

DORCHESTER UNITED CHURCH

SUNDAY DECEMBER 10TH 2023

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

WE GATHER IN GOD'S PRESENCE

Prelude “Advent Prayer” by Anthony Giamanco

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that we worship and reside on the traditional territories of the Haudenosaunee and the Anishnaabe people.

It is in the spirit of reconciliation and right relationships, and working towards this reality that we come to worship the One who will empower and guide us with grace.

Lighting the Advent Candles

The first blue candle is lit.

On this second Sunday of Advent, we light the second candle symbolizing peace - the proclamation that God calls us to live peacefully in understanding.

The second blue candle is lit.

Noticing the tiny flame, we wonder when the next puff will blow it out. We ponder that, if this candle were outside, it would quickly be extinguished.

Still the flame flickers and flourishes - a symbol of the Prince of Peace living within us, a powerful image of strength despite perceived weakness.

All sing: VU 7 "Hope Is a Star" (vs 2 only)

Peace is a ribbon that circles the earth,
giving a promise of safety and worth.

Refrain:

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.

We come to affirm that divine peace thrives within us, a
seed of inspiration strengthened by Spirit breath.

**We come to seek wisdom and daring to live lives of
peace, transforming into a community of faith that
builds bridges.**

We enter into prayer to receive the blessings of the peace
that passes all understanding:

**Whisper to our hearts this morning, O God, helping us
to notice the chasms we create between one another.
Breathe into our intentions that we become ever more
aware, believing we can make a difference, no matter
how small we may feel. Lead us through the way of
Jesus to listen to one another in love. Amen.**

-Gord Dunbar, Kincardine P.C., Kincardine, ON

Silent Reflection

**Birthdays, Celebrations and Life and Work of the
Congregation**

Call to Worship

The desert and the wilderness shall rejoice and be glad.

All of creation will bloom like a rose.

God's glory will be revealed in all the world.

Valleys shall be lifted up and mountains made low.

Let us celebrate God's evenness and stability in our broken world.

Hymn VU 2 Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

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:

Israel's strength and consolation,
Hope of all the earth thou art,
Dear desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver;
Born a child and yet a king;
Born to reign in us for ever,
Now thy gracious kingdom bring.

By thine own eternal spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone;
By thine all-sufficient merit
Raise us to thy glorious throne.

Opening Prayer

In a world overcome by violence, we remember the Prince of Peace.

In the midst of greed and selfishness, we rejoice in God's unconditional gift of love.

In an age burdened by despair and lack of hope, we announce the Advent of the Promised One.

In a society that defines itself by success, we encounter

the Suffering Servant.

**Among a people who have lost direction we celebrate
One who is the Way. Amen.**

WE ARE BLESSED BY GOD

Anthem “My Soul Cries Out” (Canticle of the Turning)

Soloist Morvan Magee

Time for the Young and the Young at Heart

The Prayer of Jesus (The Lord's Prayer)

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our trespasses

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

Psalm 85 VU 802

*Sung Refrain: “God, show us your love, show us your love
and mercy.”*

Once you were gracious to your land, O God,
you restored the fortunes of Jacob;

**you forgave the offence of your people,
and pardoned all their sin.**

You drew back all your displeasure,
and turned from your fiery wrath.

**Restore us again, God our Saviour,
and put away your just anger toward us.**

Will you be angry with us forever?
Will you prolong your wrath to all generations?
**Will you not revive us again,
that your people may rejoice in you?**

*Sung Refrain: "God, show us your love, show us your love
and mercy."*

Let me hear what you will say, O God,
for you will speak peace to your people,
to the faithful who turn their hearts to you.
**Surely salvation is near to those who fear you,
and your glory will dwell in our land.**
Mercy and faithfulness will meet,
justice and peace will embrace,
**Faithfulness will spring up from the earth,
And righteousness look down from heaven.**
You, O God, will give what is good,
And our land will yield its harvest.
**Righteousness will go before you,
And the paths of your feet will be peace.**

*Sung Refrain: "God, show us your love, show us your love
and mercy."*

Scripture Readings:

First Lesson Isaiah 40: 1-11

Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.
² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the Lord's hand

double for all her sins.

³ A voice cries out:

‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴ 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.

⁵ Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.’

⁶ A voice says, ‘Cry out!’

And I said, ‘What shall I cry?’

All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.

⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.

⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand for ever.

⁹ Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good tidings;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,
lift it up, do not fear;

say to the cities of Judah,

‘Here is your God!’

¹⁰ See, the Lord God comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;

his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.

¹¹ He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,

and gently lead the mother sheep.

Gospel Mark 1: 1-8

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

² As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,
‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;

³ the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
“Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight”’,

⁴ John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ He proclaimed, ‘The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸ I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.’

Other Readings 2 Peter 3: 8-15a

Hymn VU 29 Hark the Glad Sound

Hark, the glad sound! The Savior comes,
the Savior promised long:
Let every heart prepare a throne,
and every voice a song.

He comes the prisoners to release,
in Satan’s bondage held;

the gates of brass before Him burst,
the iron fetters yield.

He comes the broken heart to bind,
the bleeding soul to cure,
and with the treasures of His grace,
to bless the humble poor.

Our glad Hosannas, Prince of Peace,
your welcome shall proclaim;
and heaven's eternal arches ring,
with your beloved name.

Sermon "A Highway for God"

Hymn VU 20 On Jordan's Bank

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry
announces that the Lamb is nigh.
Awake and harken, for he brings
glad tidings of the King of kings!

Then cleansed be every life from sin:
make straight the way for God within,
and let each heart prepare a home
where such a mighty guest might come.

In you, we find abundant life,
our refuge in the midst of strife;
without your grace we waste away,
like flowers that wither and decay.

Stretch forth your hand, our health restore,
and help us rise to fall no more.

O let your face upon us shine
and fill the world with love divine.

All praise to you, eternal Son,
whose advent has our freedom won,
and praise to God whom we adore,
with Holy Spirit evermore.

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S GRACE

Prayer of the People

Gracious and merciful God, our hearts are troubled by the conflicts within us, but especially by the conflicts without. We wonder whether the Advent wreath and the lighting of the candles is a sign of something more than anticipation and expectation. We have become so accustomed to the seasonal liturgies of the Church, that we have begun to take them for granted. When Advent calendars filled with chocolates and sweet treats have become part of popular culture something is lost in the translation.

When holy days become mere holidays, O God, our lives are being drawn away from the deeper relationship we promised to have with you. We ask for hearts that are penitent so a blanket of comfort may be spread equally over all your people. You have called us to be heralds of good tidings, so we lift our voices in honour of the One who brings restoration, comfort and healing to those who can find no peace.

We make common cause with those for whom Christ's coming turns bad news into good news; the captives, the strangers, the neglected poor, the abandoned young, the forgotten elderly, the desperate lonely. May we become

channels of your grace that all who yearn for your Advent may hear your voice as it speaks comfort and hope.

Shelter us from the winds of chance and change and welcome us into the Shepherd's bosom of care. Cover us with your mercy and enliven us with your kindness. Teach us to become a community of faith that brings the poor and destitute into the centre, that we may heal the sick and calm the fears of the frightened. May we open a way for the prophets of justice to be heard.

May we exercise discernment and restraint as the season beckons us to follow the lead of a culture bound by values that dehumanize and draw us away from the compassion and care of loving God. May all who find this season overwhelming renew their hope in a future of inclusion where racial inequality has no place. May the One who remained authentically human when confronted by the forces of division give us the inner strength to hold our society and our world accountable.

May our efforts help to bring comfort to the afflicted and an openness to the outcast that they may be held within your tender mercy. In our weakness and lack of courage help us to sense in your presence the freedom to become a people of hope. And now we lift our hearts in a prayer for peace in a world of intransigence and hubris. May the people who live in abject poverty with very little or nothing to eat, exposed to the ravages of the weather and the threat of disease, be surprised by your bountiful supply of all their needs.

We offer this prayer knowing that we are called to live in the freedom of God's grace which has no favourites and breaks down every barrier that stands in the way. Amen

Invitation to Invest in God's Mission

The prophet's cry to comfort the people is no longer heard in our age. God has come among us, and our eyes have remained shut. The call to open our eyes and see what God is about must be heard again, for God is about change and new life for all of creation. We must commit ourselves to follow the path of the Suffering Servant.

Offertory Hymn VU 55 In the Bleak Midwinter (vs 4 only)

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 I can I give him,
give my heart.

Prayer of Dedication

Above the world's weeping,
there is a song of hope.
Above the noise of conflict,
there is a song of peace.
Above the cries of hate,
there is a song of love.
Bless these gifts, O God, that we, too, may sing your song.

Hymn VU 650 O God of Bethel

O God of Bethel, by whose hand

your people still are fed,
who through this earthly pilgrimage
have all our servants led;

Our vows, our prayers, we now present
before your throne of grace;
God of past ages, be the God
of each succeeding race.

Through each perplexing path of life
our wandering footsteps guide;
give us each day our daily bread,
and raiment fit provide.

O spread your covering wings around
till all our wanderings cease,
and at our God's beloved abode
our souls arrive in peace.

Commissioning and Benediction

Go now in peace.

We are called to live in peace with one another.

Go now in faith.

We are called to be agents of reconciliation.

Go now in love.

We are called to live in the light of God's grace.

May the Spirit's blessing be upon you as you leave this
place.

Hymn (Closing Response) Go Now in Peace

Go now in peace. Never be afraid.

God will go with you each hour of ev'ry day.

Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true.

Know He will guide you in all you do.
Go now in love, and show you believe.
Reach out to others so all the world can see.
God will be there supporting us with love.
Go now in peace, in faith, and
in love.

**Postlude “Creator of the Stars of Night”
by Ryan H Jones**