

## Call to Worship

Gather us in, the broken-hearted and the joyful.

**Gather us in, the weak and the strong.**

Gather us in, the fearful and the brave.

**Gather us in, the young and the old.**

Gather us in, to sing of God's works.

**Gather us in, to praise Jesus Christ.**

Gather us in, to worship and wonder.

**Gather us in, to know of God's love.**

— written by Mary J. Scifres, and posted on the [Ministry Matters](#) website.  
[re:Worship: Call to Worship: Isaiah 40, Psalm 147](#)

## Lighting the Candle of Peace

We've gathered here on this Advent Sunday to draw near to you, God. Our hearts long to be close to you. Help us this season to open our hearts so that you may draw near to us. Open our eyes to the true light that came into the world as we wait to receive it again. Open our ears to the truth of your Word.

Hear the Word from the prophet Isaiah (40:28-31): "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak."

"Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

We grow weary, God. So many things in this world make us weary. We need your strength. We need the light of Christ to come to us to strengthen us and give us peace.

(The candle of peace is lit)

## Hymn

*Comfort, comfort you my people*

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| 1. Comfort, comfort you my people;<br>tell of peace, thus says our God;<br>comfort those who sit in darkness<br>bowed beneath oppression's load.<br>Speak you to Jerusalem<br>of the peace that waits for them;<br>tell them that their sins I cover,<br>and their warfare now is over. | 2. For the herald's voice is calling<br>in the desert far and near,<br>bidding us to make repentance<br>since the kingdom now is here.<br>Oh that warning cry obey!<br>Now prepare for God a way;<br>let the valleys rise in meeting<br>and the hills bow down in greeting. |
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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.

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## Prayer of Adoration and Confession

O God, you are our God; earnestly we seek you;  
our souls thirst for you, our bodies long for you,  
in a dry and parched land where there is no water.  
Almighty God, during this Advent season, we are weary.  
For many of us or for our families, the days are hectic,  
and our minds run ahead long into the night.  
We rush from one Christmas activity to the next,  
and can't find rest after each long week.

Jesus speaks these words to us today:

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, 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.”

**When we feel overwhelmed, when we are filled with worry,  
when our activities lack purpose and our tasks seem endless,  
instill within us your peace, O God. We long to calm ourselves in your  
presence and quiet our ambition, and so we pray these things through Christ  
in whom we find our strength. Amen.**

By Lisa Vanderkamp Longing for More | Reformed Worship

## Assurance of Forgiveness

God hears the cries of the broken-hearted  
and renews the strength of those who trust in his mercy.  
In Jesus Christ, God has taken us by the hand,  
forgiving our sins and lifting us up to new life.  
Sisters and Brothers, your sins are forgiven; be at peace.

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## Scripture Readings

### ❖ Isaiah 40:27-31

<sup>27</sup>Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, “My way is hidden from the LORD,  
and my right is disregarded by my God”? <sup>28</sup>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. <sup>29</sup>He gives power

to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. <sup>30</sup>Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; <sup>31</sup>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.

### ❖ Galatians 6:7-10

<sup>7</sup>Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. <sup>8</sup>If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. <sup>9</sup>So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest-time, if we do not give up. <sup>10</sup>So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.

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

### Message We are Weary

Part of verse 31 from Isaiah 40 has always stood out for people. Not surprisingly, it is the line that reads “they shall mount up with wings like eagles.” All one has to do is imagine an eagle in flight, their wing span so majestic, their flight seemingly effortless as they catch even the slightest breeze and soar high above. It gives us pause and we watch in awe. This can be in our imagination, or watching on a screen, or if lucky enough, one might get to see that majesty in motion in nature.

There is something promising in thinking that those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles. It is a hope filled image in a ravaged and struggling world where people are tired. Tired of fighting illness or the challenges of old age. A world where personal wars are waged for those who are struggling with addiction or mental health issues, and a continual challenge for those who walk alongside them as family or in professional fields of work.

People are tired of family fights and broken relationships. Tired of having to work so hard to make ends meet and then hearing the news that food costs are going to continue to rise along with all other aspects of managing a household. Even people who thought retirement was going to be a wonderful endless opportunity to rest when they felt like it, find that other demands seem to fill up their time.

We have regional and national concerns of affordable and accessible healthcare and education for all. And just the other evening the news spoke of the challenges of equitable policing in our country and province. Then there are the global concerns of power, politics, war, famine, refugees, the list is endless.

We are weary.

We are weary of the burdens we carry, whatever they are and whatever the cause. Few people seem to have boundless energy. Grief, pain, sorrow, losses of many kinds wear us down and we wonder does it ever ends.

I wish I could tell you it does. But it doesn't. To be human is to struggle. To be human also means laughter, joy, and at times peace, but there is always the struggle. There are always times of being weary. The weariness can bear upon us mentally, emotionally, physically, and even socially.

The book of Isaiah is written to and about a weary people. People taken captive under the brutal rule of the Babylonian empire. Taken from their homeland, everything they held dear destroyed. We don't have to look far to know those kinds of images. Just watch people in Gaza as they fight one another for food, or the destruction of the Ukraine. Not to mention the losses, frustration, and fear of those who are leaving South America and other countries in hopes of finding a future for themselves and their families in a foreign land and without the security of knowing that their hopes will ever come to fruition.

The people of Israel in the time of the Babylonian captivity had been in their state so long that it was hard from them to believe that the God that had claimed them as their own had not abandoned them. Verse 27 speaks to that as it asks, "Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, 'My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God'?" The people had gotten to the point that they figured God just couldn't be with them anymore. How could God be with them as God's chosen people when things had gone so wrong, the judgement upon them so harsh, so unforgiving, the punishment so horrific?

Many people throughout the ages have had times, even very faithful people, when they question whether or not God has forgotten about them. They still believe in God, they just don't think God cares about them anymore, for whatever reason. And yet the writer of Isaiah continues with what the Israelites knew at their core, it had been written on their hearts from the time of their birth,

<sup>28</sup>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. <sup>29</sup>He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. <sup>30</sup>Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; <sup>31</sup>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. (NRSV)

The questions, "Have you not know? Have you not heard?" are rhetorical questions. Of course the people knew of God's faithfulness. Of course God would not abandon them. It was just hard to tell in the moment. It can be that way for us as well. In our darkest times it is difficult to remember that God is still with us.

As I prepared for writing this message I read a commentary by Professor Stan Mast. It made me think about this passage differently than I had before and I would like to share some of his thinking that for him was also shaped by the sermon of another preacher, Dr. John Claypool. The thought is that there are three ways that God comes to us in times when we are weary and when we think about how God interacts with the world and us as individuals.

The first may be through direct intervention in the situation we find ourselves in. Remember that image of the eagle soaring? What one might also observe is an eagle after its prey. We don't say that people are "eagle eyed" for nothing. Eagles can spot a fish in the water from great heights and dive down and grasp the fish with its talons before the fish has even realized that it is great peril. That analogy goes along well with how God can pluck us out of disaster or struggle in one fell swoop. However, we are not prey in God's hands, we are beloved children of God rescued from what it is that is overtaking us.

Quoting Professor Mast, "Sometimes God simply rescues us. Quickly, perhaps instantaneously, he gets us out of the situation or miraculously changes the situation. We soar up out of the situation on wings like eagles and the trouble is gone, behind us."<sup>1</sup>

But we all know that God showing up in that kind of way does not always happen. It happens, but God showing up in other ways is more akin to our experience. Sometimes it takes a long time for things to sort themselves out. It is then then we may be encouraged by the lines of scripture that talk of having strength, of not growing weary. It is times like this that God comes along side us, and we and God work together to get through a situation. When we go through these times trusting that God has given us enough strength for the moment, the wisdom and courage to get through, that our strength is renewed. Though we may find ourselves weary, we can continue because we trust and know that God is with us.

Still there are other times when it just feels like God has left us in a situation to figure it out for ourselves. No amount of prayer seems to get through and no break throughs happen. Let me quote Stan Mast again, because his words aptly describe what I have known and witnessed but have not had words for.

...there are other times when God's help doesn't change the situation at all. He doesn't rescue us out of the situation and he doesn't give us the strength to repair it ourselves. Instead, he simply gives us the strength to endure, so that we are personally renewed. The situation doesn't change, but we do. We grow stronger. We don't faint. We think we will, but we don't. We just keep walking

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<sup>1</sup> Stan Mast. [Isaiah 40:21-31 - Center for Excellence in Preaching](#). Accessed December 6, 2024.

through the situation and we emerge on the other side of it a renewed person, because God gives us the strength to endure.<sup>2</sup>

We all prefer it when God just resolves our troubling circumstances, but often it is the deepest of struggles that have the power to change us in ways that we could not have imagined. It is not that God wills this for our lives. Still, God will use these circumstances to grow us if we allow it. The world is broken. People are broken and so our lives are affected by those circumstances and relationships. But God does not abandon us in our affliction. God is always present. Always with us in the struggle.

We know this because God, in Jesus, became flesh. Jesus experienced the pain of the body, mind, and spirit as a human being. God is not aloof, but is on the ground in the struggle, with you always, in the world always. We can count on that just as those who in Babylon knew that truth deep in their souls. God was with them, even if they could not feel it or understand how God was present. They knew it still because of the stories of the people who witnessed to God's presence throughout their history. Their history is ours and more so.

Jesus is God's new covenant that is the story of God with us since the beginning of time. The creating God of Genesis is still with us now creating, responding, and restoring. In that we can rejoice as we do each Christmas. The reminder that God is with us. Emmanuel.

Our struggles are real, they make us weary. In that, know that God is in it with you and because of that we can respond and be there for others as Galatians tells us to "not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest-time, if we do not give up."<sup>10</sup> So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith."

Today, whatever you face, remember that the God, who was and is and will be, is with you and in the world. Thanks be to God for being ever present. The God of hope, peace, joy, and love goes with us and is with us always.

## **Prayers of the People**

Come, Christ Jesus, be our guest and enter our lives with your blessing.

We are lonely for you and the peace you bring so draw near to us in friendship and faithfulness, so that in this season of celebration, we may know how near you are.

Christ Jesus, coming among us,  
Bring us peace.

Come, Christ Jesus, be our guide and show us the way to wisdom and gratitude in the face all that is distorted or untrue. We thank you for the kindness we know in friends and good neighbours, in warm houses and warm smiles. We pray for those who have lost their way in life and feel like there is no place to turn.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Equip us to reach out to those who need your embrace and ours.

Come, Christ Jesus, be our hope and touch us with your healing and grace in every way we need these gifts. We remember before you those we know and those known to you alone who are living with loss or illness this season, those who face depression or discouragement, all who are worried and any who this time of year difficult; bring your comfort into their lives and ours.

Come, Christ Jesus, and rule in our lives and claim your rightful place in our hearts. Your world struggles for the justice and mercy you bring. We remember before you places marked by violence and upheaval, and the devastating impacts of the climate crisis. Draw near to all leaders and citizens working for peace and justice.

Encourage honourable action and co-operation in confronting global challenges and local needs. Give hope to people under oppression and those who live with fear or hunger day by day. Hasten the day when the world's peoples will live as neighbours, reconciled in your truth and freedom.

Christ Jesus, coming among us,  
Bring us peace.

In hope for your world, we pray together the prayer that Jesus taught...

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. Second Sunday of Advent. December 8, 2024. Year C.

## 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

We make our offering today as a sign of our commitment to the reign of Christ among us, trusting that our gifts will accomplish more than we might ever imagine, because God will bless them—and us.

St. Andrew's uses the donations that we receive to support the ministry of God from this church and in community. Your gifts make a difference and this includes the ministry of online worship as well. If you are able to make a one-time donation or support this ministry on an ongoing basis your gift makes an impact. Please check us out at [standrewpres-tbay.ca](http://standrewpres-tbay.ca). There you can find various ways of giving from e-transfer to the online donate button that allows you to give by credit card. We are deeply grateful for your generosity.

1. Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;  
they shall rise up on wings as eagles;  
they shall run and not be weary;  
they shall walk and not faint:  
help us Lord; help us, Lord, in your way.
2. Those who serve the suffering world shall renew their strength;  
they shall rise up on wings as eagles;  
they shall run and not be weary;  
they shall walk and not faint:  
help us Lord; help us, Lord, in your way.
3. Those who live the risen life shall renew their strength;  
they shall rise up on wings as eagles;  
they shall run and not be weary;  
they shall walk and not faint:  
help us Lord; help us, Lord, in your way.
4. Those who love the Mystery shall renew their strength;  
they shall rise up on wings as eagles;  
they shall run and not be weary;  
they shall walk and not faint:  
help us Lord; help us, Lord, in your way.
5. Those who die on the march shall renew their strength;  
they shall rise up on wings as eagles;  
they shall run and not be weary;  
they shall walk and not faint:  
help us Lord; help us, Lord, in your way.
6. Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;  
they shall rise up on wings as eagles;  
they shall run and not be weary;  
they shall walk and not faint:  
help us Lord; help us, Lord, in your way.

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## **Benediction**

Go now to wait on God,  
to pay attention to all God is doing around you,  
and to serve as the Spirit guides you.  
And may the peace of Christ bless you  
and keep you wherever you may go. Amen.

Written by Dr. Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries, August 2023.  
[Discipleship Ministries | Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany, Year B - ...](#)