

Central United Church Windsor
Pastor Charmain Bailey - December 5, 2021



Light Shines In The Darkness
Advent Peace

Comfort, comfort my people says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and cry to her, that she has served her term, that her penalty has been paid, that she has received from Jehovah's hand double for all her sins.

A voice cries out in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert, a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up and every mountain and hill be made low. The uneven ground shall become level and the rough places a plain.

Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all the people shall see it together, for the mouth of Jehovah has spoken.

Comfort, comfort my people says your God. God is with us when we think no one cares or understands how hard we tried, how desperately we longed to do the right things, but just could not seem to get it right.

Comfort, comfort my people says your God. God is with us when the doctor says there's no hope, when our prayers bounce off the ceiling, when our mind will nor rest and no solution comes.

Comfort, comfort says your God. God be with us when we laugh uncontrollably, and because the stress of life can no longer be caged in, and we give way to the giddiness of the spirit which lets us release the anxiety that stifles us as we dare to be ourselves.

Comfort, comfort says your God. Emmanuel God with us when we are so lonely our insides ache with the pain of emptiness, and our skin craves to be touched by a gentle hand, when phones don't ring, and no one knocks, and not a single person will look into your eyes.

Comfort, comfort my people says your God. O come, o come Emmanuel God with us... descend to us we pray..

The Christmas stories are beautifully composed testimonies to the liberating power of God. The symbols and characters placed in the stories reveal the heart of Christmas, the heart of God's love, and the good news that Hope, Joy, Peace and Love finds us in the midst of our fear and worry.

Years later the church picked the winter solstice as the best time to celebrate the birth of Jesus because the darkest, most difficult time of the year reflects that God births new life in us, in the darkest and most difficult times of our lives.

Now that Christmas has become a national festival and a frenzy of commercial consumption, there is a vortex of frenzied energy surrounding it. It is inescapable .

It brings some blessings. The excitement of children, pretty Christmas cards arriving by mail wishing happiness and joy. Conversations conclude with Merry Christmas and Holiday music is everywhere reminding us to have a holly jolly Christmas.

But that covers up our pain and struggle that some of us are feeling at this time. It covers up what Christmas is really about, God coming to us in Jesus, into the struggle, into the pain, into the realities that we often feel we have to hide.

It covers up the reality that we are living in a time where the world feels like a scary place because the political climate is intense, and this intensity is being driven by fear, and this fear is coming from the dwindling of our personal resources, it's coming straight from our pockets to the wealthiest few, but the wealthiest few have reinforced their campaigns of shifting the blame to poor, the refugees, the immigrants. And so we are afraid and we are lashing out to those who deserve it the least....

It distracts us from social problems of our society where homelessness is on the rise, suicide is on the rise, drug abuse and overdoses are taking the lives of our children at an alarming pace.

It refocuses our minds so that we don't have to worry about our planet, our earth, our home is shifting and changing as our environment is being destroyed by our over consumption and our greed.

The grand celebrations distracts us from the pain and loneliness of our homeless and elderly neighbours, and our our neighbours for whom this time of year is hell, because their loved ones are no longer here to share in the celebration, because their children want nothing to do with them,

because they are too ill and are just in too much pain, because they just can't afford to get their children or wives gifts....

This service is a time for us to acknowledge those neighbours. This service is a time for us to be still from the business and to face our own realities. It's a time for us to break through the distractions to see ourselves, to look at our own pain and struggles, to focus on what Christmas really is, and what it could be on a deeper level, it's a time for us to intentionally seek peace in our lives.

We are aware that there is much darkness in our world, the darkness of ignorance, cruelty and greed, the night time of pain and fear, the darkness and struggle of new life being born and reborn. We acknowledge these, but we are also aware of the comfort that our creator offers. We are aware of the peace that is to be claimed from the birth of the baby on whom we wait.

Yes, we are aware of the darkness, but we are also aware of the good news that Light shines in the darkness. Say it with me.. Light Shines In The Darkness.

Today we give thanks that we can hope for a better world, and for better living for all... yes, light shines in the darkness.

Today somewhere, someone who is lonely is receiving comfort from a stranger... Yes, light shines in the darkness.

Today somewhere there is a man and his wife purchasing and delivering toys to a family, bringing them the Christmas cheer that they wouldn't have experienced otherwise, yes, light shines in the darkness..

Today, right now, there is a couple planning the menu to feed the lonely elderly folk who have nowhere to go on Christmas Day.., yes, light shines in the darkness..

Today there is someone receiving the news that their loved one made it through a difficult surgery..., yes, light shines in the darkness..

Comfort, comfort my people says your God. O come, o come Emmanuel God with us, shining his light into our darkness, and bringing us some well needed Peace, thanks be to god.