

**HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &  
SPRINGVALE UNITED CHURCH  
SUNDAY, JANUARY 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

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

Milton: St. Paul's

*"... and the Kings Came"*

The work of Christmas is about to begin: to find the lost, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner, to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among others, to make music in the heart.

**OFFERING PRAYER**

Lord, as we embark on this new year, we lift up to you our loved ones, our communities, and the world. May your peace reign in our hearts and in the hearts of all people. As we give these offerings this morning may they bring healing where there is brokenness and reconciliation where there is division. Receive these gifts in Jesus' name we Pray. Amen

**PRELUDE AND WELCOME**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS, BIRTHDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

*Combined with Hymn #81 As with Gladness Men of Old*

*Congregation: singing verse 1*

1      As with gladness men of old  
did the guiding star behold,  
          as with joy they hailed its light,  
          leading onward, beaming bright,  
so, most gracious Lord, may we  
evermore your splendour see.

L: On the Eve of His birth, shepherds were led to a stable, to see the Child in a manger, the child who would be the hope for all those who were oppressed and hopeless.

**P: The night sky, dark and foreboding, was filled with angelic light, and the voices of the heavenly host brought the good news to those who least expected it.**

*Congregation: singing verse 2*

2      As with joyful steps they sped,  
to that lowly manger bed,  
          there to bend the knee before  
          Christ, whom heaven and earth adore;  
so may we with eager pace  
ever seek your throne of grace.

L: Others were drawn to the manger scene, from distant lands, seeking to find a king who would change the world, who would bring good news.

**P: They came bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, costly and precious for the most precious Gift of God.**

*Congregation: singing verse 3*

3      As they offered gifts most rare  
at that manger crude and bare,  
          so may we with holy joy,  
          pure and free from sin's alloy,  
all our costliest treasures bring,  
Christ, to you, our heavenly King.

L: Let us come this day, bearing our burdens and our joys. Let us come before the manger of the King.

**P: We come, bringing what we have, to pay homage to the one who will change the world.**

*Congregations: singing verse 4&5*

4      Holy Jesus, every day  
keep us in the narrow way;  
          and, when earthly things are past,  
          bring our ransomed souls at last  
where they need no star to guide,  
where no clouds your glory hide.

5 In the heavenly country bright  
 none shall need created light;  
     you its light, its joy, its crown,  
     you its sun which goes not down;  
 there for ever may we sing  
 hallelujah to our King.

### OPENING PRAYER

God of promise and light, open our eyes this morning, that we may see your light in the darkness. Open our hearts, that we may perceive your promises of justice and righteousness fulfilled in the babe of Bethlehem. May we, like the Magi, have a star to guide us on our journey quest to find the one who will truly set us free. May this time of worship bring us closer to you, that the good news of the birth of light and love will transform our lives. Amen.

### ANTHEM

### CHILDREN'S TIME

### CHILDREN'S VIDEO

### REFLECTIVE READING FOR THE NEW YEAR

**Reader 1:** Whew! This year is almost over! What a relief!

**Reader 2:** I never thought I would get through it all. For some reason there seemed to be more demands on me and on my time than ever before.

**Reader 1:** I know what you mean! Now we are looking at a new year. I don't know if I'm ready.

**Reader 2:** I don't think we are ever ready for what's coming.

**Reader 1:** I have to admit it, I am not exactly looking forward to starting another year. I didn't get done all the things I should have gotten done during the last year.

**Reader 2:** Well, you can't go back and retrieve that stuff, you know.

**Reader 1:** I wonder what will be different this coming year.

**Reader 2:** I wonder if I will be different this coming year. I wonder if I will be more prepared to do all that I have to do.

**Voice:** Quiet your spirits. God is with you. You do not have to finish this year by rushing headlong into a new year. Give yourself some quiet time. Be at peace. God is with you.

**Reader 1:** I know. I've got to let go of slavery to a schedule and take some time just to be quiet, calm--just to be.

**Reader 2:** I've got to take a better look at the things that are important, not spend so much time plotting and planning.

**Voice:** Come to me, you who are weary and find your burdens heavy. I will give you rest.

### \*CHORUS: #108 "His Name Is Wonderful"

His name is Wonderful, His name is Wonderful,

His name is Wonderful, Jesus, my Lord.

He is my mighty King, Master of everything,

His name is Wonderful, Jesus my Lord.

He's the Great Shepherd, the Rock of all ages,

Almighty God is He.

Bow down before Him, Love and adore Him,

His name is Wonderful, Jesus, my Lord.

**SCRIPTURE READINGS:** Isaiah 60:1-6 ; Matthew 2:1-12

### The Future Glory of Israel

**60** Arise, shine, for your light has come,

and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.

<sup>2</sup> For behold, darkness shall cover the earth,

and thick darkness the peoples;

but the LORD will arise upon you,

and his glory will be seen upon you.

<sup>3</sup> And nations shall come to your light,

and kings to the brightness of your rising.

<sup>4</sup> Lift up your eyes all around, and see;

they all gather together, they come to you;

your sons shall come from afar,

and your daughters shall be carried on the hip.

<sup>5</sup> Then you shall see and be radiant;  
your heart shall thrill and exult,<sup>[a]</sup>  
because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you,  
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

<sup>6</sup> A multitude of camels shall cover you,  
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;  
all those from Sheba shall come.  
They shall bring gold and frankincense,  
and shall bring good news, the praises of the LORD.

### **Matthew 2:1-12**

#### **The Visit of the Wise Men**

<sup>2</sup> Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men<sup>[a]</sup> from the east came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose<sup>[b]</sup> and have come to worship him.” <sup>3</sup> When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup> and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. <sup>5</sup> They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

<sup>6</sup> “‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who will shepherd my people Israel.’”

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.” <sup>9</sup> After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. <sup>11</sup> And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

### **MESSAGE**

It is difficult to read this piece of the Christmas story and not picture three youngsters dressed as kings and wearing handmade crowns, making their way down the center aisle while the congregation sings, "We Three Kings." And yet, my imagination is taking me in a different direction this year as I consider the story before us now. Oh, yes, there is the truth that the gifts these royal travelers presented appear to point to death for this newborn baby. And yes, there is the wonder that all the world was coming to kneel at his feet. Still, I find myself wondering about these travelers themselves and what compelled them to take such a journey in the first place. For what a journey it must have been for those who first followed that star. One can only imagine how difficult all the way through from beginning to end, the challenges did not cease for them once they returned home. And how could it have been simple after that?

For they had, no doubt, risked their fortunes and their reputations to travel far ... only to have their purposes nearly disillusioned and their lives threatened by a suspicious ruler.

For they had traveled to see royalty and they were led to kneel before a baby born of poor parents in an out of the way place.

They must have had dreams and nightmares both about this particular journey for the rest of their lives as they wondered at its meaning for them and for all the world.

And so find myself thinking of those wise men, those magi, those kings and I find myself wondering about what stirred in their hearts to compel them to risk so much. What deep yearning for something other than what they had known led them to travel so far? And as I think of them, I find myself thinking of all of us and wondering at other journeys taken...and what it is that makes such journeys possible, necessary, preferable, even, to simply living the life that is right before us. What sign in the sky, what communication from God, would make me go that deep, that far to discover its meaning for me?

And then it strikes me that those travelers to Bethlehem were simply living their lives to their natural conclusions. For apparently their life's work was studying the stars. And when they saw a star which seemed to hold such meaning, all they could do, if they were to be true to who they were called to be, was to follow its direction. So having studied the stars and having felt the prodding of one particular star to take this incredible

journey, when they came to the place to which the star led them, they were met there by God. We know this could not have been at all what they expected ... at least not God in the form and circumstance before them there. And it may well have been true, that things were never quite the same again for them ... and perhaps in ways that were not all that pleasant. Still, in that baby, they met the 'Holy One,' God's Own Son. And all they were doing was what they believed they were made to do.

And yet, at the same time, this was probably more than what they bargained for when they first started out ... for packing up to travel to a place unknown was probably not in the job descriptions they first accepted. Indeed, in what they set out on here and in what they experienced in and through this journey, there was a whole lot more for them now than sitting in a quiet, familiar place, taking notes on parchment and sharing their insights with others.

Perhaps this is so for all of us. As we use and develop the gifts that God has planted within us... as we become all we were made to be, with eyes and hearts open, perhaps we, too, will encounter God there as well. And yet, there must be a point, it seems when we follow God's leading out of our most comfortable places in order that we might encounter the Holy One as well. And it could be that it might not look like we thought it would, but in the surprise itself, perhaps God resides.

And so for those who teach, and those who preach, and those who visit, and those who build, and those who nurture children, and those who clean, and those who invent and those who heal and those who....well, you fill in the blank. Maybe like those magi from so long ago, our first calling is simply to be who we were made to be. And then to keep our eyes and ears and hearts open to when we are called to step out in faith, somehow taking those gifts of God to their natural conclusions. Oh, those times will come to us all, that's guaranteed. And when they do, and when we follow God's leading within and beyond them, it is also a sure thing that we will encounter God, perhaps in unexpected ways and places, too. And it is also certain that our lives will never be the same again.

**HYMN: #82 A Light is Gleaming**

**A light is gleaming, spreading its arms  
throughout the night, living in the light.  
Come share its gladness, God's radiant love  
is burning bright, living in the light.**

- 1 When light comes pouring into the darkest place,  
it hurts our eyes to see the glow.  
Sometimes a word of hope reminds us of our fears,  
our memories and tears. R
- 2 When night is round us and every shadow grows,  
a star is there to light our way.  
It tells a story of Jesus who came near to say:  
'God's light will ever stay.' R
- 3 And Jesus showed us a brighter path to walk.  
He showed us things we hadn't seen.  
Now we, like Jesus, can help creation shine,  
and this will be a sign: R
- 4 So let us live in the brightness God has giv'n,  
and let us rise to see the dawn.  
We trust that God is here asparkle and ablaze,  
- warming all our days. R

**PASTORAL PRAYER**

Patient Lord, wait for us while we get nostalgic over the Manger Scene. Our hearts are warmed by the witness of the shepherds and the journey and adoration of the Magi. We want to stay right at that time and feel the glow of that love. But you call us to go from the manger, back to our fields, back to our schools, back to our homes, back to our work. You pour your transforming love into our lives and we are challenged to bring back to all those places the glad good news of hope and salvation. Remind us again of all the opportunities we are given to celebrate your love and power. Help us find joy in serving others. As we have brought the names of those near and dear to us before the throne of grace, asking for your healing mercies, help us remember that the love poured out in the Light of the Natal Star is still given for us this day. Give us grace

and peace to reach out to all those in need. For we ask this in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

**CLOSING HYMN: #35 Good Christian Friends, Rejoice**

- 1 Good Christian friends, rejoice  
with heart and soul and voice!  
Give ye heed to what we say: News! News!  
Jesus Christ is born today.  
Ox and ass before him bow,  
and he is in the manger now.  
Christ is born today! Christ is born today!
- 2 Good Christian friends, rejoice  
with heart and soul and voice!  
Now ye hear of endless bliss: Joy! Joy!  
Jesus Christ was born for this!  
He hath opened heaven's door,  
and we are blest forevermore.  
Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!
- 3 Good Christian friends, rejoice  
with heart and soul and voice!  
Now ye need not fear the grave: Peace! Peace!  
Jesus Christ was born to save!  
Calls you one and calls you all  
to gain his everlasting hall.  
Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!

**BENEDICTION**

The Light of the Star, the light of God's love, shines before you as you leave this place. Go in peace, go in joy, go in love to meet God's people in the world and greet them with the good news of salvation. AMEN.

**CHORAL AMEN**

**POSTLUDE**

**Announcements**

**Sunday, January 14<sup>th</sup>:** Short Church Council meeting at Hagersville in the parlour after worship.

**Friday, January 19<sup>th</sup>:** Chili Lunch at Hagersville from 11:30am-1pm. Tickets are \$10/person. Takeout Only. Call Susan at 905-768-3729 to order ahead.

**Friday, January 19<sup>th</sup>:** Scrapbooking Setup in the afternoon/evening at Hagersville.

**Sunday, January 28<sup>th</sup>:** Deadline to have your reports to the office for Annual Reports.

**Tuesday, February 13<sup>th</sup>:** Pancake Supper at Hagersville. More information to follow.

**Sunday, February 18<sup>th</sup>:** Springvale Annual Meeting after 9:30am worship.

**Sunday, February 25<sup>th</sup>:** Hagersville Annual Meeting after worship with potluck lunch to start.

**Wednesday, March 6<sup>th</sup>:** Office Board meeting at 10:30am at Springvale.

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FundScrip orders are due today for January! Please see order forms at the back of the church.

## A Witty Short Christmas Story

It was the day after Christmas at St Peter and St Paul's Church in Borden, Kent, England. Father John, the vicar, was looking at the nativity scene outside when he noticed the baby Jesus was missing from the figures.

Immediately, Father John's thoughts turned to calling in the local policeman but as he was about to do so, he saw little Nathan with a red wagon, and in the wagon was the figure of the little infant, Jesus.

Father John approached Nathan and asked him, "Well, Nathan, where did you get the little infant?"

Nathan looked up, smiled and replied, "I took him from the church."

"And why did you take him?" Asked Father John.

With a sheepish grin, Nathan said, "Well, Father John, about a week before Christmas I prayed to Lord Jesus. I told him if he would bring me a red wagon for Christmas, I would give him a ride around the block in it."