

PRAYER WALK/ADVENT 2020/DECEMBER 21

"It gets darker and darker, and then Jesus is born."
-Wendell Berry.

December 21 is the shortest, darkest day of the year. Throughout the season of Advent, the world has been getting a little darker each day. In this season, we are reminded that just as the world seemed to be at its darkest, the light of Jesus entered the world, and everything changed. The birth of Jesus 2000 years ago, paired with the hope that he will come again, gives us the courage to look honestly at the darkness of our own world, and to believe that God is at work even today.

So, for this season of Advent, we encourage you to walk and "pray with your feet" in downtown Hamilton, on or around December 21—ideally in the late afternoon (if you are not available on Monday, you could also walk on Sunday, December 20). As you walk, allow yourself to experience the growing physical and spiritual darkness of the city, and ask God to show you how his light is entering the world.

A few practical suggestions:

- Bring a friend or two!
- The route takes 20-30 minutes without stopping. Plan for extra time if you would like to stop to pray.
- If you are cold, there are lots of places on this route to find a hot drink. Maybe you could buy an extra and give it to someone else?
- Consider wearing a mask if the walk is crowded.

Questions to ask yourself as you walk:

- What languages do you hear?
- What do you think the people you pass might be thinking and feeling?
- What needs do you see represented?
- How has the downtown been effected by the pandemic, gentrification, etc.?
- What sorts of messages do you see around you in ads, graffiti, art, etc.?
- What churches do you see?
- What do you think God is doing downtown?

DIRECTIONS FROM PHILPOTT:

1. Go East on York Blvd toward James.
2. Turn right at James St. N.
3. Continue to Main St.
4. Cross Main St. and turn right.
5. Continue past City Hall to Bay St.
6. Turn right at Bay St.
7. Continue on Bay St. past Jackson Square
8. Turn right at Vine St.
9. End at Vine & Park.



PARK & YORK

In 1900, the Hamilton Christian Workers (today called Philpott Church) met outdoors, in rented church buildings, and burlesque halls. They wanted to construct a building of their own, resolving "that in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and for his glory alone, we proceed to build a church wherein to preach the simple gospel of the Grace of God and where all classes would be welcomed and made perfectly at home." One year later, they constructed their first building on this site. **Thank God for his faithfulness to Philpott church, and pray that he would continue to form us into a community of grace for all people.**

YORK & JAMES

From here, you can see the shops, restaurants and businesses of James St. N., many of which have struggled during the pandemic. The biblical idea of *shalom* tells us that God's intention is for people to live together in harmony and peace, working together for mutual flourishing. What would that look like on James St. N.? Are there businesses here which contribute somehow to the *shalom* of the city? Are there others which bring strife and oppression to the city or which take advantage of the poor? How could this change? **Pray and ask the Lord to provide for the people and families represented by these small businesses (even those businesses which are no longer here). Ask God to show you what *shalom* would look like here.**

JAMES & KING

Depending on the time of day, you can often see a diverse collection of people and activities at this corner: people are shopping, busking, working, on their way to class, begging, and waiting. What do you think God sees when he looks at these people? Across the street, you can see a Christmas tree in Gore park (where P.W. Philpott used to hold outdoor meetings in the late 1800's). How is this Christmas different from years past? **Pray that God's light would shine in the midst of darkness in downtown Hamilton.**

MAIN & MACNAB

From here you can see a variety of businesses and institutions, including The Space Youth Centre, New Vision United Church, YMCA Immigrant Services, and the Superior Court of Justice Family Courthouse. **Pray that God would use these organizations to bring his light to downtown Hamilton. Pray for those who work in difficult fields to have godly wisdom and endurance in doing well. Pray for the at-risk and vulnerable people who come through these organizations to be treated with dignity, and that God would restore broken people and families.**

MAIN & BAY

Here you can see City Hall, as well as Hamilton Health Sciences. What sorts of challenges has the city government faced this year? Have you seen people protesting outside of City Hall this year? Have you been to a protest yourself? What sorts of conflicts are represented in this space? What sort of relationship do you think the church should have to these issues? Does our faith have anything to say about the pandemic, racism, police reform, immigration, gentrification, and so on? **Pray for the city leaders to understand the issues and conflicts we face in Hamilton. Pray that they would govern well, that they would seek justice with humility and courage. Pray for Christians who work in government, that they would be able to live out their faith with integrity. Pray for churches in Hamilton, that God would empower us to witness to him in the midst of these issues.**

BAY & YORK

From here, you can see a number of businesses and institutions, including First Ontario Centre, the Salvation Army Hamilton Booth Centre, Sir John A. MacDonald High School (now closed), and the Salvation Army Community and Family Services building (just past the Subway on Bay), which runs a monthly food bank. **Pray that God would continue to provide for those who have no place to go. Pray that the Salvation Army and related ministries would have the resources and volunteers they need to be able to offer housing, meals, and spiritual support to people in need. Pray for an end to the opioid epidemic which has claimed many lives on this street in this year alone. Pray for the community organizations, churches, and public agencies which work with people experiencing homelessness, poverty, or addiction. Pray that God would show you the darkness that exists here, but also that he would show you his light.**

PARK & VINE

From here, you can see the building that has housed our church for more than a century, but you can also see the Vine, which has recently become home to The Hub, a drop-in site for people who are experiencing homelessness to have rest, hygiene, support and referrals to social and medical services. Partnering with The Hub is one way that we believe God is calling us to continue our church's historic mission of providing a place for people to experience welcome and community. **Pray that The Hub would be a place of welcome and grace to people who live in difficult circumstances. Pray that The Hub would be a place where people's physical, relational, and spiritual needs are met. Pray that addictions and deep wounds would be healed. Pray that people would come to know Jesus in this building. Pray that The Hub would be a light in the darkness, and that God would empower Philpott Church to continue to proclaim the good news of Jesus to the world.**