



## **Hornsby Uniting Church - News for December 8, 2024 - Advent 2**

***Our Vision: To grow in Christ and share His love.***

*And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ - to the glory and praise of God. - Philippians 1:9-11*

A man who lived a long time ago - before Jesus was born was known as a prophet and his name was Malachi. He was very unhappy as the people who organised worship had become careless and people were forgetting to care for others and were failing to act with justice. Malachi said that such lack of care was not pleasing to God. Malachi believed and therefore told everyone that a messenger was coming who would be calling people to prepare for the coming of the Lord. He warned that the words spoken by this person would be extremely harsh. They would be like the searing heat of a furnace used to melt precious metal like silver so that any impurities could be removed, and also like very strong soap used to scrub away any ingrained stain on fabric.

Have you have seen commercials on television where really dirty paths, garage floors, roofs etc are cleaned by a high pressure hose - or an advertisement for a washing powder or bleach where you see the action of the powder/liquid actually getting rid of the dirt? Malachi's message is that, as surely as these processes penetrate the dirt and get rid of it, so the messenger who is coming to prepare the way for the Lord will be penetrating people's hearts and minds with his words and challenging them to get rid of anything that might cause God pain. Who was the messenger that Malachi referred to ?



Advent is a time for us all to think of and to get rid of anything that we do or say that causes God pain or hurts or our friends or anyone else so that we can truly be ready to welcome Jesus at Christmas.

*"A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all people will see God's salvation.'"*

*"I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years."*

Our morning worship service is videotaped each Sunday, and made available online later in the day.

You can join us at

<http://hornsby.unitingchurch.org.au/church-at-home.html>

Barring any unforeseen crisis, Kent will be away travelling for about nine days from December 14. That means that several regular things will be missing for **Sundays December 15 and 22** - there will be no weekly newsletter, and no online video of the morning worship. Warwick will be handling an extra workload during morning worship, including the audio system and use of recorded music, so please be patient with any problems! If you have any issues needing to be dealt with, please speak with Rev.Kodjo, or members of church council - Joyce Lum, Bill Laidlaw and others.

So, we wish you all a happy, calm and peaceful Christmas!



### IN PRAYER

Advent God, you call on us to prepare the way for Jesus' birth and yet - each year it seems that we spend more time making preparations for our own pleasure rather than preparing for Jesus to be born

anew in our hearts and lives - in our families, our communities, our nation, our world. When our involvement with partying, buying gifts, ordering food, writing cards, leaves us with no energy left to celebrate the reason for such activity - the birth of Jesus Christ. Help us, O God, to prepare ourselves faithfully and sincerely to receive the Christ-child.

Thank you Wise and patient God, for the thorough way you prepare for all good things:

By your creating Spirit you slowly prepared this planet earth to become the home of living creatures whom you shaped in your own soul-likeness... You prepared Abraham and Sarah to be the first covenant people by sending them on a journey, destination unknown. You prepared Moses to liberate, lead and teach your people by a letting him live many years in the wilderness, destination far off. You prepared Samuel to be your priest and the anointer of kings, by giving him the faithfulness of his mother Hannah and a training from childhood in the temple at Shiloh. You prepared David to be a remarkable king and poet by the years he spent as a humble shepherd of his father's sheep.

You prepared Amos to be your courageous prophet by the seasons he spent up in the hill country of Tekoa, pruning fruit trees and caring for herds. You prepared Hosea to understand and to preach the message of your love, through the painful experience of a failed marriage. You prepared John the Baptist to be your prophet by giving him a mother and father of faith, and by (perhaps) training him among the desert communities of zealous monks.

In the fullness of time you prepared a young woman named Mary, and a carpenter of integrity called Joseph, to nurture and teach of your only true Son, Jesus our Saviour. Thank you, wise and patient God for these acts of far-sighted and most generous love. Thank you also for your Spirit today, around and within us, preparing us for things which no eye has seen nor ear heard.


***Give thanks to God whose name is love, whose goodness remains forever.***

## 081224 – HOPE - A December to Remember



**The year 2024** has almost run its course very quickly and here we find ourselves in December! As we journey on in hope of a better tomorrow in our world; we can remember this beautiful hymn – *O God our Help in Ages Past* by Isaac Watts, to keep our hopes alive - that no matter what we go through, it will be well for us when we put our trust in God.

December's name derives from the Latin word *decem* (meaning ten). When we talk about the 10 commandments, we refer to it as the **DECALOGUE** which simply means the Ten Laws. December was originally the tenth month of the year in the calendar of Romulus c. 750 BC, which began in March. December was a month of celebration even before Christendom: In Roman times, the mid-winter festival of Saturn was celebrated – the *Saturnalia*. It was a time of feasting and merry making; even slaves and their masters switched places for a while. The *Saturnalia* culminated with the winter solstice, which fell on December 25 in the Roman calendar. As the last month of the year in the Gregorian calendar, December ends with New Year's Eve on December 31. Many people around the world count down to the new year and celebrate with fireworks and well-wishes. Although in many other cultures, the new year begins on very different dates. December officially became the twelfth month in the year 153 BCE. In the first week, 2 December is celebrated as the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery. It provides an opportunity for governments, organizations, and individuals worldwide to come together and take steps to eliminate modern slavery and support survivors. Our Hope is that other inhumane laws and activities will end for all peoples to be free!

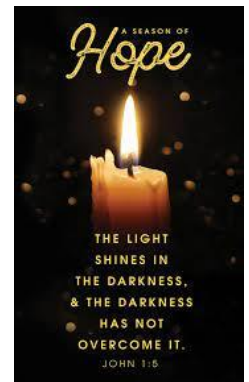
December is a time for celebration, reflection, and anticipation. As both the Gregorian and Julian calendars come to a close with these 31 days, it marks a significant cultural and historical milestone. The month is filled with a variety of festivals, holidays, and observances, offering a rich opportunity for cultural reflection and historical contemplation. The first Sunday of December offers, the candle  of Hope, lit on our Advent wreath, is a beam of light in our December cold dark world – a glimmer of our Hopes and prayers!

"Hope" is one of the most beautiful words in the English language. It evokes thoughts of sunrises that push back all kinds of darkness. It suggests birth, healing, promise, positivity and possibility. Hope makes us able to keep on going, or if we have fallen to get up and try again. Hope is a gift that our faith can give to us that will indeed meet the need of our hungry hearts. Hope is the essence of the Christian faith. The good news is that hope is there for us. But most of us have yet to learn to discover it and take hold of it. This is the hope for a lost world and a reminder that Jesus Christ will come again as He did some two thousand years ago.

I do not wish to force any one to believe as I do; neither will I permit anyone to deny me the right to believe that the last days are near at hand. The words and signs of Jesus Christ compel me to believe that. For the history of the centuries that have passed since the birth of Jesus nowhere reveals conditions like those of the present times. There has never been such building of advancement in the world. Much of what is happening in our world today is very peculiar than ever before. Increase in knowledge and science, information galore and a juxtapositioned with abundance of wickedness, deception and hatred. In addition, humans are delving very much into the mysteries of things; that today a teen knows more than twenty doctors formerly knew.

The drama of history is not going to just fizzle out or end in a whimper! It is going to come to the kind of climax that he who conceived the drama wants for it. Whether you are prepared or not; whether you believe it or not.... every year we sing joyfully; *You better watch out, You better not cry, Better not pout, I'm telling you why: Santa Claus is comin' to town.*

In the same way Jesus Christ is coming soon. Maranatha! You better get prepared. We share a dream of a coming Messiah, the One who would set life aright, the One who would open the way to abundant joy and peace, hope, love and life. Something radically new is unfolding and that you and I have significant roles to play as participants in the story. Let the Hope of our expectation of His coming again be renewed in excitement. Are you preparing well in advance for that? May we find ourselves as the Herald to the coming Kingdom of God and Jesus. May this Advent Season be a December to Remember the Reason for the Season of Advent. Hope in Christ and trust him as we pray Isaac Watts hymn. God richly bless you. Let the candle of Hope burn brightly in your life.



*1 O God, our Help in ages past,  
our Hope for years to come,  
our Shelter from the stormy blast,  
and our eternal Home.*

*3 Before the hills in order stood,  
or earth received its frame,  
from everlasting Thou art God,  
to endless years the same.*

*5 Time, like an ever-rolling stream,  
bears all its sons away;  
they fly forgotten, as a dream  
dies at the op'ning day.*

*2 Under the shadow of Thy throne  
Thy saints have dwelt secure;  
sufficient is Thine arm alone,  
and our defense is sure.*

*4 A thousand ages in Thy sight  
are like an evening gone,  
short as the watch that ends the night  
before the rising sun.*

*6 O God, our Help in ages past,  
our Hope for years to come,  
be Thou our Guard while life shall  
last, and our eternal Home!  
**Amen and Amen!***

*Jojo Nkrumah 071224 (inspiration from QA Ababio)*