

**St. Mark's United Church
Cannifton, Ontario
December 1st, 2024**

Minister: Rev. Ryan McNally, MDiv.

Organist/Pianist: Mark Bond

**Technical Team: Sheila Parks, Elaner Pound, Mary Milligan,
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ADVENT 1 - HOPE

GATHERING

Prelude

COMMUNITY NEWS

ADVENT WREATH

In a world filled with tragedy and chaos, we arrive weary, wary, and wrung out.

We come to find shelter from our fears, to discover hope as we practise our faith in worship.

We're tired of this marathon of difficulty, longing for relief through a return to what we once thought normal.

We come because the vulnerable Christ child enlightens us with possibility.

On this first Sunday of Advent, we light this first candle symbolizing hope—the assurance that the risen Christ transforms all things in love.

The first purple candle is lit.

† Hymn # 7 VU

“Hope is a Star”

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.**

Flickering and fragile, this tiny flame opens us to wonder, to the heart of God, which transforms us as we join together in prayer:

We come to be sustained in life, O God, even as we wrestle. Inspire us to perceive the Way of Jesus as the path of wholeness. Unite us to become a community of faith woven as one by the Spirit. Teach us how to live by loving-kindness, becoming catalysts for hope in the hearts of those we encounter. Amen.

PASSING THE PEACE

The Peace of Christ be with you all!

And also with you.

Let us share the peace of Christ with those nearest to you, using a word, sign, or gesture of peace as we prepare to sing our opening hymn together.

† Hymn # 2 VU

“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.

APPROACHING GOD THROUGH PRAYER

† Hymn # 34 VU “Come Now, O God of Hope”

- 1 Come now, O God of hope,
we are your people;
pour out your spirit
that we be one body.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Merciful God, as the new church year begins, we know we are not ready for your coming.

We confess that we are selfish, making choices that benefit us while hurting others, forgetting your desire for justice and righteousness to prevail.

We find ourselves trapped in doubt and fear, worrying that there isn't *really* enough hope for us to depend on, or that you've somehow forgotten your promises.

We are sorry, God, and we ask you to forgive us. Reorient us as citizens of your kin-dom; remind us that we are your beloved children. We now pause to prayerfully search our hearts, sharing with you the thoughts, words, and actions that we so deeply regret and no longer wish to carry ... (*pause for silent confession*).

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

† Hymn # 33 MV “Jesus Came Bringing Us Hope”

Jesus came bringing us hope, Jesus came bringing us hope,
Jesus came bringing us hope, hallelujah forever more!

WORD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Ryan McNally

SCRIPTURE

Jeremiah 33: 14 - 16

Read by: Nancy Shorey

Psalm 25 “In You, We Hope, We Trust”

To you, O Lord, we lift our souls; in you alone we trust;
O let us not be put to shame, in you, we hope, we trust,
Your steadfast love, it covers us.

**Help us to know your paths, O Lord,
Lead us in your truth; All your ways are faithfulness,
As you teach your humble one, that your covenant is love.**

Luke 21: 25 – 36

MESSAGE

“Hopeful, Happy New Year”

† Hymn # 467 VU “One Bread, One Body”

**One bread, one body, one Lord of all,
one cup of blessing which we bless;
and we, though many, throughout the earth,
we are one body in this one Lord.**

- 1 Gentile or Jew, servant or free,
woman or man, no more. R
- 2 Many the gifts, many the works,
one in the Lord of all. R

3 Grain for the fields, scattered and grown,
gathered to one, for all. **R**

COMMUNION

*Rev. Andrew O'Neil,
St. Paul's United Church, Riverview, NB.*

God be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to God.

Let us give thanks to God.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

In the rich dark winter, God makes an astounding promise:

“I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up.” (*Jeremiah 33:15*)

In the wilderness, a voice cries out, longing for
the Refiner's fire, repair, and renewal,
the promised birth (and rebirth) of hope.

Called to bear the weight and fruit of promise,

Mary sings ancient trust – the song of generations –
that God comes to fill the hungry and lift the humble.

She sings that love and truth will meet, that justice and peace will kiss.

In the midst of uncertainty, Jesus assures his disciples:

Just as the tree blooms, so the signs are clear
that the kingdom of God is near.

In the deep of our own winter, we look for them:

bud of hope, branch of peace, sprig of joy, blossom of love.

While around us the snares of fear and conflict lie in wait of infant hope,
you, O Wisdom, O Endless Love, O Radiant Dawn, are there,
keeping vigil with us, in this season of expectation.

We gather at this table, praying that crooked ways be made straight,
that valley's peace be lifted up and mountain's might brought low

so that all God's people might rejoice together, saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosana in the highest!
Blessed is the one that comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest!**

We give thanks for the mystery and wonder revealed that first night,
as humble people led by hope gathered in a quiet stable
and were witness to your promise reborn.

We give thanks for the blessing and love Jesus shared
with all whom he met, in food and story.

We remember that, on the night before he was handed over to die,
Jesus broke bread with his friends, blessed it, gave thanks, and said,
"Take, eat. This is my body, which I give for you. When you share it,
remember me."

We remember that he took the cup and, giving thanks, said,
"This cup is the new covenant in my blood. When you drink it, remember
me."

Revealed in stable, cross, and empty tomb, we give thanks, O God, for your
limitless love for all. With your people of all times and places, we await with
hope the fulfillment of your vision for all creation.

**Bless us, O God, and these your gifts.
Encourage us to share your life and love,
Which makes us, and the gifts we share, truly holy.**

Transform us, God, and your world, and bless your children:
those who feel alone or afraid...
those who whose souls and homes are broken by violence...
those who will go hungry, thirsty, and cold tonight...
those who long only to hear that they are loved...

God made known in Jesus Christ,
hear our prayer.

We pray these things, trusting in God's faithfulness revealed:
Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

SHARING THE BREAD AND CUP

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

SHARING OUR GIFTS

GIFTS IN ACTION STORY

Moderator's Advent Message

† Hymn # 55 VU

“In the Bleak Midwinter”

- 4 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.

OFFERING PRAYER

Gracious God, we offer you these gifts with expectant, hopeful hearts. Multiply these resources to support this congregation and your global Church and build your beloved community among our neighbours and the nations!

We gladly give as a habit of holiness; we give with hope for a more just and generous future.

Faithful God, we offer you ourselves. Soften our hearts and reshape our minds until we are reflexively alert to your priorities for this wonderful, yet wounded world that we love and serve in your name.

**Holy Spirit, help us to make space for the grace of hope this week.
Amen.**

- 1 Tomorrow Christ is coming,
as yesterday he came;
a child is born this moment,
we do not know its name.
The world is full of darkness,
again there is no room;
the symbols of existence
are stable, cross and tomb.
- 2 Tomorrow will be Christmas,
the feast of love divine,
but for the nameless millions
the star will never shine.
Still is the census taken
with people on the move;
new infants born in stables
are crying out for love.
- 3 There will be no tomorrows
for many a baby born;
Good Friday falls on Christmas
when life is sown as corn.
But Jesus Christ is risen
and comes again in bread
to still our deepest hunger
and raise us from the dead.
- 4 Our God becomes incarnate
in every human birth.
Created in God's image,
we must make peace on earth.
God will fulfil Love's purpose
and this shall be the sign:
we shall find Christ among us
as woman, child, or man.

BLESSING & SENDING FORTH

Go forth as people of hope.

We go into the world

As you make your preparation for the Christ child's coming again, know God goes with you, blessing you and guiding your way. Amen.

“As We Leave” (Choral Amen)

As we wait, we trust your Word.

Seal in us the hope we've heard!

We'll live for peace, seek joy, this day;

In your love, we'll grow and pray.

Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen.

Postlude

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