

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> - Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski

First Sunday of Advent – November 28, 2021

Words of Welcome

Welcome to Worship! This is the first Sunday in Advent and it is so good to be together in this journey to Christmas. As the world gets busy, we take time to ponder and be still, sing, pray, and learn...and we begin with the Call to Worship.

Call to Worship

What are you waiting for?

**We wait in HOPE for the Lord;
he is our help and our shield.
But if we HOPE for what we do not yet have,
we wait for it patiently.**

Where is your HOPE?

**For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.
It teaches us to live in this present age while we wait for the blessed HOPE—
the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. But as
for me, I watch in HOPE for the Lord, I wait for God my Savior.**

—adapted from Psalm 33:20; Romans 8:25; Titus 2:11–13; Micah 7:7
Chris Walker. What are you waiting for – A Series for Advent and Christmas – Reformed Worship September 2021.

We are going to add a candle lighting for Advent. If you have a candle or an Advent wreath, I invite you to stop the video so that you too can light a candle as I do. The first candle lit in the Advent wreath is the candle of Hope.

Advent Candle Lighting – The Candle of Hope

Advent is a time of waiting.

We wait in anticipation of Christmas, the celebration of Christ's birth.

We wait in expectation and hope for the day when Christ comes again.

Today, we light the candle of hope.

As we wait, let us be people of hope. *[The first candle is lit.]*

Chris Walker. What are you waiting for – A Series for Advent and Christmas – Reformed Worship September 2021.

Hymn

Come though long-expected Jesus

110

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| 1. Come, thou long-expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us;
let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art,
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart. | 2. Born thy people to deliver;
born a child and yet a king;
born to reign in us forever;
now thy gracious kingdom bring.
By thine own eternal Spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all-sufficient merit
raise us to thy glorious throne. |
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Words and music: public domain

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of light and love,
our praises and prayers overflow with hope as the season of Advent opens.
You come to your people to dwell with us.
You come with power—not to dominate, but to transform.
You come with promises—not to give us what we want, but to make all things new.
You come with signs of your deep love for the world.
You come, and your truth breaks forth,
shattering lies and half-truths, setting your people free.
Your coming is our hope,
and so, we offer you our worship in gratitude and anticipation.
Come into our lives again, O God,
and show us how to hope in the face of all that is discouraging,
for we gather in the name of Hope made flesh,
Jesus Christ, your promise and our desire.

**Surprising God,
Forgive our sleepiness in the presence of your splendour.
Forgive us if we yawn when you present us with life-changing possibilities.
Forgive us for abandoning hope so quickly,
and expecting the same old thing in the same old way.
Forgive us for underestimating your power to do a new thing.
Awaken us to your holy, hopeful presence.
Awaken us so we may watch and wait for you, Lord Jesus Christ.
Come, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.**

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Assurance of Pardon

The One who comes with justice also comes with mercy. The God of Judgment is truly the Christ of compassion. God offers you forgiveness today, in the hope you will receive it gladly. Do not be afraid but rejoice in the God who comes to us.

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Scripture Reading Luke 12:35-40

³⁵⁻³⁸ “Keep your shirts on; keep the lights on! Be like house servants waiting for their master to come back from his honeymoon, awake and ready to open the door when he arrives and knocks. Lucky the servants whom the master finds on watch! He’ll put on an apron, sit them at the table, and serve them a meal, sharing his wedding feast with them. It doesn’t matter what time of the night he arrives; they’re awake—and so blessed!

³⁹⁻⁴⁰ “You know that if the house owner had known what night the burglar was coming, he wouldn’t have stayed out late and left the place unlocked. So don’t you be lazy and careless. Just when you don’t expect him, the Son of Man will show up.”

[The Message](#) (MSG) Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by [Eugene H. Peterson](#)

Message Active Waiting

I remember as a child the absolute joy of Christmas. I was fortunate to have grown up in a family where Christmas was a time of joy, and though there wasn't abundant or even expensive presents, there was always a few special things. As December came upon us, the first thing my dad would do was get the Christmas tree and decorations up. I think my mom probably was the instigator, but I have to say some of those memories have faded. What I do remember is many times over the years where my sister and I spent the night in sleeping bags on the floor in front of the Christmas tree with the colourful lights gently wooing us. These days if I don't have a pillow topped mattress I wake up stiff and sore, but not in those days. When I was young it was all awe and wonder, and I think it was the waiting for Christmas that made it all the more exciting.

Now my parents didn't do Santa Claus, stockings, advent candle lighting, or other traditions that families may have, but that never bothered me. I knew that whatever presents I received from my mom and dad had come from their love and provision. The presents almost never got under the tree much before Christmas Eve, so there would be a lot of anticipation waiting for that to happen. But we had Christmas music playing, our little town would get the special Christmas lights out that absolutely glimmered and gleamed with snow softening the glow at night. In that time, most every one put up Christmas lights so going for a drive around town to see the lights was another tell tale sign that Christmas was coming.

Then there was the food. We knew Christmas was coming near when the Montreal smoked meat that had been specially ordered for sandwiches came into the house. I really don't know why that was a thing but it was. Also, we knew that our favorite Dutch treat "oliebollen" would be made at some point in the season. And when I was very young, we knew that Christmas Eve meant the special Christmas treat bag from my grandmother and time with many of my uncles and aunts.

As a child it seemed that every day in December we waited for Christmas to come, but we didn't just sit there and wait, all the things we did made the waiting interesting, fun, at times very peaceful, and all of it was done in a way that one might describe as actively waiting. This is the kind of waiting that the scripture from Luke is describing. Now I just recently clued into the fact that this short passage contains two separate scenarios. I think I always lumped the master and the houseowner together. But these are two examples of actively waiting.

First we have the joyous story of a master coming back from his honeymoon and the house servants are awake and ready to greet him. And surprise surprise, he not only arrives home late but becomes the host, sitting the servants down at the table, serving

them, sharing his wedding feast and treating them as honoured guests. They were ready, awake and alert, and because of that and the generosity of the host, they were blessed.

The second story as we noted, is that of the house owner who was burglarized, and his story might resonate with any number of us. Some of you may have that experience and so you can relate to this. Ken and I had an entire cargo trailer stolen from a yard site that had a padlocked gate. The trailer itself had special locks on the doors and hitch. We thought it was pretty secure there and as we were storing the trailer outside of Toronto, we rarely ended up out there to check on it. Imagine our surprise when we learned that someone had stolen it. Our sense of grief and feeling of being violated was more profound than I had anticipated. The trailer held our almost new washer and dryer, a number of Ken's tools, but most dear to us were the many Christmas decorations and special items we had left in the trailer when we moved across Canada, as our little apartment just could not hold it all.

I tell you that if we had known what night or day the burglar was coming, we would have been there, we would have made things even more secure, checked on it more often, maybe found a different way to store those things precious to us. But we thought it was secure. We became comfortable with how things were and where the trailer was at. But when we did not expect it, Ken found out in a conversation with a co-worker that the trailer, with the many things that were important to us, was gone.

Both these stories from Luke are about waiting, but not just waiting in a passive manner, biding one's time as you get lost in a rabbit hole of social media, binge watching television series, working endless hours, gossiping about the neighbour or family member, or sticking their head in a book. Not that these should be avoided, but maybe done in moderation.

These stories are about active waiting, the servants are ready and waiting, doesn't matter how late it is before the master, the bridegroom shows up. It is also about being vigilant against the burglar that comes unexpectedly. Most importantly these stories are about how we expect Jesus to show up, or even if we expect Jesus to show up.

And at one time I only read these stories in light of what is often referred to as Jesus' second coming. I still believe that will happen in some way, but it really doesn't matter when. What I think may be even more significant is that Jesus showed up in the first place and through the work of the Holy Spirit continues to show up in our lives and in the world everyday. This may be of value to consider and take some time to look at. More and more I am coming to understand and believe that God is showing up every day, at all times of the day, and we are so complacent, so unaware, so wrapped up in our things to do and places to be, whether it be taking care of children or going to your fourth

doctor's appointment this week, that we just don't pay attention or take time to notice God.

We are not waiting for Jesus to show up in the smile of a child, the warm embrace from a loved one, or even in the compassion of a nurse who took a little time to make sure you were comfortable. We forget that sometimes Jesus shows up in us as we recognize that a doctor has just spent hours away from their family to care for others and we say a kind word of encouragement, or make the day for a teacher with a small token of appreciation on a regular Monday morning. We don't see Jesus in the toothless grin of a person living on the street, or how we might be the face of Jesus to them as we greet them with a smile and hello.

What I am trying to say is that if we are expectantly waiting for the Christ child, God come to us in the form of a little baby at Christmas, then we can begin right now to see Jesus in others, from the person in the pew beside you to the one who hands you your Timmy's or Starbuck's coffee through a serving window. We can look for God at work in organizations, in our church, at our work place, or place of residence.

God shows up everyday. It is our task to pay attention, to wait attentively, expectantly, and actively, for God to present God's self in our interactions and relationships, in nature, and in people, in nations, and in families. So don't be lazy or careless, complacent or self-satisfied. Stay alert and watchful, for God has always been present, is present, and will continue to show up day after day after day. Pay attention, actively wait and then when you see God, see Jesus in others or in yourself, experience the Holy Spirit at work, you will also be blessed, not with more possessions, or money, prestige or power but with hope, joy, love, and grace. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Prayers of the People

O Spirit of Hope,

When the world is confusing and bleak, you pierce the despair with your Word, and renew our vision of God's possibilities for our lives.

Thank you for lessons learned, for changes of heart, for new discoveries made and hope restored, even as the pandemic stretches on.

As the world around us prepares for the long, cold sleep of winter, we pray for those who feel the burden of loneliness and isolation.

We remember those without homes to shelter in, and those forced to leave their homes through conflict, natural disaster or political upheaval.

Spirit of Hope, shelter all these under your wings.

O God of Peace,

There is strife and disagreement all around us these days, sometimes in our own lives and relationships, and in many nations and neighbourhoods in the news.

We pray for places where violence and cruelty appear to win the day, thinking especially of Afghanistan and Haiti, and situations closer to home that we carry on our hearts.

God of Peace, work for just and peaceful resolutions to prevail.

O Creator of Joy,

We give you thanks for moments of joy and celebration in our lives, for pleasure given and received, for quiet times of reflection and conversation, and for the many ways that allow us to keep in contact with those we love. As the days grow colder, we remember those who feel bitter while others rejoice, those who grieve the loss of loved ones, and those who face a bleak winter for any reason.

Creator of Joy, bring them light and warmth in the season ahead, and let your joy shine through us as compassionate companions.

O Love divine made flesh in Christ,

You call us into communion with you and community with one another.

We pray for your church and our congregation, that love will guide all your people as we plan for our life and mission. We remember before you our families, whether we are close or estranged; for our friends, whether nearby or far away.

Love divine, bless each one with your love and help us express our gratitude and concern for each other in word and action.

We sum up all our prayers, spoken and unspoken, in the words Jesus taught us to say:

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Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Invitation to make an offering

I invite you to make an offering today with hopeful hearts, trusting that the Holy One who comes to us will bless our gifts and our lives, to make us signs of hope in the world God loves.

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As we are people from different churches and places following this service. I encourage each of you to present your offering to God to your church community.

If you consider St. Andrew's your church, regardless of where you live, would like to learn more about St. Andrew's, get involved in our ministry and work, or make a

donation toward the life and ministry of St. Andrew's Presbyterian, in Thunder Bay visit our website at <http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> for more information or to connect with me.

Hymn

All earth is waiting

109

1. All earth is waiting to see the Promised One,
and open furrows await the seed of God.
All the world, bound and struggling, seeks true liberty;
it cries out for justice and searches for the truth.
2. Thus says the prophet to those of Israel:
"A virgin mother will bear Emmanuel,"
one whose name is "God-with-us" our Saviour shall be;
with him hope will blossom once more within our hearts.
3. Mountains and valleys will have to be made plain;
open new highways, new highways for the Lord.
He is now coming closer, so come all and see,
and open the doorways as wide as wide can be.
4. In lowly stable the Promised One appeared;
yet feel his presence throughout the earth today,
for he lives in all Christians and is with us now;
again, with his coming he brings us liberty.

Words and music by Alberto Taule, Gertrude C. Suppe, Skinner Chavez-Melo

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Benediction

God's presence and promises are real.

Go now into God's world,

trusting in God's love and placing your hope in God.

Go in peace. Go in hope.

<https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/3267/worship-connection-november-28-2021>