by Joel Peters

Ascension Choir And Music Ministry Fund

Music Ministry has been an integral and defining hallmark of Ascension of Our Lord Parish since its earliest days. The parish founders commissioned the Casavant brothers to build and install our magnificent Opus 1344 organ, and the internationally renowned Canadian organist Lynwood Farnham performed its inaugural concert in 1930.

From 2020 to 2022, Opus 1344 underwent a full restoration thanks to a successful capital campaign and the generous support of Le Conseil du patrimoine religieux du Québec. The restored instrument was inaugurated in May 2022 by another internationally acclaimed Canadian organist, Isabelle Demers, now Head of the Organ and Church Music Program at McGill University's Schulich School of Music.

Over the past three years—and again thanks to the generosity of our parishioners and friends—Ascension has been able to hire four McGill voice students to serve as section leaders for our volunteer choir, significantly enriching the quality and beauty of our liturgical celebrations. This year, our collaboration with McGill's Schulich School of Music has expanded further with the hiring of an assistant organist, a McGill student working under the direction of Professor Demers.

In essence, your support has strengthened Ascension's Music Ministry while also providing McGill students with meaningful financial assistance and a unique professional experience. We are deeply grateful for your commitment, which continues to sustain and elevate the musical life of our parish.

A heartfelt THANK YOU to all the generous donors, benefactors and sponsors that contributed in 2025 to the Ascension Choir Music Fund!

Together we make beautiful music!

In Memoriam

It is with heavy hearts yet lots of love that we remember

our beloved choir members whom we lost recently:

Alan Cameron – Brenda Garcia Quevedo – Co Hoedeman

John Pecknold – Linda Wiltshire

Thank You to Our Concert Benefactors

Bonnie Auger
Jonathan Birks
Tom Burpee

Barbara Cefis
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Photo by Monika Ag

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Please mention "Choir Fund" in the
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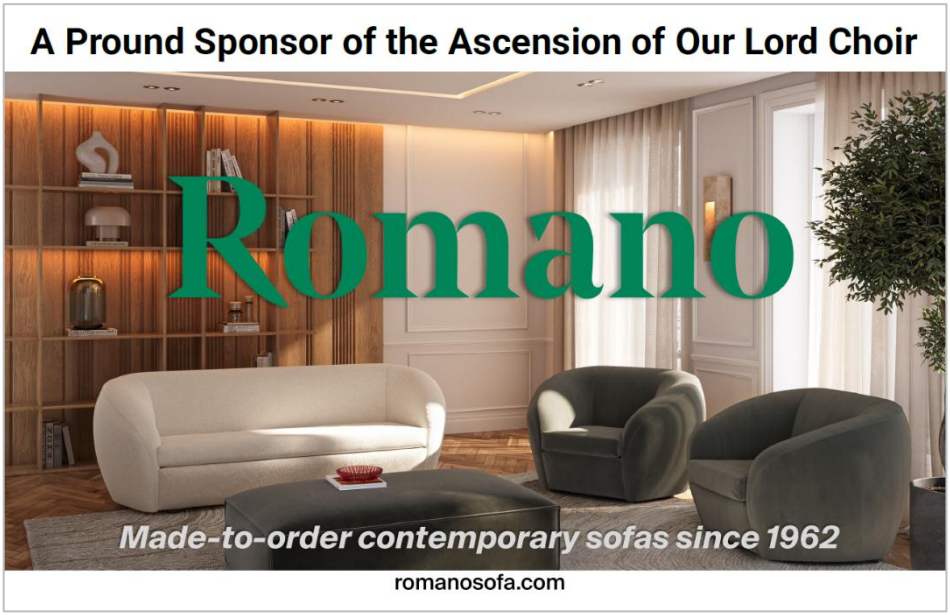

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Permettez-moi d'exprimer ma gratitude aux personnes travailleuses et talentueuses qui ont rendu possible ce merveilleux événement.

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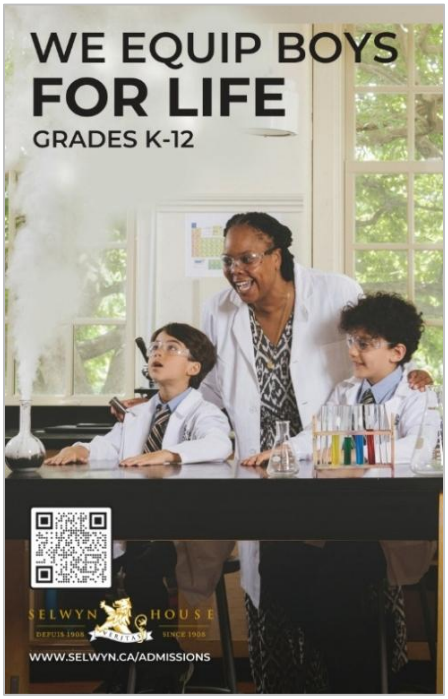

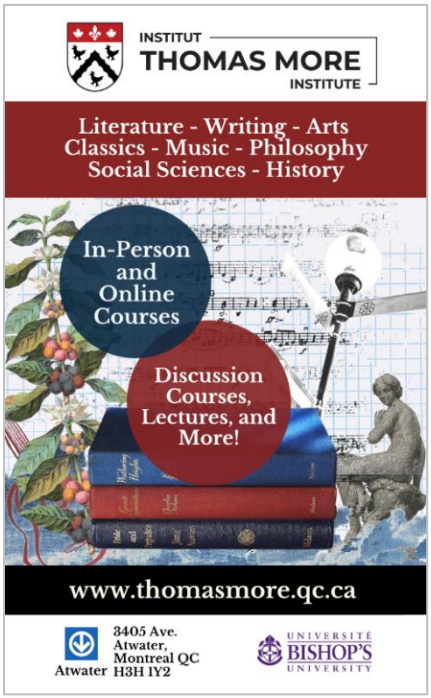

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Mass Hours	
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday	9:00 AM
Saturday	4:30 PM
Sunday	10:30 AM

Contact Information	
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Director of Music & Organist: Joel Peters	music@ascensionofourlord.ca

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