

**HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &
SPRINGVALE UNITED CHURCH
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29th, 2020**

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REGIONAL COUNCIL PRAYER CYCLE

St. Paul's Dundas

First Sunday of Advent "HOPE"

Advent means coming. During Advent we remember how people watched and waited for God to come in Jesus, and we watch and wait for God to come and work in our world and lives.

Offertory Prayer

God of Peace and Hope, you have blessed us in so many ways. Today we return blessings and thankfulness to you. Bless these gifts and all gathered here that we may be bearers of peace and hope to your world.
AMEN.

PRELUDE

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

ANNOUNCEMENTS, BIRTHDAYS AND CELEBRATION

CALL TO WORSHIP

Listen!
Listen to the stirring of the heavens. The stars are gathering, the light shifts, and there is a steady beat, beat, beat across the universe.
Listen!
Listen to the rhythm of Advent. A readying, pulsing heartbeat, steady and real beats, beats, beats, across this season.
Listen!

Listen to the beat. God's Advent beat, transforming swords into ploughshares, missiles to Communion plates, rifles to rocking chairs. Listen!

Come with me, and pick up the beat of God for God is beating out the rhythm of something new.

OPENING 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.

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God, as we begin this season of Advent remind us again that in the midst of our darkness you are bringing us peace, to calm our anxious spirits and hectic lives. Turn our hearts again toward you. Make us ready to receive your Son our Saviour. Slow our pace, and give us the blessing of feeling your peace in our spirits. For we ask this in Jesus' precious Name. AMEN.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

ADVENT 1 - HOPE (Based on Psalm 80)

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

*Light first candle*Like a single candle lit in the darkness,
hope can sometimes be a fragile, flickering thing...**Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may find hope in this world.**

In a world that sometimes feels like there is no hope, in a year that sometimes feels like all hope has been lost, stir up your might, O God, and come bring the light to this world.

Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may find hope in this world.

God, we trust that you are with us, fanning our flicker of hope into a flame that can light up the whole world.

Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may find hope in this world.

Let us never turn away from you, let us proclaim the truth to the ends of the earth, we have hope because God is with us!

Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may find hope in this world once again.**ADVENT HYMN: #7 "Hope is a Star" Vs. 1**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.**CHILDREN TIME****CHILDREN'S HYMN****LITANY FOR FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT****P: Boxes, tissue paper, tape, ribbons, tags.....is everything all ready now for the season of giving?**

L: Wrap us in your love, O God.

P: Lights, wreaths, trees, lawn ornaments, window candles.....is everything all ready now for the season of celebration?

L: Light our way in the darkness, O God.

P: Reaching out to others...yes, planning...do we? Everything is so different this year God.

L: Guide and direct our lives and steps, O God.

P: So what do we do this year?

L: Place your hope in your presence and love of God.

P: That's it? Place our hope in God?

L: That's it!

P: But all the stuff we have to do....what happens to all of that?

L: Don't be frantic. Place your hope in God.

P: But.....

L: Place your hope in God. Slow down. Listen. Behold! God is with you!

P: Where is God?

L: Here, right here, right now, beside you, before you, behind you - with you always. You don't have to fear.

P: God is with us in this place, and everywhere we go. Open our hearts, and minds, listen....he is with us.**SCRIPTURE READINGS: Mark 13:24-37**

New International Version

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!’”

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.

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... 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 that 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 shout, 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, though, 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 troubles 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 catalogue.

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

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING HYMN: #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.**

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**

3 O come, O come, great God of might,
who to your tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times once gave the law
in cloud, and majesty, and awe. **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**

5 O come, O Key of David, come,
and open wide our heavenly home;
make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery. **R**

6 O come, O Dayspring, from on high,
and cheer us by your drawing nigh;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight. **R**

7 O come, Desire of nations, bind
all peoples in one heart and mind;
O bid our sad divisions cease,
and be for us the Prince of Peace. **R**

SENDING FORTH

May God take us and hold us, call us and love us
unsettle us and challenge us
waken us and guide us remould us and transform us
with the Good News of Advent
and the promise of Christ's birth.
Amen.

CHORAL AMEN

POSTLUDE

