

**HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &
SPRINGVALE UNITED CHURCH
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20th, 2020**

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REGIONAL COUNCIL PRAYER CYCLE

Hamilton, Emmanuel

Advent 4 - Love

“Love came down at Christmas, love oh, love divine, Love was born at
Christmas, star and Angels gave the sign.”

Offering Prayer

There are so many things to be thankful for today, God.
Receive these tokens of our gratitude for your love incarnate in the babe
of Bethlehem. May they become God-with-us for all the world. May
they breathe magic back into a world that needs a sense of wonder and
joy. Amen

CALL TO WORSHIP

It's Christmas again, God. Are we ready for it?
So many uncertainties out there God.

**Has the world forgot what Christmas is all about...
you coming to earth...Emmanuel...God-with-us.**

As we worship this morning hear the promises of hope, peace, joy and
salvation and love as we sing our familiar carols.

**Let us hear angel voices, see shepherds hurrying to a stable,
feel the baby's soft breath on our cheeks, and ponder in our hearts
what all this means for the world, for us, as we prepare for your
birth once again.**

OPENING HYMN: #43 Go, Tell it on the Mountain

OPENING PRAYER

Let the love that shaped earth and heaven
 dwell within us this Christmas
Let the love that created humanity
 dwell within us this Christmas.
Let the love that overcomes suffering and hatred
 dwell within us this Christmas.
Let the love that causes us to rejoice with loved ones
 dwell within us this Christmas.
Let the love that forgives and renews
 dwell within us this Christmas.
Let the love that brings reconciliation after separation
 dwell within us this Christmas.
Let the love that brings the blessing of peace
 dwell within us this Christmas.
May we share that peace with all people near and far.
Amen

LIGHTING OF ADVENT CANDLE “LOVE”

ADVENT 4 - LOVE

We light our first Advent candle, a symbol of Hope.

Light first candle

We light our second Advent candle, a symbol of Peace.

Light second candle

We light our third Advent candle, a symbol of Joy.

Light third candle

We light our fourth Advent candle, a symbol of Love.

Light fourth candle

Like a fourth candle lit in the darkness,
Love increases the more it is shared.

I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever.

In a world where love can sometimes be seen as weakness, and hatred as
strength,

in a year when we have felt far away from those we love,
God, remind us that your steadfast love is established forever.

I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever.

God, we trust that you are with us,

That your faithful love is as firm as the heavens.

I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever.

Let our mouths proclaim your faithfulness to all generations,
let us proclaim the truth to the ends of the earth,
we have love because God is with us!

I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever.

ADVENT HYMN: #7 Hope is a Star verses 1, 2, 3 & 4

- 1 Hope is a star that shines in the night,
leading us on till the morning is bright.
**When God is a child there's joy in our song,
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,
and none shall be afraid.**
- 2 Peace is a ribbon that circles the earth,
giving a promise of safety and worth. **R**
- 3 Joy is a song that welcomes the dawn,
telling the world that the Saviour is born. **R**
- 4 Love is a flame that burns in our heart,
Jesus has come and will never depart. **R**

ANTHEM

CHILDREN'S TIME

CHILDREN'S SONG: It's Christmas Time

VIDEO

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Matthew 1:18-23 NIV

Joseph Accepts Jesus as His Son

18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about[a]: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. 19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet[b] did not

want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,[c] because he will save his people from their sins."

22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"[d] (which means "God with us").

Luke 2:1-7 NIV

The Birth of Jesus

2 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while[a] Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to their own town to register.

4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

REFLECTION: The Light of Love

Almost overnight, enchantment has come to our neighborhoods. Here and there, dotting homes and yards, Christmas lights have appeared. A mismatched string of blue and white lights draped over the fence across the street. A twinkling of lights everywhere as you drive. Signs of irrepressible hope emerging from a dark night.

The same thing is happening in cities and towns across the globe. In the midst of the pandemic, hope is showing up in the most ordinary and innocent of ways... in Christmas lights. Whether in low wattage hope flung across a window or in a dazzling display that illuminates an entire yard, Christmas lights say it all ... we are not going to let this Christmas be pushed aside...we are going show the world that hope, peace, joy and love still exist.

I write in praise of Christmas lights, that reflect the star of Bethlehem, reminder of the light of the world, symbol of childlike joy. If the world ever needed these simple reminders of light, of family, of love, we need them now.

In fact, the pandemic has caused us to long for the normal, unassuming things we once took for granted: a hug, a handshake, a smile. How we miss the gathering of people and sharing of stories and community with one another. We miss visiting the sick in the hospitals, going to retirement homes and sharing some of us worship and visiting our shut ins. I truly feel that Christmas lights remind us of enduring hope.

Maybe that's why I found the Christmas lights in my neighborhood strangely grounding. Twinkling reminders that someday it would all be okay again. Just like the star of Bethlehem that guided Mary and Joseph, the shepherds and lead the wise men to find hope for the future.

I know some have seen the post about The Christmas Star appearing this year on December 21st. I couldn't help but really take a deeper look at how amazing that this occurrence would be happening in the year 2020. A rare event in the night sky that has not been seen in almost eight centuries.

In the year when Jesus was born, there was violence, chaos, political and social unrest. It was dark.

The Magi found him by way of the star, which was the "meeting" of 3 stars Jupiter, Saturn and Mars. They followed the star until it rested on where he was and they began to worship him. In a time where it was dark, Light was brought in to our world. Jesus stepped in to the chaos and brought peace, hope and love.

Fast forward to this year, 2020. It's a time of violence, chaos, uncertainty, political and social unrest. It is dark. Winter Solstice, December 21st, being a time where the day is the shortest and night is the longest...it's literally the "darkest day" and is the beginning of what most would say the cold, dark winter season.

But on the darkest day this year, Jupiter and Saturn meet, giving us the Christmas Star! How fitting...that in the moment of time... when we need it ... during the Christmas season that we get to see this beautiful reminder...that even in the darkest of times... light will, and has, stepped

in. In our chaos God is there. In our darkest time, God is there. God brings light, and makes all things new.

So, as you look out on Dec 21st for the Christmas Star, may we be reminded of His power, and His Light that he brings for all mankind. God is perfect at stepping into chaos and bringing it into peace, bringing hope, bringing joy and bringing love in the form of a star that so long ago shone over the place where love was born.

CAROL: #74 What Child is This

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

O sweet Child of Bethlehem,
grant that we may share with all our hearts
in this profound mystery of Christmas.
Put into the hearts of men and women this peace
for which they sometimes seek so desperately
and which you alone can give to them.
Help them to know one another better,
and to live as brothers and sisters,
children of the same Father.
Reveal to them also your beauty, holiness and purity.
Awaken in their hearts
love and gratitude for your infinite goodness.
Join them all together in your love.
And give us your heavenly peace. Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

CAROL: #44 It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

SENDING FORTH

God grant you the light of Christmas, which is faith;
the warmth of Christmas, which is purity;
the righteousness of Christmas, which is justice;
the belief in Christmas, which is truth;
the all of Christmas, which is Christ.
Amen