

**HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &
SPRINGVALE UNITED CHURCH
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3rd, 2023**

2

Ministry of Caring: The Whole People of God
Ministry of Pastoral Care & Worship: Pastor Peggy Bartlett
Cell: 905-317-5275 Email: info@hsupc.ca
Website: www.hsupc.ca
Church: Hagersville- 905-768-5863 Springvale- 905-768-1501

.....
REGIONAL COUNCIL PRAYER CYCLE

Streetsville

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT: HOPE

My mom used to say “we are on the greased slide to Christmas!” Perhaps we should get off the greased slide, and instead, look around at the wondrous acts of love and compassion that are happening, even in these dark times. For just a moment, take a deep breath and then exhale slowly – relax. Look around! You will find God present with you, guiding and loving you.

OFFERING PRAYER

Bless these gifts, O Lord, and help them to bring the transforming love you have given us into ministries of hope and peace in this our dark world. AMEN.

PRELUDE AND WELCOME

ANNOUNCEMENTS, BIRTHDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: The time is coming when the Lord shall pour his most special blessing on the earth.

P: We want to be ready for that time. What should we do?

L: Be vigilant. Keep your hearts, minds, and spirits open to God’s word.

P: Help us, O Lord, to be aware of all of your blessings.

L: Come, let us celebrate God’s love for us.

P: Make our hearts ready to receive your Gift of Love, O Lord.

OPENING HYMN: #10 Prepare the Way of the Lord Sing 2x
Prepare the way of the Lord!
Prepare the way of the Lord!
Make a straight path for him, make a straight path;
prepare the way of the Lord!

OPENING PRAYER

O Lord, our lives are so filled with chaos and tribulation. Help us be ready to receive your message and gift of love, that we might grow into faithful disciples, serving you by serving others with hope and compassion. In Christ’s Name, we pray. AMEN

THE LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE:

The Candle of Hope: Watch! Wait!

Reader 1: In the days to come, the Lord shall establish God’s house upon earth!

Reader 2: Watch! Wait! For God will do something special, something very unexpected.

Reader 1: Do not be hesitant. Place your trust in God’s promise.

Reader 2: Today we light this first candle, a special candle, lighted in darkness, shedding its meager light into our world. [*The first candle is lighted.*]

Reader 1: Come, see the light. Let its brightness fill you.

Reader 2: Come, feel the warmth of the light. Let it give you comfort.

Reader 1: Come, draw near to the light, for it is God’s way of breaking through to you.

Reader 2: Come, rejoice in the light, for God is with us!

CANDLE LIGHTING HYMN: First verse of #1 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.**

ANTHEM

CHILDREN'S TIME**CHILDREN'S VIDEO****READING OF CONTEMPLATION**

Reader 1: I feel as though I am about to begin a race--the race to Christmas. It gets this way every year. I want to focus on Jesus, but instead I get caught in the trap of purchasing.

Reader 2: My children have all grown and live so far away. I am lonely and it just doesn't feel like the holidays anymore. The scriptures say to watch and wait. That's all I do. I watch as time rushes by and wait for words of love and joy from my family. I feel alone. Where is the message of hope that will dry my tears?

Reader 3: I have a business to run and so much of the bottom line depends on the Christmas buying public. I feel pressured to push the items earlier and earlier each year so that I can ensure my employees of their jobs and even give them a little bonus for their faithfulness. But at the same time, I have lost the joy of the season. Instead it is one great big sale. I can't seem to see the Christ in this holiday season. Help me see you, Lord.

Worship Leader: Can you identify with our readers? Do things already seem out of control? Have you lost the focus of the season? Do not be afraid. The Lord is with us, ready to bless our lives and give us hope. God is bringing to us the greatest gift of all. Watch! Be ready! Your blessing is on its way.

CHORUS: #85 I Will Bless Thee, O Lord
I will bless thee O Lord (*my God*)
I will bless the O Lord,
With a heart of thanksgiving
I will bless thee O Lord;
With my hands lifted up
And my mouth filled with praise
With a heart of thanksgiving,
I will bless thee O Lord. X2

SCRIPTURE READINGS:**1 Corinthians 1:3-9**

3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 4 I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. 5 For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge— 6 God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. 7 Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. 8 He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Mark 13:24-37

24 “But in those days, following that distress,“ ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; 25 the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’[a] 26 “At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27 And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens. 28 “Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. 29 Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it[b] is near, right at the door. 30 Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

The Day and Hour Unknown

32 “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Be on guard! Be alert[c]! You do not know when that time will come. 34 It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. 35 “Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. 36 If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. 37 What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”

MESSAGE "Santa Claus is Coming to Town"

There is a song that is familiar to all of us, a song, that could be called an advent hymn, although it does not talk about the coming of Jesus.

I am sure you know what song I am talking about....

The song is loved by millions of people - especially by children.

It is a song that speaks about the coming of an important person,

a person who knows us and our every action,

a person who is good and loving and who expects us to be the same.

Of course the song is "Santa Claus is Coming to Town".

For a world no longer accustomed to reading the scriptures,

Santa Claus if Coming to Town, summarizes the Advent message in a secular way. Think about it just substitute the name Jesus for the name of Santa Claus and we would then have, in lyrical form, the essence of what the gospel tells us about the return of Christ and how we should be ready for it.

Image yourself as a child at Christmas for a moment...

Do you remember what you father and mother, especially your mother did around the house during most of December?

Remember what happened at that time of year? How the house was decorated and lights were hung up , the tree decorated, mom writing Christmas cards and baking, yes scads of baking was done: shortbread, Christmas cakes, squares, and sugar cookies.

And don't forget the Sears Christmas Wish Book...ah yes... looking, wishing, marking....

Think of how it seemed everyone around you was doing things that they often never did at any other time of year.

Remember how you knew something special was going on, that Christmas was coming and Santa was watching, listening....

Do you remember what it meant at this time of year to look forward to Christmas?

I may be off base here, because I am thinking of my own experience of the Christmas season back then, in the back of your mind, almost unconsciously you knew even then as a child, that what you did, or did not do, made a difference somehow; and in some way. But, for most of us it didn't really worry you all that much even when you heard the words of the song that go: He knows if you have been bad or good, so be good for goodness sake, because in the back of

your mind, you knew that Santa Claus loved you, and that he would be fair to you, and overlook all the little things you did ... just maybe...

And although your parents may have teased you about how if you didn't do what they wanted you to do Santa would leave coal in your stocking, you still didn't get too worried because you knew that your parents loved you and you knew that you were trying to be especially good - when you remembered.

The song told you though what it was all about didn't it: "You better watch out, you better not cry, you better not pout, I'm telling you why - Santa Claus is coming to town."

And you watched out, from mid-November you watched out, That is what a lot of childhood's are like around Christmas time.

As adults, and as Christians, we are called to follow that song too and recover the joy and the blessedness of our childhood faith in goodness.

As adults and as Christians, we are called to follow the song with one major difference: we are called to substitute the name of Jesus for the name of Santa Claus.

But that is about the only difference.

For we are to prepare for Jesus coming again, with the same energy and the same dedication and indeed the same joy as we awaited Santa Claus when we were children.

We are called to prepare ourselves for the gift of God to us... of a king who will bring love and compassion to a troubled world, of a king who saves the world, not destroys it.

And the best way to prepare for that king is what Advent is all about, preparing is not by developing fear of what will happen if we are not prepared, but rather by developing ways of giving hope and peace and love and joy - the things that our candles are meant to remind us of.

We prepare for our King by preparing our hearts, by reading the bible just as fervently as we studied the Sears Wish Book.

So...this advent, give hope by showing care for those who are in need, give peace by turning the other cheek when you are provoked, give love by hugging someone who is feeling sad or tired, and give joy by being encouraging and helping someone who feel at the end of their rope, by showing them that you care and that therefore God cares as well.

When you do these kinds of things you will receive hope, peace love, and joy in return and you will know that when the king,

our Lord Jesus, does return, that you are ready for him. For you will know his presence in your heart and you have prepared the way for his coming once again.
Amen

HYMN: #29 Hark the Glad Sound

- 1 Hark, the glad sound! The Saviour comes,
the Saviour promised long:
let every heart prepare a throne,
and every voice a song.
- 2 He comes, the prisoners to release
in Satan's bondage held;
the gates of brass before him burst,
the iron fetters yield.
- 3 He comes, the broken heart to bind,
the bleeding soul to cure,
and with the treasures of his grace
to bless the humble poor.
- 4 Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace,
your welcome shall proclaim;
and heaven's eternal arches ring
with your beloved name.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING HYMN: #2 Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

- 1 Come, thou long-expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free:
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.
- 2 Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art,
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.

- 3 Born thy people to deliver;
born a child and yet a king;
born to reign in us for ever;
now thy gracious kingdom bring.
- 4 By thine own eternal Spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all-sufficient merit
raise us to thy glorious throne.

SENDING FORTH

To all the corners of the world, God is bringing God's blessing. Be ready! Watch! For the time is near; Salvation is at hand. Be at peace in the arms and love of God.

CHORAL AMEN

.....

Announcements

- Sunday, December 10th:** Second Sunday of Advent – White Gift Sunday
- Monday, December 11th:** Coffee time at Hagersville from 10am-12pm.
- Tuesday, December 12th:** Coffee time at Springvale starting at 9:30am. All are welcome.
- Friday, December 15th:** Hagersville Santa Claus Parade at 6pm.
- Sunday, December 17th:** Candlelight Service at Springvale at 7pm.
- 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 😊

