

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay
<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> - Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski
1st Sunday in Advent - November 27, 2022

Words of Welcome

First Sunday of Advent – Light of Hope

The light shines in the darkness,

We come to worship, seeking the light of Christ once again.

Shine into our lives and into your world this Advent.

Renew us with fresh hope.

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Candle Lighting

Hymn

All earth is waiting

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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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Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Almighty and everlasting God,

You hold all our days in your hands, and embrace us in your everlasting arms.

In a tired and violent world, you are hope.

In a hectic and busy world, you are peace.

In a cold world, you are comfort.

In Jesus Christ, you bring love into this world,

and call us to embody his love in all we do and say.

In our worship this day, we offer you our love and loyalty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Make us one in worship and service, so that the world will see your hope at work in us and through us, making all things new.

**God of hope,
we confess that we often prefer accepting half-truths and pleasing ideas,
rather than your challenging word. We praise our own cleverness rather than
your wisdom. We have exploited others for our benefit and used the earth
without a thought for its wellbeing.**

**In your mercy, forgive what we have been, help us amend what we are,
and direct who we shall be through the mercy of Jesus Christ our Lord.**

God of hope and healing, we turn to your Word to hear your will and your wisdom for our times. Open our hearts and minds by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit so that we might hear what you are saying to the church through Christ, your Living Word.

Amen

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Assurance of Forgiveness

Receive the Good News in hope.

With great mercy, God forgives what we have confessed
and offers us new life in Christ.

Trust in the hope that you are forgiven and that,
with God, new things are possible.

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Scripture Reading Colossians 1:24-29

I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. ²⁵I became its servant according to God's commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, ²⁶the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. ²⁷To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹For this I toil and struggle with all the energy that he powerfully inspires within me.

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The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Message The Mystery of Hope

In his book [Crazy Talk: A Not-So-Stuffey Dictionary of Theological Terms](#), Rolf Jacobson says this about hope, "Hope...The promise of a future worth the trouble it takes to get

out of bed in the morning. Intimately related to faith and love, and quite unlike fear, dread, and sarcasm, hope is one of those things that we human beings cannot generate from within. Hope starts to grow inside of us when a promise is spoken to us from the outside.”¹

The first candle of Advent is the candle of hope. Hope is one of those elusive things to define, as Professor Jacobson has said, it starts to grow inside of us when a promise is spoken to us from the outside. Think of your own life. Most of us have been touched by someone struggling with illness, a serious diagnosis, and/or death. It may be that you are the person living with those outcomes. Hope gives us reason to continue. It is based in realizing achievable possibilities. Hope for comfort, reassurance, joy. It may be the hope of making it to Christmas, or another milestone. Hope does not take away the reality that physical or mental decline, or even death will happen. Hope gives us the ability to live into those moments.

The loss of hope can mean faster and further decline for the one experiencing the issue. It can mean that grief takes hold and joy becomes illusive. Hope takes hold of grief, of sorrow or uncertainty and says there is a future, there is life, there is love, compassion, reason to get out of bed in the morning. Often times hope seems fleeting, yet it can be found in the smile of a child, a call from a friend, the understanding of someone who has travelled this road before you.

Dr. [Adam Stern](#), in an article for Harvard Medical School writes, “Bad things — often really tragic things like accidents, illness, and untimely death — happen to people every single day. We know this, yet we are tasked with finding ways of moving forward in a world where nothing is guaranteed...we find ways to oppose the dread of life’s dangers with hope: an aspirational feeling that circumstances can improve, that we can persist, that there is at least as much good in the world as bad.”²

Hope is a big topic in the both the Old and New Testament scriptures. Over and over, we are encouraged, even instructed to put our hope in God. Often, we hope that God will intervene and we will experience a miracle, particularly of healing for a loved one. And there is a place for that hope, but we do live in a world where pain, suffering, and death happen, and it happens to all of us. We do not get to live in this world unscathed. The hope that is from God is one that brings comfort and even joy. Think of the old carol which sings,

God rest ye merry, gentlemen
Let nothing you dismay
Remember, Christ, our Saviour
Was born on Christmas day

¹ Jacobson, Rolf A., Editor. *Crazy Talk: A Not-So-Stuffy Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Augsburg Books. Minneapolis. 2008. P 88.

² Adam P. Stern, MD, Contributor. [Hope: Why it matters - Harvard Health](#). Accessed November 25, 2022.

To save us all from Satan's power
When we were gone astray

O tidings of comfort and joy
Comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy

This is a carol about the hope that was born in that humble place in Bethlehem. The hope we anticipate throughout Advent and specifically Christmas morning. Comfort and joy are promises that God can and does keep that grow from hope. People often speak about quality of life. Going to a more challenging conversation, people who commit suicide see their lives devoid of meaning and hope. When talking with a suicidal person, one of the ways to get them through is to find those things which resonate with them regarding future hope, meaning, and purpose.

There are those who are now considering or have gone through with medical assistance in dying. For them the quality of life has receded. They place their hope in the peace of death. For Christians, it is also about the hope and promise of eternal life with the God who loves them deeply and will welcome them home.

Going back to what Rolf Jacobsen wrote, "Hope starts to grow inside of us when a promise is spoken to us from the outside." The writer of Colossians says, "God chose to make known how great...are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." (v27). The start of hope is the mystery of Christ in you and in me, and in every person.

Our hope is one that comes out of knowing Jesus. This is done through reading scriptures, worship, study, and in relationship with others. All of this together teaches us about the hope that is the mystery of Christ in us. It comes in experiencing and living our faith together. It is also about paying attention to the beauty of creation. At this time of year, it may be the sun glinting through a frosty window, or the radiance of the sun on a cold day. It may be the wintery night sky, the softness of snowflakes or even the power of a winter storm. It is realizing that God is God over all of life, our own and that of the world.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 the writer says, "Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word." In other words, hope is a gift from God that comes through grace.

Hope is about expectation, the expectation that God is with us. Advent itself is about waiting expectantly for the birth of the Messiah. We know through scriptures that this did indeed happen with the birth of Jesus. Jesus lived, died at the hands of oppressors, but birthed a new creation when he rose as the first born of people with hope for the future. People attested to this experience and shared their stories through the oral and written

traditions. We get to experience this hope through the work of the Holy Spirit still indwelling in us.

With Christmas we celebrate that Jesus really is Lord of all...all fullness, reconciling all things to himself. That reconciliation is one of love, grace, joy, peace...and hope. Yet, part of the mystery of hope in Christ is that much of it remains a mystery. Still, we are powerfully inspired to live this mystery, to proclaim the mystery of faith, this mystery of hope, because our lived experience and that of those who have shared it with us, teaches us that it is hope that sustains us.

Romans 5:5 says, "...and hope does not disappoint us because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."

Hope is lived. Hope is experienced. Hope comes from the promise that God goes with us, loves us, forgives us, and lives in us. Hope grows inside us because of love. May the mystery of hope resound in your heart this day and in the days to come knowing that you have Christ in you. All glory, honour, and praise be to the Saviour in whom we place our trust and our hope. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Surprising and Steadfast God,
In the anticipation of your coming,
keep us awake so that we will see you at work in the world.
We give you thanks for moments of joy and celebration in our lives,
for times of excitement and surprise;
for love given and received,
for friendships that furnish our life with meaning and happiness,
and for family who reflect your unconditional love.
In all our relationships and encounters,
allow us to see you in one another.

We pray for the coming of your kingdom week by week.
Today we pray for the nations,
and for all those who frame laws and shape society,
who are charged to keep the peace and administer justice.
We thank you for leaders and governors who are faithful to their responsibilities.
And we pray for places where justice is twisted in the interests of the powerful,
and innocents suffer as a result.

Move in the hearts and minds of leaders for the sake of justice and generosity,
so that people everywhere will experience freedom and have hope for their futures.

We pray for those who are suffering this day,
for those who are ill, for those who mourn,
and for all fear who the future and what it may bring.

Surround them with your love,
support them with strength,
and inspire the hope they need to face another day.

Eternal God, all souls are precious to you;
the dead, as well as the living, are in your care.
We thank you for your saints of every generation.
and for those dear to our own hearts,
who have entered into your heavenly presence.
Keep us in communion with them,
and bring us with them at the last to dwell in your light.

And hear us as we offer prayers in silence for all those on our hearts this day:

Joining our voices into one, we pray as Jesus taught:

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 the offering

This Sunday we celebrate the Advent of Hope, coming to us in Jesus Christ. Think of your gifts as seeds of that hope which we can plant in the world God loves for Christ's sake. ©The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. First Sunday in Advent. November 27, 2022. Year A.

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>

Hymn

While shepherds watched their flocks by night

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1. While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
all seated on the ground,
the angel of the Lord came down,
and glory shone around.
2. "Fear not," said he, for mighty dread
had seized their troubled mind;
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring
to you, all humankind.

3. "To you, in David's town, this day
is born of David's line
a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord,
and this shall be the sign:
4. "The heavenly babe you there shall find
to human view displayed,
all meanly wrapped in swathing bands,
and in a manger laid."
5. Thus spake the seraph, and forthwith
appeared a shining throng
of angels praising God, who thus
addressed their joyful song:
6. "All glory be to God on high,
and to the earth be peace;
good will henceforth from heaven to earth
begin, and never cease!"

Words and music: public domain

Benediction

Go in hope this day, and keep awake!
Watch for signs of God at work around you and within you.
Look for opportunities to serve others in Jesus' name.
And may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit
and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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