

**HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &
SPRINGVALE UNITED CHURCH
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17th, 2023**

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Ministry of Caring: The Whole People of God
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REGIONAL COUNCIL PRAYER CYCLE

St. Davids-Queenston

Advent 3 – JOY

Yes, Christmas is a time of joy and happiness for many people around the world. As Norman Vincent Peale said, “Christmas is the season of joy, of gift-giving, and of families united”. The birth of Jesus Christ is celebrated as “Good Tidings of Great Joy” by Christians worldwide. The message of Christmas is one of joy and hope, and it is a time to spread love and cheer to those around us.

Offering Prayer

Lord, you have blessed our lives in so many ways. Receive these tokens of our blessings and cause them to work in this world which you have loaned to us to make light shine in the darkness and peace an attainable goal in all conflicts. We offer these gifts in Jesus’ name. AMEN.

PRELUDE AND WELCOME

ANNOUNCEMENTS, BIRTHDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Because Christmas is almost here
Because dancing fits so well with music
Because inside baby clothes are miracles.
Because some people love you
Because of chocolate

People: Because pain does not last forever
Because Santa Claus is coming.
Because of laughter

Leader: Because there really are angels
Because forgiveness is yours for the asking
Because of children, Because of parents.

People: We Rejoice!

Leader: Because the blind see.

And the lame walk.

Because lepers are clean

And the deaf hear.

People: Because the dead will live again

And there is good news for the poor.

Because of Christmas

Because of Jesus

All: We rejoice!

OPENING HYMN: #38 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.
 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 heavenly song? R
- 3 Come to Bethlehem and see
 Christ whose birth the angels sing;
 come, adore on bended knee
 Christ, the Lord, the newborn King. R
- 4 See him in a manger laid,
 whom the choirs of angels praise;
 Mary, Joseph, lend your aid,
 while our hearts in love we raise. R

OPENING PRAYER

Lord, we have come to this place from a world of demands and schedules. We have sought hope and peace and have found them here. Now we seek the inner joy that only your presence can bring to our lives. Open our hearts and our spirits to your love. For we ask this in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE

Reader 1: Today we light three candles- the first Candle is called HOPE and it is a

Reader 2: The second Candle is called PEACE, God's gentle loving peace for our lives.

Reader 1: The third Candle is called JOY, because of God's absolute presence in our lives.

Reader 2: Come, all is ready. Let the light of this these candles, called HOPE, PEACE, and JOY, bring brightness to your spirits.

The first three candles are lit.

Reader 1: Light three candles, see them glow....

Brightly, so that all may know....How three candles show the way...

Making our darkness bright as God's day.

All Pray: Dear God, we carry many burdens and worry over many things. Help us to hear your promise in this Advent season, that in hearing, we may receive the Spirit's gift of joy. And may our spirits be kept sound at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

LET US SING TOGETHER VERSES 1,2&4 OF O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL

1 O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lowly exile here
until the Son of God appear.

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.**

2 O come, O Wisdom from on high,
who orders all things mightily;
to us the path of knowledge show,
and teach us in her ways to go. **R**

4 O come, O Rod of Jesse's stem,
from every foe deliver them
that trust your mighty power to save,
and give them victory o'er the grave. **R**

ANTHEM**CHILDREN'S TIME: READING – DIME STORE ANGEL**

It was just a Christmas Angel, that my Mom put on our tree.
She bought it at a five and dime, when I was only three.
Each year we'd trim our Christmas tree, with lights and ornaments.
Then Mom would always tell me, what the Angel represents.
The Angels came to tell the shepherds, of the Christ Child's birth.
And, Angels are still here with us, to guide us here on earth.
The Angel on our Christmas tree, was made in such a way.
That if the light inside burned out, you just threw it away.
The light burned out when I was twelve, the Angel would not shine.
But, Mom would not throw it away, she said it looked just fine.
She loved that little Angel, that she put upon our tree.
She said it didn't need a light, for anyone to see.
Then I grew up, and I moved out to start my family.
And, I'd go home at Christmas time, to help her trim her tree.
My wife and children went with me, to mom's house every year.
The house was filled with love and joy, as we shared Christmas cheer.

The kids would always say to her, "The Angel is burned out."
Then, she would smile and tell them, what the Angel's all about.
She told another reason, for it's specialty.
Your daddy picked that Angel out, when he was only three.

My mother passed away this year, early in the spring.
And then I had the painful task, of going through her things.
The beautiful old house she owned, was left me in her will.
We moved back in the summertime, we feel her in it still.

Early in December, we brought out our Christmas tree.
I went up to the attic, just to see what I could see.
I saw a cardboard box, with markings, "Ornaments and stuff."
And in it was the little Angel, that she loved so much.

I brought the cardboard box downstairs, and showed the family.

Then they persuaded me to put the Angel on our tree.
 We trimmed the tree that weekend, and we talked of Christmas past.
 Then when the tree was finally done, the Angel went on last.

Every night till Christmas, all the lights were burning bright.
 Except the little Angel, that had long burned out her light.
 Then on Christmas morning, I arose before the rest.
 I had to have my coffee, to be at my very best.

I walked into the living room, my coffee cup in hand.
 Then what I saw, so puzzled me, I could not understand.
 I just stood in silence, as, my eyes filled up with tears.
 The little angel was all aglow, that had been dark for many years

CHILDREN'S VIDEO: Beautiful Star of Bethlehem

LITANY OF PREPARATION FOR CHRISTMAS

God of joy and celebration...God of love and mercy...God of peace and righteousness.

In this season of God with us we celebrate with the angels.

We are graced by the wonder of God's presence.

We are filled with the tenderness of Christ's love.

Love and faithfulness meet together...Righteousness and peace kiss each other, Faithfulness springs forth from the earth.

Shout aloud Hallelujah! God's faithfulness comes down from heaven, God has kept his promise, the Saviour will be born once again.

In this season of God with us we rejoice for God's salvation has come

The redeemer of all creation will come to earth

And we catch glimpses of God's Messiah healed world

This is the time we believe once more that perfect love casts out fear

That generosity transforms scarcity into abundance

That righteousness overcomes oppression with justice

We are graced by Christ's presence and filled with his love

May we become bearers of God's light,

And go out to transform our troubled world.

Jesus, you come

In the voice of the poor

In the hurting of the sick

In the anguish of the oppressed

Open our eyes that we may see you

Jesus, you come ... In the weakness of the vulnerable, In the questions of the doubting, In the fears of the dying

Open our ears that we might hear you

Jesus, you come... In the celebration of the saint, In the generosity of the faithful, in the compassion of the caring.

Open our hearts that we might embrace you

May the light of God shine on us,

May the love of Christ shine in us,

May the life of the Spirit shine through us.

This day and evermore. Amen

CAROL: #74 What Child is This

- 1 What child is this, who laid to rest,
 on Mary's lap is sleeping?
 Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
 while shepherds watch are keeping?
 This, this is Christ the King,
 whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
 haste, haste to bring him laud,
 the Babe, the Son of Mary!
- 2 Why lies he in such mean estate
 where ox and ass are feeding?
 Good Christian, fear; for sinners here
 the silent Word is pleading. R
- 3 So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;
 come, one and all, to own him.
 The King of Kings salvation brings;
 let loving hearts enthrone him. R

SCRIPTURE READINGS

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not treat prophecies with contempt ²¹ but test them all; hold on to what is good,

²² reject every kind of evil.

²³ May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

Luke 1: 39-45 Mary Visits Elizabeth

³⁹ At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, ⁴⁰ where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! ⁴³ But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"

Luke 2:10-11

¹⁰ And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

MESSAGE: Christmas Joy

Lights sparkle in the night sky. Prettily wrapped packages lie under the tree. Familiar scents fill our homes from homemade treats and confections. We hear the sounds of bells and familiar carols. Excited children count down the days until the 25th.

Christmas is nearly here.

When most people think of Christmas, they think of a sweet little baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. Images of sheep and donkeys; wisemen and angels; songs and joyous laughter come to mind when we think of this time of year. As one song goes, "It's the most wonderful time of the year..."

Why does Christmas equal joy in our mind? Especially for those of us who are Christ followers?

It's more than just the presents and time spent with family. The joy of Christmas goes deeper than the sweet taste of gingerbread, the happiness on a child's face, and the beautiful lights wrapped around the tree. The

joy of Christmas comes from why Jesus was born in the first place. It comes from what Jesus came to do. He didn't come simply to be a precious baby for us to ooh and ahh over. He didn't come to remain a child. He came to be our Messiah, our Savior. He came to bring us forgiveness for our sins.

"In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." Hebrews 9:22

"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace." Ephesians 1:7

"When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins." Colossians 2:13

This is good news that ought to fill our hearts with awe and wonder. Like the shepherds in the fields, we ought to rejoice at the announcement the multitude of angels brought, "I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11). Like Mary, when we think of the joy and excitement about a baby born in a stable, we ought to ponder all these things in our heart.

Let us consider and ponder what this joy means. At Christmastime, let us consider Jesus, God made flesh, and may our hearts focus on why he came to earth. Let us focus on what it means for God to take on skin and bones that would one day be pierced and broken for us. As we sing our songs of joy, may we ponder in our hearts the marvelous truth that the Son of God would enter our sinful and broken world to free us from our prisons of sin and shame. Let us consider that this baby Jesus, whose birth we celebrate at Christmas, was born for the purpose of our redemption and forgiveness of sins.

This is the joy of Christmas.

"Mary did you know that your baby boy would some day walk on water? Mary did you know that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters? Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new. This child that you've delivered, will soon deliver you."

Let's go deeper this Christmas, beneath the piles of presents, and to the underlying significance of what it means for Jesus to come to earth. For without the birth of Christ, there would be no forgiveness of sins. Joy to the world, the Lord has come!

CAROL: #59 Joy to the World

- 1 Joy to the world! the Lord is come:
let earth receive her King!
Let every heart prepare him room,
and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.
- 2 Joy to the earth! the Saviour reigns:
let all their songs employ,
while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.
- 3 No more let sins and sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground:
he comes to make his blessings flow
far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.
- 4 He rules the earth with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness
and wonders of his love, and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love.

PASTORAL PRAYER

"It's the most wonderful time of the year" - the music swirls toward our ears from countless speakers in stores, on the radio, on TV. But we aren't so sure about that. We have been so wrapped up in preparation for the "wonderful season" we can't seem to find the joy. So many people are in need. We have friends and family members who are suffering from illnesses, loss, alienation. We want them to be happy, but we can't make that happen. We bring the names to you, Lord, for your healing mercy and rest in the assurance of your loving presence with them. That

is a comfort to us. But we also stand in need of your healing restoration. We are feeling depleted, discouraged, and exhausted. Slow us down, Lord. Help us to feel the joy of your love from the "inside out" and in every direction! Remind us that your gift of love is freely given to us so that we may be healed and be a blessing to someone else. Touch our hearts and spirits, so that your joy may spring from our lips and our lives. For we ask it in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

LORD'S PRAYER

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.

SENDING FORTH

The whole world waits in December darkness for a glimpse of the Light of God. Even those who snarl "humbug!" and chase away the carolers have been seen looking toward the skies. The one who declared her never would forgive has forgiven, and those who left home have returned, and even wars are halted if briefly, as the whole world looks star ward. In the December darkness we peer from our windows watching for an angel with golden wings to announce the Hope, Peace, Joy and Love to the World!

CHORAL AMEN

POSTLUDE

Announcements

Sunday, December 24th: Morning Worship Service at Springvale at 9:30am. (Only one service in the morning)

Sunday, December 24th: Christmas Eve Service at Hagersville at 7pm

Sunday, December 31st: Joint Service at 10:30am at Hagersville.
Christmas Sweater Sunday.

Please bring in your paper products for the
Hagersville Food Bank

Recipe For Christmas Joy

1/2 cup Hugs

4 tsp. Kisses

4 Cups Love

1 Cup Special Holiday Cheer

1/2 Cup Peace On Earth

3 tsp. Christmas Spirits

2 Cups Goodwill Toward Man

1 Sprig Of Mistletoe &

1 Medium-Size Bag Of Christmas Snowflakes

Mix hugs, kisses, smiles, and love until consistent. Blend in holiday cheer, peace on earth, Christmas spirits and good will toward men. Use the mixture to fill, warm heart, where it can be stored for a lifetime. (it never goes bad!) Serve as desired under mistletoe, sprinkle liberally with special Christmas snowflakes. It is especially good when accompanied by Christmas Carols and family get-togethers. Serve to one and all.