

**Westmount Presbyterian Church**  
**Sunday, December 6, 2020**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Week of Advent – Peace**  
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- Advent and Christmas is a wonderful time of year.
- I love all the decorations and lights and music and getting together with loved ones.
- Of all the beautiful Christmas decorations, my favourite is the nativity set.
- One of the things I like so much about looking at a nativity is that it encompasses the whole meaning of Christmas.
- During Advent, we often focus on a different theme for each week – Hope, Peace, Joy and Love – and these are all captured by the nativity portraying the birth of Christ, the faithful obedience of Mary and Joseph, the proclamation of the angel and the response of the shepherds and Magi.
- While this is a wonderful time of year, it can also be quite stressful, and for many people it is even more stressful this year.
- Amidst all the busyness, we can feel pressured to decorate, write cards and letters, shop for presents, bake and cook.
- It can be quite overwhelming.
- For other people, it can seem quite lonely and isolating.
- This year, during the pandemic, is especially lonely and isolating for many people.
- Because of this, I find that looking at and reflecting on the nativity reminds me of what is really important.
- Christmas will come - Christ will come - whether or not I get all the decorations up, whether my cards are early or a little late, whether or not I bake some special treats, whether or not I see everyone, even whether or not I am able to attend church.
- And this gives me a sense of peace.
- In the end, all the busy things we fill our time with, while very enjoyable and good, are not an essential part of the season.
- This season is about waiting for Christ to come.

- And while there are things we can do to prepare our hearts, Advent and Christmas are primarily about what **God through Christ does for us**.
- The great God and Creator of the universe loves us so much that he chose to become human – to be born a helpless baby to a poor humble couple – to live among us.
- And peace is a large part of his message and ministry.
- In today’s reading from Isaiah, the word peace is not used, but the concept is there – warfare is ended, iniquity (another word for sin) is forgiven, the Lord is coming in power and glory, and unlike the grass or flowers of the field, God and his Word will stand forever.
- “Comfort, comfort my people” is the message – in other words, be at peace.
- In our reading from Luke, Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, prophesied about the coming and long-awaited Saviour, who will **“guide our feet into the way of peace”**.
- Peace was coming into the world through Christ.
- Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; **my** peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.” (John 14:27)
- Jesus gives us a peace that we cannot receive through the world – through lights or decorations or music or even through other people.
- The apostle Paul called this “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding.” (Philippians 4:7)
- This peace is available to each one of us, and once we receive it we can share and spread that peace to others.
- Part of the peace that surpasses understanding is a sense that no matter how alone or isolated we may feel – we know that we are not alone.
- God, through the Holy Spirit is always with us – we are never alone.
- Where is this peace found?

- In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor, the meek, those who mourn, and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.” (Matthew 5:3-6).
- In other words, in weakness.
- In those places of our hearts where we feel most broken, most insecure, most in agony, most afraid, most alone, we are forced to let go of our self-sufficiency and turn to Christ.
- Where we are most vulnerable, the peace that is not of this world is mysteriously hidden.
- It is in that place that Christ speaks to us as he did to the apostle Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”
- Paul’s response was, “Therefore I am content (or at peace) with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)
- The world tells us that peace is found in strength, but the paradox of our faith is that true peace, the peace that surpasses understanding, is found in weakness – when we are afraid or sad or lonely.
- During this Advent and Christmas season may we all be filled with the peace of Christ that surpasses understanding.
- Let us pray:  
 Heavenly Father, during this wonderful season of Advent, this time of waiting, in days which are at times dark and difficult, we turn our hearts to you. Give us wisdom beyond human wisdom, especially in our leaders.  
 Give us strength beyond human strength, especially to all frontline workers and caregivers. Give comfort beyond human comfort to all who grieve. Give us that peace which the world cannot give – the peace that surpasses all understanding.  
 Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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 Scriptures:  
 Isaiah 40:1-11  
 Luke 1:57-79