

# ◆ MELROSE UNITED CHURCH ◆

86 Homewood Avenue ◆ Hamilton, Ontario ◆ L8P 2M4

905 522 1323 ◆ [melrose@melroseunited.ca](mailto:melrose@melroseunited.ca)

◆ [www.melroseunited.ca](http://www.melroseunited.ca) ◆

◆ [www.facebook.com/melroseunitedchurch](https://www.facebook.com/melroseunitedchurch) ◆

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Minister:	The Rev. Sonia Ireson
Music Director:	Alexander Cann
Family Ministries Coordinator:	Meg Chalmers
Custodian:	Kevin Geluch
Office Administrator:	Michelle Millson

◆ **December 19, 2019 – 7:00 p.m.** ◆

**A Light in the December Darkness**

**MELROSE UNITED CHURCH**  
◆ **WEDNESDAY, 18<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER, 2019** ◆  
**A LIGHT IN DECEMBER DARKNESS**

*Welcome to this time when we can, with others, acknowledge the “blue” feelings we have at Christmas time. For many who have lost a loved one, or who care for a loved one in distress, this is a time of sharp loneliness.*

*For others, who have lost a relationship, health, a job, or had a financial setback it may be a time of pain, confusion, or fear.*

*This is not a joyous season for everyone.*

*Our prayer is that this time of quiet worship will be a healing blessing.*

◆ **GATHERING** ◆

PRELUDE

WELCOME

HYMN: All Poor Ones and Humble

VU 68

*1. All poor ones and humble and all those who stumble,  
come hastening, and feel not afraid ; for Jesus, our treasure, with love past  
all measure, in lowly poor manger was laid.*

*Though wise men who found him laid rich gifts around him,  
yet oxen they gave him their hay, and Jesus in beauty accepted their duty;  
contented in manger he lay.*

*Refrain:*

*Then haste we to show him the praises we owe him;  
our service he ne'er can despise; whose love still is able  
to show us that stable, where softly in manger he lies.*

*2. The Christ Child will lead us, the Good Shepherd feed us and with us  
abide till his day. Then hatred he'll banish, then sorrow will vanish, and  
death and despair flee away.*

*And he shall reign ever, and nothing shall sever from us the great love of our King; his peace and his pity shall bless his fair city; his praises we ever shall sing. Refrain.*

CALL TO WORSHIP

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

**All: Yet, we who come here, we carry more than joy;  
We carry, loss, worry, grief and pain.**

One: We come weary, seeking rest from expectations.  
We also seek a holy presence to be with us.

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

A Reading from the Gospel of Matthew 11:28-30

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear and the burden I give you is light.”

HYMN: In the Bleak Mid-Winter

VU 55

*1. In the bleak mid-winter*

*Frosty wind made moan,  
Earth stood hard as iron,  
Water like a stone;  
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,  
Snow on snow,  
In the bleak mid-winter  
Long ago.*

*2. Our God, Heaven cannot hold Him*

*Nor earth sustain;  
Heaven and earth shall flee away  
When He comes to reign:  
In the bleak mid-winter  
A stable-place sufficed*

*The Lord God Almighty,  
Jesus Christ.*

*3. Enough for Him, whom cherubim  
Worship night and day,  
A breastful of milk  
And a mangerful of hay;  
Enough for Him, whom angels  
Fall down before,  
The ox and ass and camel  
Which adore.*

*4. Angels and archangels  
May have gathered there,  
Cherubim and seraphim  
Thronged the air,  
But only His mother<sup>1</sup>  
In her maiden bliss,  
Worshipped the Beloved  
With a kiss.*

*5. 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 (said by all)**

**Holy One, you are with us in times of trouble and in times of peace; in times of sorrow and in times of joy.**

**When we are unsure of how to continue living and loving, your Spirit intervenes with sighs too deep for words. Speak to us now, Loving God. Comfort us with your abiding peace.**

Silence....

A Reading from the Book of Isaiah (excerpts from 40:1, 25-31)

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? Says the Holy One.

Lift up your eyes on high and see:

Who created these?

He who brings out their host and numbers them,

Calling them all by name;

Because he is great in strength,

Mighty in power, not one is missing.

Have you not known? Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God,

The Creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow weary;

His understanding is unsearchable.

He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless.

Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted;

But those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,

They shall mount up with wings like eagles,

They shall run and not be weary,

They shall walk and not faint.

One: The Word of the Lord

**All: Thanks be to God.**

HYMN: A Candle is Burning

VU 6

*A candle is burning, a flame warm and bright,*

*A candle of Hope in December's dark night*

*While angels sing blessings from heaven's starry sky,*

*Our hearts we prepare now for Jesus is nigh*

*A candle is burning, a candle of Peace,*

*A candle to signal that conflict must cease*

*For Jesus is coming to show us the way  
A message of peace humbly laid in the hay*

*A candle is burning, a candle of Joy,  
A candle to welcome brave Mary's new boy  
Our hearts fill with wonder and eyes light and glow  
As joy brightens winter like sunshine on snow*

*A candle is burning, a candle of Love  
A candle to point us to heaven above  
A baby for Christmas, a wonderful birth  
forjesus is bringing God's love to our earth.*

*We honor Messiah with Christ's candle flame  
Our Christmas Eve candles glad tidings proclaim  
O Come, all you faithful, rejoice in this night  
As God comes among us, the Christian's true light.*

## ◆ LITANY OF THE CANDLES ◆

First Candle - A Candle of Hope

One: The first candle we light to remember those persons whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their name, their voice, their face, their memory that binds them to us in this season. We hold them before God, giving thanks for their lives in ours.

**All:** Thank you for the gift each of these people has been in our lives. We want to believe that we will celebrate the treasure of love with them again when we are all in your presence forever. Take our sad and aching hearts and comfort us, for we only feel hollowness and emptiness. God of the sorrowing, draw near. Amen.

- First Candle is lit

## Second Candle – A Candle of Peace

One: The second candle we light is to redeem the pain of loss; the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs with the security they bring, the loss of health in ourselves or in family members, the loss of joy and peace in our lives from the stresses which surround us, the loss and loneliness we experience when our loved ones do not share our faith. As we gather up the pain of the past, we offer it to you, O God, asking that into our open hands you will place the gift of peace.

**All: God of mystery we come before you in need of peace, keenly aware of your promises for guidance and protection. Our hearts are fearful and anxious. We forget that you will be with us in all that we experience. Teach us to be patient and open to changes in our lives with which we are now going through. Amen.**

- Second Candle is lit

## Third Candle – A Candle of Joy

One: We light this candle for those who experience loss of direction in their lives. Hear our prayer to know where we are headed as we stumble through the darkness. Help us to be full of faith, to believe deep within that you are our signpost, our wisdom and our guide.

**All: God who resides in our depths, we cry out to you. Help us to have a strong sense of inner direction and reassure us that we are on the right path. Take all that is lost within us and bring it home to you. Return us to be able to feel Joy. Amen.**

- Third Candle is lit

## Fourth Candle – A Candle of Love

One: The fourth candle we light is a sign of LOVE, the love that

the Christmas Story offers us. We remember that God, who shares our life, promises us a place and time of no more pain and suffering.

**All: O God, lift up our hearts, we pray to a joyous confidence in your care. Guide us when we cannot see the way. Teach us to know that the light of eternal goodness shines behind the shadows of our fears. Teach us to find the love in life and grow within it so that our lives may bring comfort and encouragement to others. Amen.**

- Fourth candle is lit

SOLO – Chris Palmer, guitar

Prayers of the People

One: In the spirit of this season let us now confidently ask our God for all the good things we need: For ourselves as we participate in this Christmas as special people coping with our many different losses. God hear our prayer.

**All: And in your mercy, answer.**

One: For our families and our friends, that they may continue to help and support us, God hear our prayer.

**All: And in your mercy, answer.**

One: For all the losses we know in our lives, for our dear ones who have died and our dreams that have disappeared, O God, hear our prayer.

**All: And in your mercy, answer.**

One: For our family and friends, that you may bless them with hope, peace, joy and love. God hear our prayer.

**All: And in your mercy, answer.**

One: For peace throughout the world, in countries that live in fear, in our homes and streets where domestic violence



leaves us trembling, God hear our prayer.

**All: And in your mercy, answer.**

One: God of great compassion and love, listen to the prayers of these your people. Grant to all, especially the bereaved and troubled ones this Christmas, the blessing we ask in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray

**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,  
And the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.**

#### LIGHTING OF THE INDIVIDUAL CANDLES

One: Each of us comes bearing our own hurts, sorrows, broken places. I want to invite each of you to offer your personal wound to the God who loves each of us deeply and wants to carry our pain. God waits patiently, gently calling out: "Give me your hurts, come to me... all who labour and are heavy laden, I will refresh you!  
I invite each of you to come forward to light a candle, remember that it is God who lights a candle in our darkness and holds us close until we are able to shine.

After candles are lit.....

One: These lights in their brightness are only symbols, but as they burn and finally go out, we remember that suffering passes, though memory remains forever.

## ◆ CLOSING ◆

One: as we gather this evening, we embrace and claim the darkness that is present both in the world and in our own lives. As people who are familiar with the darkness, we also know that we gather to be illuminated by the light of the Christ Child this Christmas season. May the Christ Child, born in a lowly stable, himself an outcast, bring light, comfort, peace, and joy this holiday season.

CLOSING HYMN AS YOU LEAVE....

*O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear.*

*Refrain:*

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.*

*O come, O Rod of Jesse's stem, from every foe deliver them  
that trust your mighty power to save,  
And give them victory o'er the grave. Refrain.*

*O come, O key of David, come,  
and open wide our heavenly home;  
Make safe the way that leads on high,  
And close the path to misery. Refrain.*

*O come O Dayspring from on high  
And cheer us by your drawing nigh;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
And death's dark shadow put to flight. Refrain.*

