

Words of Welcome

Second Sunday of Advent – Light of Peace

The light shines in the darkness,

We come to worship, seeking the peace of Christ.

Shine into our lives and your world this Advent.

Renew in us Jesus' call to be peacemakers this day.

©The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 2nd Sunday in Advent. December 4, 2022. Year A

Candle Lighting

Hymn

Comfort, comfort you my people

113

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Comfort, comfort you my people;
tell of peace, thus says our God;
comfort those who sit in darkness
bowed beneath oppression's load.
Speak you to Jerusalem
of the peace that waits for them;
tell them that their sins I cover,
and their warfare now is over. | 2. For the herald's voice is calling
in the desert far and near,
bidding us to make repentance
since the kingdom now is here.
Oh that warning cry obey!
Now prepare for God a way;
let the valleys rise in meeting
and the hills bow down in greeting. |
| 3. Make you straight what long was crooked;
make the rougher places plain;
let your hearts be true and humble,
as befits God's holy reign,
for the glory of the Lord
now o'er earth is shed abroad,
and all flesh shall see the token
that God's word is never broken. | |

Words and Music: public domain

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of wisdom and understanding, of peace and promise,
you are the giver of life and you live in us.

You have welcomed us as your children,
and called us to live out your image with hospitality toward each other.

In Jesus Christ, you offer us living water to wash away our sin and sorrow,
and call us back to paths of justice and righteousness.

With the Holy Spirit, you baptize us for service and life in community,
refreshing us each day with your presence and purpose.

Glory and honour and praise be yours, Creator, Christ and Spirit,
this day and every day, now and evermore.

**God of peace and promise,
we confess that we have taken your commitment to us for granted.
We assume what we do is acceptable to you, yet we judge others more
harshly. We have been slow to welcome others, especially if their cultures or
convictions differ from ours.**

**You call us to repentance, but we resist seeing anything needing change in our
hearts or our habits. Forgive our self-satisfied attitudes, and challenge us with
your vision of a peaceable kingdom where all can be made new. Amen**

©The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 2nd Sunday in Advent. December 4, 2022. Year A.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Receive the Good News in peace.

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

Receive the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and be at peace with God, with yourself and with one another.

©The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 2nd Sunday in Advent. December 4, 2022. Year A.

Scripture Reading John 16:25-33

²⁵ ‘I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures, but will tell you plainly of the Father. ²⁶On that day you will ask in my name. I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; ²⁷for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. ²⁸I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and am going to the Father.’

²⁹ His disciples said, ‘Yes, now you are speaking plainly, not in any figure of speech! ³⁰Now we know that you know all things, and do not need to have anyone question you; by this we believe that you came from God.’ ³¹Jesus answered them, ‘Do you now believe? ³²The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each one to his home, and you will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me. ³³I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!’

New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. <http://nrsvbibles.org>

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

Message The Peace of Christ

In pretty much every in-person service of worship at St. Andrew's there is a sharing of the sign of peace. The words said by the worship leader are "Peace be with you" and the response by the congregation is "and also with you." Why these words? Why this sign of peace?

The peace of Christ is significant in the words spoken by Jesus himself and by other New Testament writers. It is a what the people of God have also desired from ancient writers of scripture to now. Yet it seems so illusive. When we look around at the world we see nations at war, people at risk, power and politics wreaking havoc on the lives of those who have no power or influence. Refugees fleeing violence and famine. The world does not seem a very peaceful place.

Yet for us, here in this country, we live in a particular safety, we do not feel threatened, at least not as a country at war. We head into stores to hear carols over the sound systems that would make you think that Christmas is all about love, good will toward all and joy. You would never know that the Christ child was born in a time when life was difficult and precarious.

Still, the birth of Jesus was how divine love became something more than just words. Jesus' life was divine love in the flesh. And this is significant as it means that Jesus and through Jesus, God knows what it is like to live an earthly life. God is not some far off entity that cares little about you and me. God's love for humanity, for creation was and is so deep that he came in Jesus to show us the extent of God's love. Jesus' life was one of teaching and healing, it was to teach about grace and restore people to relationships of wholeness.

Let the disciples themselves be our case study. Those men that Jesus had gathered around him for three years of ministry were imperfect, slow to understand, thought they had things figured out and spoke like they would stand by Jesus no matter what, only to learn after the fact that they were weak, had not understood what Jesus was teaching them, and rather than having followed a victorious leader who would be king, instead watched as their leader was hung unceremoniously on a cross.

Jesus knew all of this about them even as he was with them. In the hours before this particular conversation that we read today, Jesus has been telling the disciples what to expect in the coming days. He is letting them know that he will die at the hands of those who want an end to the charismatic leader's influence on the people, especially those who are oppressed. There is nothing worse for those in control, those in power, that want to keep power, than to have people who are oppressed being given hope for a better life. That makes people think that change is possible.

This was the time of the Pax Romana, the peace of Rome. Thing was, though this was a time of wealth and prosperity, the peace was enforced, when necessary, through the slaughter of those who might think and choose to challenge those in power.

The reading for today comes from the hours before Jesus will be betrayed and arrested and Jesus is trying to prepare those closest to him for what will happen. He says to them, "I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures, but will tell you plainly of the Father. ²⁶On that day you will ask in my name. I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; ²⁷for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came

from God. ²⁸I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and am going to the Father.’ ²⁹ His disciples said, ‘Yes, now you are speaking plainly, not in any figure of speech! ³⁰Now we know that you know all things, and do not need to have anyone question you; by this we believe that you came from God.’”

And Jesus responds, “³²The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each one to his home, and you will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me.”

Jesus is giving them final instructions, knowing that they really don’t get it but in time all of it will make sense. As they experience the fear and uncertainty, the threats and the powerful, they we draw on all that he has taught them, they will remember, and in that remembering they will find their way. Jesus tells them that God loves them and their relationship with God is as close as the words they speak, the thoughts they think, and the hope they need. Just as Jesus is not alone, even though all scatter because God is with him, we are not alone because God is with us.

And then he says another thing that is easy to gloss over if you are not paying attention, “³³I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!”

I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace.

What kind of peace can one have when everything around them is in turmoil? We look at the devastation in the Ukraine, the challenges and strife in Afghanistan, the hate crimes that instigate people to damage property and injure, even kill other human beings. We look at our own lives and think where can one find peace when they don’t know how to pay the bills, their partner is abusive, addictions have ruined families and lives, grief and or illness has taken away joy?

And Jesus comes saying, “I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace.” Knowing all that the disciples would face, what you and I would face, Jesus offers peace. This is not peace that is outwardly enforced or even willed into being. The peace that we speak of when we light the Advent candle of peace is something quite different.

Carolyn Slaughter writes, “Peace is an inner harmony and sense of well-being based on our confident faith that God has accepted us, loves us and is in control of our lives, no matter how turbulent our external situation might be. Peace results from knowing we are forgiven and accepted by God. Peace does not require the absence of conflict or distress; it is a sense of tranquility and order regardless of what is happening around us because no matter our circumstance, God has everything in place and is in control. Peace is the internal assurance that no matter how the waves of life rock our boat, Jesus is in the boat with us.”¹

¹Slaughter, Carolyn. Following Jesus; Steps to a Passionate Faith. Leader Guide. Abingdon Press. Nashville.2008.

This does not take away our freedom as human beings to make decisions or have to live with the consequences of decisions that we or others make. God does not want puppets. Yet God lovingly stays with us, will be with us through all that we go through.

In John 14:25-27 Jesus is recorded as saying, "I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you. 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."

The peace of Christ is a gift. It comes to us through the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, the love of God and the Holy Spirit given to us and at work in us and the world. If peace seems illusive to you at this time, it may be helpful to spend time in quiet with Jesus, give him your cares and concerns, your distress, your grief. It will not change the external forces and circumstances that you face, but it will change you. You may even find new insights to help you change your circumstances and find ways through struggle.

The Apostle Paul began and ended many of his letter with something that spoke to the peace of Christ and so using his words from 1 Corinthians, and as you go from worship into another week, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Peace be with you.

Prayers of the People

God of the peaceable kingdom Isaiah envisioned,
where predator and prey are reconciled, and children play in safety,
we give you thanks for every step taken towards reconciliation among rivals.
and every program provided to give children a reliable future.
Thank you for policies implemented on behalf of the climate and every vulnerable creature, to give us all hope for an enduring future in the world you love,
for peace will not come if the earth keeps tilting out of balance.

God of John the Baptist's rallying cry,
You raised up John in the wilderness as a voice calling us to conversion.
We thank you for signs of renewal and change in the church,
and in communities grappling with historic injustice and current outcry.
Guide advocates who work for change with both courage and compassion.
As we await the coming of Christ,
awaken the church to new ways to undertake ministry and mission,
and give us the energy and resources to reach out in ways we have yet to imagine.

God of steadfast encouragement,
St Paul called the followers of Christ to live in harmony,
and welcome those perceived as strangers to you and to them.
Thank you for welcoming us when we were strangers

to a new community, a new church or a life changed by unexpected circumstance. We pray for people who dread this Christmas season because life has changed for them, or circumstances leave them feeling lonely and discouraged. Draw close to those who suffer in body, mind or spirit, and guide us to reach out to someone who needs comfort or encouragement.

God of justice and equity,
The psalms, the prophets and the gospels proclaim your care for the poor, and your expectation that your people will look to the needs of the vulnerable. We thank you that Canada has resources to share, and pray that our leaders will attend to longstanding injustice and urgent need without excuse or delay. We pray for places torn apart by war, and for communities devastated by storm, flood, fire or drought. Challenge any who would hoard scarce resources or profit from the needs of others. Open our hearts to share what we can, even in these difficult times.

Hear our prayers, O God, and strengthen us to serve you in faith and obedience. We offer our prayers through our Lord Jesus Christ who taught us to pray together:
©The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 2nd Sunday in Advent. December 4, 2022. Year A.

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 Peace, born for us in Jesus Christ. Think of your gifts as seeds of that peace which we can plant in the world God loves for Christ's sake. ©The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 2nd Sunday in Advent. December 4, 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

Hail to the Lord's Anointed

115

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Hail to the Lord's Anointed,
great David's greater Son;
hail, in the time appointed,
his reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression,
to set the captive free,
to take away transgression,
and rule in equity. | 2. He brings salvation speedy
to those who suffer wrong;
he saves the poor and needy,
and helps the weak be strong;
they sing who once were sighing,
their darkness turned to light,
for they, who once were dying,
are precious in his sight. |
|---|---|

3. He shall come down like showers
upon the fruitful earth,
and love, joy, hope, like flowers,
spring in his path to birth.
Before him on the mountains
shall peace, the herald, go,
and righteousness, in fountains,
from hill to valley flow.

4. All powers shall bow before him,
and gold and incense bring;
all nations shall adore him,
his praise all people sing,
for he shall have domination
o'er river, sea and shore,
far as the eagle's pinion
or dove's light wing can soar.

5. O'er every foe victorious,
Christ on his throne shall rest,
from age to age more glorious,
all-blessing and all blest:
the tide of time shall never
his covenant remove;
his name shall stand forever—
that name to us is Love.

Words and Musci: public domain

Benediction

Go in peace this day, ready to bear fruit worthy of your commitment
to Jesus Christ and his kingdom of justice and peace.

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.

©The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 2nd Sunday in Advent. December 4, 2022. Year A.