

**HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &
SPRINGVALE UNITED CHURCH
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13th, 2020**

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REGIONAL COUNCIL PRAYER CYCLE

Peoples Memorial United Church

Advent 3 - Joy

Joy, for the Christian, joy is much more than a fleeting emotion. Instead, Galatians 5:22 lists joy as the second fruit of the Holy Spirit, meaning that joy is a gift that we receive from God through the Holy Spirit.

Offering Prayer

Lord, you have blessed our lives in so many ways. Receive these gifts and help then to work in this world to make your light shine in the darkness and your peace be an attainable goal in all conflicts. We offer these gifts in Jesus' name. AMEN.

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Welcome to worship on this Third Sunday in Advent. Our focus today is the Joy which beckons us onward.

P: As these days are growing darker, we need to focus on the light and the Joy.

L: Jesus is the light which God has given especially to the world.

P: Help us make our hearts ready to receive Jesus, our hope our peace and our joy.

CAROL: #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

- 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 of Joy and Light, shine through our darkness, bringing us hope. Open our hearts for the journey, our eyes for the light, our spirits for the peace which you bring. Fill our mouths with laughter and speech with shouts of joy that we shall reveal the love with which you surround us. We offer this prayer in the name of the One who is coming into the world bringing your hope, love, peace, and joy, Jesus Christ. AMEN.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

ADVENT 3 - JOY (Based on Psalm 126)

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

Like a third candle lit in the darkness,
joy shines brighter and brighter, and dances in the wind.

The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoiced.

In a world that sometimes feels lacking of joy,
in a year when we have missed out on expected, routine joys,
God, help us to find the joy in the unexpected, in the disruption, in the silver linings.

The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoiced.

God, we trust that you are with us,
and that those who sow in tears will reap with shouts of joy.

The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoiced.

Let our mouths be filled with laughter and our tongues with shouts of joy,

let us proclaim the truth to the ends of the earth,

we have joy because God is with us!

The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoiced.

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

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**

ANTHEM

CHILDREN'S TIME

CHILDREN'S SONG

ADVENT LITANY: REJOICE

Because Christmas is almost here
Because dancing fits so well with music
Because inside baby clothes are miracles.
Rejoice!

Because some people love you

Because of chocolate

Because pain does not last forever

Because Santa Claus is coming.

Rejoice!

Because of laughter

Because there really are angels

Because your fingers fit your hands

Because forgiveness is yours for the asking

Because of children

Because of parents.

Rejoice!

Because the blind see.

And the lame walk.

Rejoice!

Because lepers are clean

And the deaf hear.

Rejoice!

Because the dead will live again

And there is good news for the poor.

Rejoice!

Because of Christmas

Because of Jesus...

We rejoice!

SCRIPTURE READING: Psalm 126; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Psalm 126

A song of ascents.

¹When the LORD restored the fortunes of^[a] Zion,
we were like those who dreamed.^[b]

²Our mouths were filled with laughter,
our tongues with songs of joy.

Then it was said among the nations,

“The LORD has done great things for them.”

³The LORD has done great things for us,
and we are filled with joy.

⁴Restore our fortunes,^[c] LORD,
like streams in the Negev.

⁵Those who sow with tears
will reap with songs of joy.

⁶Those who go out weeping,
carrying seed to sow,

will return with songs of joy,
carrying sheaves with them.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

New International Version

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.

MESSAGE

The Real Joy of Christmas

The word joy is inseparably connected to Christmas and to the biblical account of the birth of Jesus Christ. The angel brought "good tidings of great joy" to the shepherds (Luke 2:10). The wise men, when they saw the star, "rejoiced with exceeding great joy" (Matthew 2:10). Elizabeth, when she heard Mary's voice said that her baby "leaped in my womb for joy" (Luke 1:44).

But...we ask where did all the Christmas joy go? How did things get so complicated? So rushed? So squeezed and cluttered? It doesn't have to be that way. We can choose to step aside—step into a quieter moment—and read angels' words that came on that night that changed the world. Christmas is a glorious season of the year. It is also a busy time for most of us. It is my hope and prayer that we may not become so caught up in the pressures of the season that we place our emphasis on the wrong things and miss the simple joys of commemorating the birth of the Holy One of Bethlehem.

Finding the real joy of Christmas comes not in the hurrying and the scurrying to get more done. We find the real joy of Christmas when we make the Savior the focus of the season.

Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, He came forth from heaven to live on earth as mortal man and to establish the kingdom of God. His glorious gospel reshaped the thinking of the world. He lived for us, and He died for us. What can we, in return, give to Him?

I love the words written by the English poet Christina Rossetti:

What can I give Him,

Poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd

I would bring a lamb.

If I were a Wise Man

I would do my part,

Yet what can I give Him?

Give my heart.

Our celebration of Christmas should be a reflection of the love and selflessness taught by the Savior. Giving, not getting, brings to full bloom the Christmas spirit.

We feel more kindly one to another. We reach out in love to help those less fortunate. Our hearts are softened. Enemies are forgiven, friends remembered, and God obeyed. The spirit of Christmas illuminates the picture window of the soul, and we look out upon the world's busy life and become more interested in people than in things. To catch the real meaning of the spirit of Christmas, we need only drop the last syllable "mas", and it becomes the Spirit of Christ.

True happiness comes only by making others happy. In short, the Christmas spirit is the Christ spirit, that makes our hearts glow in love and friendship and prompts us to kind deeds of service.

How much better the world would be if we all gave gifts of understanding and compassion, of service and friendship, of kindness and gentleness, and of love and joy.

As the Christmas season has encircled us with all its glory, may we, as did the Wise Men, seek a bright, particular star to guide us in our celebration of the Savior's birth. May we all make the journey to Bethlehem in spirit, taking with us a tender, caring heart as our gift to the Saviour.

Hope, peace, joy and love aren't items that can be tied with a bow and placed under your tree, they're spiritual and emotional experiences that you need to make space for in your heart. When you do this, you can experience true joy this Christmas season. Amen

CAROL: #48 Hark the Herald Angels Sing

- 1 Hark! the herald angels sing,
 'Glory to the newborn King,
 peace on earth, and mercy mild,
 God and sinners reconciled!
 Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
 join the triumph of the skies;
 with the angelic host proclaim,
 'Christ is born in Bethlehem!'
 Hark! the herald angels sing,
 'Glory to the newborn King!'
- 2 Christ, by highest heaven adored,
 Christ, the everlasting Lord,
 late in time behold him come,
 offspring of a virgin's womb.
 Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
 hail, the incarnate deity,
 pleased with us in flesh to dwell,
 Jesus, our Emmanuel! R
- 3 Hail, the heavenborn Prince of Peace!
 Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
 Light and life to all he brings,
 risen with healing in his wings.
 Mild he lays his glory by,
 born that we no more may die,
 born to raise us from the earth,
 born to give us second birth. R

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Lord of time and hope, we are rushing headlong into the holidays to come. We look at our calendars and our day planners and wonder how we will get everything done in the time allotted to us before the "big Day" arrives. We begin to panic at the thought of projects still to be finished, contacts that need to be made, preparations for festivities that have only just begun. And the darkness of obsessive holiday planning overtakes us and clouds our minds and spirits. But you are a God of time

and Light. You bring hope to us, as you always have through the voices of the great prophets, and now through the One who is to come, Jesus Christ. Remind us again what this season is truly about.....love, hope, peace and joy. Calm us down. Slow us down. Help us remember that it is in loving relationship that you gave your Son to us and it is in loving relationship that your Word is carried into the hearts of the people. No tinsel, ribbons, tape, cards and convey the eternal message adequately. You have given us the Light, to shine in our path and cut through our darkness. Shine in the hearts of your people today. Bless those dear ones whom we have named before you today with your healing, reconciling, comforting presence and love. Give strength to all who face difficult situations and let your compassionate light shine on them guiding their decisions and their steps. Bring us at last to your presence, where the light of hope and love continually pour out on us. These prayers and hopes we offer in confidence and gratitude for your love and presence. 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 trumpet of Joy is sounding in the land. We have heard God's word of healing love and are challenged to go forth into God's world with the good news of God's abiding peace with us. Go in hope and peace may God's joy always be with you. AMEN.

CHORAL AMEN**POSTLUDE**
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