

**WELCOME
TO
GRACE UNITED CHURCH**



***Where Everyone is Part of the Family
&
Worship is a Lifestyle NOT an Event***



Grace United Church

120 Pine St. Gananoque, ON K7G 1C7

Ordained Minister

Rev. Takouhi Demirdjian-Petro B.A., B.Th., M.Div.

Director of Music

Mr. Paul Harding, B. Mus., B. Ed.

Office Administrator

Laurie Cadue

December 21, 2023

*Blue Christmas – Journeying through the Longest Night*¹

Loss, Healing, and Hope

Remembering Those We miss



WE PREPARE FOR REFLECTION AND HEALING

Prelude

Welcome

Call to Worship (Responsive)

One: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

All: And also with you.

One: All around us, lights are lit and carols play.
The season heaps joy upon us.

Yet, we who come here, we carry more than joy;

1

¹ Portions of this worship are from Advent Unwrapped – 2016 – UCC

we carry loss, worry, grief and pain.

We come weary, seeking rest from expectations.

We also seek a holy presence to be with us.

We come to this place, by the resilient grace of God:
love that never lets go.

Carol: Voices United #64

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"

1 O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by;
yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.

2 For Christ is born of Mary;
and gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together
proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King,
and peace to all on earth.

3 How silently, how silently
the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts

2

the blessed gift of heaven.
No ear may hear his coming;
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still
the dear Christ enters in.

4 O holy child of Bethlehem,
descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin, and enter in;
be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
our Lord Emmanuel.

Words: Phillips Brooks 1868

Music: Lewis Henry Redner 1868.

Public Domain

Prayer of Approach (Responsive)

One: We gather this night, to remember...
those who have touched our lives,
glad memories and happy stories,
and love that we hold dear.

All: We name those who have been life itself to us.

One: We gather in the name of Jesus,
vulnerable as an infant,
joyful and happy as a youth,
wise and caring as an adult.

**All: We gather in the presence of God,
who brings life and light to all.**

One: All life is precious in God's sight.

All: No one is ever alone or forgotten.

One: Come, let us gather in the Spirit of hope and peace.

All: We worship, in the name of joy and love. Amen.

Listening for God's Promise

LOSING ONE WE LOVE

Isaiah 40:1, 6–8: *Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. 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. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.*

Prayer (All): Holy One, you are with us in times of trouble and in times of peace; in times of sorrow and times of joy.

When we are unsure of how to continue living and loving,
your Spirit intervenes with sighs too deep for words.

Speak for us now, Loving God.

Comfort us with your abiding peace... *(silence)*

Voices United #494 – Verse 1

"Those Hearts That We Have Treasured"

1 Those hearts that we have treasured,
those lives that we have shared,
those loves that walked beside us,
those friends for whom we've cared,

their blessing rests upon us,
their life is memory,
their suffering is over,
their spirits are set free.

Words: Sylvia Dunstan 1991

Music: William Walker's Southern Harmony 1835; harm Dale Grotenbuis 1986

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HEALING AND MEMORY

Psalm 139:7–12: *Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast. If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night," even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.*

Prayer (All): God of all, when we feel alone, you draw nearer; when we lose our footing, you guide us toward a good path.

Through the ages, you have promised to be a comfort to your people, and you call us to be a comfort to others.

In all our living, may we never lose the memory of our most cherished relationships, and may we feel the courage and strength you offer to us through those who surround us... *(silence)*

Voices United #494 – Verse 2

"Those Hearts That We Have Treasured"

2 They still give hope and comfort,
they did not lose the fight,

5

they showed us truth and goodness,
they shine into our night.

Remember days of gladness;
remember times of joy;
remember all the moments
that grief can not destroy.

LIVING WITH HOPE AND LOVE

John 14:1–4, 18–19: *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going." "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live.*

Prayer (All): God of hope and joy, you prepare our hearts for renewal. You till the soil of our lives and nurture small shoots of possibility. Even when we are unsure, you repeat your promise: I will never leave you. Open us, Holy One, to your promise. Hold us in your care. Strengthen us for your future. Guide us in anticipation and faith... *(silence)*

Voices United #494 – Verse 3

"Those Hearts That We Have Treasured"

3 From hearts that we have treasured,
from lives that we have shared,

6

from loves that walked beside us,
from friends for whom we've cared,
we've learned to treasure kindness,
we've learned that grace provides,
we've learned to be together,
we've learned that love abides.

REMEMBERING IN HOPE

Ceremony of Commemoration – Responsive Prayer

One: We light a candle in memory of those who gave us birth,
who nurtured us, offered love, and cherished us.

**All: We remember mothers and fathers,
guardians and grandparents,
and all our family through the ages.**

One: We light a candle in memory of those
who have been joined to us in the great circle of family.

**All: We remember sisters and brothers,
aunts, uncles, and cousins,
those near to us and far away.**

One: We light a candle in memory of those who have left us
before we expected, those we hold dear,
and with whom we still walk in our dreams.

**All: We remember children and grandchildren,
those who leaped within the womb
and who danced upon the earth.**

One: We light a candle in memory of those whom we came to know
through the eyes of love.

We hold sacred the faces and memories of years past,

of those who brightened our days and lit up our lives.

**All: We remember husbands and wives,
dearest loves and closest friends,
who changed our lives forever.**

One: We light a candle in memory of those who shared in our lives
in many ways, who worked with us
and made our lives more enjoyable.

All: We remember friends and neighbours.

One: We light a candle for those we do not know, O God,
who, like us, have suffered loss, who live with grief,
who long for peace and justice,
who long for friendship and healing.

All: We remember your people, of every time and place.

One: Finally, we leave one candle unlit,
mindful of the great truth of this life,
that in the fullness of time we, too,
will join our loved ones in a realm without sorrow and pain,
in the company of Unending Love.

**All: For these and all your children, we give thanks
for life, hope and courage.**

One: Holy One, God with us, we pray to you as our Mother and...

The Prayer that Jesus Taught His Followers (All)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom
come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we
forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into
temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, the
power, and the glory forever and ever. **Amen.**

We Give as Able... Invitation to Offertory

(All offerings, unless otherwise designated, will go toward the Benevolent Fund for those in need in our wider community.)



Prayer of Thanksgiving and Dedication

GOING IN PEACE

Commissioning and Benediction

Carol: Voices United #67

"Silent Night, Holy Night"

- 1 Silent night! Holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy infant so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.
- 2 Silent night! Holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight:
glories stream from heaven afar,
heavenly hosts sing Hallelujah,
Christ the Saviour is born, Christ the Saviour is born.
- 3 Silent night! Holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from thy holy face,
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

Words: Joseph Mohr 1818; English trans. John Freeman Young 1863, et al.
Music: Franz Xavier Grüber. Public domain

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You may partner with us and offer your financial gifts in memory of a loved one to Grace United Church and help us continue to make a difference in this world:

There are many ways you can partner up with God's Mission through Grace United Church and help make a difference. by cheque -120 Pine ST. Gananoque, On K7G 1C7, e-transfer to grace.gan@outlook.com

Sign-up for PAR Forms https://united-church.ca/sites/default/files/form_par-authorization.pdf
by Credit Card through CanadaHelps.<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/118944701RR0001-grace-united-church/>

Sunday, Dec 24th Worship Service 10:30 am

Fourth Sunday of Advent - LOVE
Worship Leader, Rev. Takouhi,
with Special Guest, Debra Marra Donaldson

Christmas Eve Service 7:00pm

Worship Leader, Rev. Takouhi
A service of Lessons and Carols 7:00pm

Sunday, December 31st

Worship Service 10:30 am
Worship Leader, Barb DeJeet

