

Hagersville United Church

Christmas Eve Service

December 24th, 2023 at 7:00pm

Minister: Pastor Peggy E. Bartlett

Ministry of Music: Mr. John McBride

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CHRISTMAS GREETINGS FROM PASTOR PEGGY

CALL TO WORSHIP

Welcome to this most magical night
when angels and shepherds mingle
and the birth of a baby changes the world.

We come to celebrate with joy and wonder.

Celebrate the light that shines all around us.

We will sing and praise our most wondrous God.

Let us kneel before the Christ child,
who makes God's promises come true.

OPENING CAROL: #60 O Come All Ye Faithful (Verses 1, 3 & 4)

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.**

3 Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;
glory to God in the highest: **R**

4 See how the shepherds summoned to his cradle,
leaving their flocks, draw nigh with lowly fear;
we too will thither bend our joyful footsteps; **R**

OPENING PRAYER

O wondrous God of the stars, we come tonight with breathless wonder
to see the babe who will change our lives. We hear the names

“Wonderful Counselor,” “Mighty God,” “Prince of Peace,”
and we are in awe. You have touched the earth this night
with your unconditional love. Touch us—touch our hearts and minds
and souls. May we never tire of this story. May we never take it for
granted. Make this night magical again. Amen.

LIGHTING OF ADVENT CANDLES

Tonight, we gather together and light candles in honor of the Christ
Child.

Throughout this season we have lived, waited, and remembered the
hope, peace, joy, and love of God found in Christ.
(Light all four Candles).

With the birth of Christ, salvation has drawn near. The God who ordered
the chaos of the universe has come down into the chaos of our world.
The Word which was with God at the beginning came down and lived
with us. While we were yet living in the valley of the shadow of death,
the light of new life burst forth.

We light this candle for Christ. On this night, we remember God has
come in the Christ Child once again.

Christ candle is lit

LET US PRAY....

Glorious God, who presents us with the most precious of gifts, we praise
you for all your blessings in our lives. Tonight, we have come to this
place, in the midst of a busy time. We might not even have everything
ready at home, yet we have come, because we ourselves need to be
ready. Work in our hearts this night, preparing us for your presence.
Work in our lives that we may reach out to others in comfort and
compassion; work in our world that the darkness that has encompassed
it may be dispelled by the brightness of your love and your light that is
given to us once again tonight. In faith and expectation, we pray.
AMEN.

SING VERSE #5 OF “A CANDLE IS BURNING”

We honour Messiah with the *Christ-Candle's flame*;
Our Christmas Eve candles glad tidings proclaim.
O come, all ye faithful, rejoice on this night
As God comes among us, the Christian's true Light.

ANTHEM: Sing Allelu by Ruth Elaine Schram

READING – THE SEASON FOR MIRACLES

If we were to list the miracles of Christmas we'd probably talk about virgin births, angels, perhaps and stars that light the sky but perhaps there's another miracle: one of Mary saying 'yes' when God asked her to believe and Joseph saying 'yes' when God asked him to trust. They had to change everything about their lives and the birth of the Christ-child wasn't possible until they did. What does it mean for you to say 'yes' to this story? To believe that it might be possible for the darkness to be transformed to light and for peace to come in the world? Those who know the darkest of the world know the fragility of light; we hold our breath as the candles flicker we know they don't always last. The birth of Jesus doesn't make everything right but it shows us that the only way the darkness can be beaten is to say 'yes' to the birth of light. In the silence, we pray for those we love and miss today and we pray for a broken world... *pause*

God, this is the season for miracles and we pray for one today.

Where there is sorrow,

we pray for your grace to light the darkness.

Where is despair,

we pray for your hope to light the darkness.

Where there is hatred,

we pray for your forgiveness to light the darkness.

Where there is war,

we pray for your love to light the darkness.

Where there is confusion,

we pray for your peace to light the darkness.

Where there is injustice,

we pray for your courage to light the darkness.

Where there is fear

we pray for your joy to light the darkness.

It is the season for miracles and we pray for one today:

Come, Lord Jesus, may your light come into our world once again

CAROL: #64 O Little Town of Bethlehem Verses 1, 2, & 3

- 1 O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by;
yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.
- 2 For Christ is born of Mary;
and gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together
proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King,
and peace to all on earth.
- 3 How silently, how silently
the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessed gift of heaven.
No ear may hear his coming;
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still
the dear Christ enters in.

LUKE 2:1-7: The Birth in Bethlehem

REFLECTION

LUKE 2:8-14: The Angels & The Shepherds

REFLECTION

ANTHEM: Angel Carol by Anna Laura Page

LUKE 2:15-20: The Shepherds Worship

REFLECTION**CAROL: #75 While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks (Verses 1,2 &3)**

- 1 While shepherds watched their flocks by night
all seated on the ground,
the angel of the Lord came down,
and glory shone around.
- 2 'Fear not,' said he, for mighty dread
had seized their troubled mind;
'glad tidings of great joy I bring
to you and humankind.
- 3 'To you in David's town this day
is born of David's line
a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord;
and this shall be the sign:

THOUGHTS FOR CHRISTMAS EVE**CAROL: #69 Away In a Manger**

- 1 Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.
- 2 The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love you, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky,
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.
- 3 Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask you to stay
close by me for ever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care,
and fit us for heaven, to live with you there.

PRAYER FOR CHRISTMAS EVE

(You are invited to come forward and received a candle and gather around the Sanctuary as the video is playing)

VIDEO: “STILL, STILL, STILL”**WORDS OF REFLECTION****CLOSING CAROL: “Silent Night”****SENDING FORTH & AMEN**

Go now in wonder.
Go to bring light to those in darkness,
joy to those who can find no joy,
magic to a world steeped in realism.
Go with the songs of angels in your ears,
and the love of God in your hearts.
Go and spread the word—
the babe of Bethlehem is born for all.
Amen.

*“This Christmas, mend a quarrel. Seek out a forgotten friend.
Write a letter. Share some treasure. Give a soft answer.
Encourage youth. Keep a promise. Forgive an enemy. Listen.
Apologize if you were wrong. Think first of someone else. Be
kind and gentle. Laugh a more. Laugh a little more. Express
your gratitude. Welcome a stranger. Gladden the heart of a
child. Take pleasure in the beauty and wonder of the earth.
Speak your love, and then speak it again.”
Wishing all of you a Blessed Christmas Season and God’s
Blessings in the New Year.
~ Peggy and Dan*

**Please bring in your paper products for the
Hagersville Food Bank**

Announcements

Sunday, December 31st: Joint Service at 11am at Hagersville. Come dressed in your best Christmas Sweater!! ****Please note time change.**

A Christmas Prayer

Dear Lord,

Please help us to listen like the Sheperd's...

Rejoice like the angels...

Seek like the wisemen...

Believe like Mary & Joseph...

And live all year long with the peace, joy & love

Christ came to give.

Amen.



HOLIDAY EATING TIPS

1. Avoid carrot sticks. Anyone who puts carrots on a holiday buffet table knows nothing of the Holiday spirit. In fact, if you see carrots, leave immediately. Go next door, where they're serving rum balls.
2. Drink as much eggnog as you can. And quickly, it's rare. You cannot find it any other time of year but now. So drink up! Who cares that it has 10,000 calories in every sip? It's not as if you're going to turn into an eggnog-alcoholic or something. It's a treat. Enjoy it. Have one for me. Have two. It's later than you think. It's Christmas!
3. If something comes with gravy, use it. That's the whole point of gravy. Gravy does not stand alone. Pour it on. Make a volcano out of your mashed potatoes. Fill it with gravy. Eat the volcano. Repeat.
4. As for mashed potatoes, always ask if they're made with skim milk or whole milk. If it's skim, pass. Why bother? It's like buying a sports car with an automatic transmission.
5. Do not have a snack before going to a party in an effort to control your eating. The whole point of going to a Holiday party is to eat other people's food for free. Lots of it. Hello?
6. Under no circumstances should you exercise between now and New Year's. You can do that in January when you have nothing else to do. This is the time for long naps, which you'll need after circling the buffet table while carrying a 10-pound plate of food and that vat of eggnog.
7. If you come across something really good at a buffet table, like frosted Christmas cookies in the shape and size of Santa position yourself near them and don't budge. Have as many as you can before becoming the center of attention. They're like a beautiful pair of shoes. If you leave them behind, you're never going to see them again.

8. Same for pies. Apple, Pumpkin, Mincemeat. Have a slice of each. Or if you don't like mincemeat, have two apples and one pumpkin. Always have three. When else do you get to have more than one dessert, Labor Day?
9. Did someone mention fruitcake? Granted, it's loaded with the mandatory celebratory calories but avoid it at all cost. I mean, have some standards.
10. One final tip: If you don't feel terrible when you leave the party or get up from the table, you haven't been paying attention. Re-read tips; start over, but hurry, January is just around the corner. Remember this motto to live by:

"Life should NOT be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in an attractive and well-preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways, chocolate and wine in one hand, body thoroughly used up, totally worn out and screaming "WOO HOO what a ride!"

MERRY CHRISTMAS!!!

