

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

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

2nd Sunday of Advent – December 7, 2025

Call to Worship

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.

Light the first two Advent candles.

Hymn

On Jordan's bank

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1. On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry
announces that the Lord is nigh;
awake and hearken, for he brings
glad tidings of the King of kings.
2. Then cleansed be every breast from sin;
make straight the way for God within;
prepare we in our hearts a home
where such a mighty guest may come.
3. For thou art our salvation, Lord,
our refuge and our great reward;
without thy grace, we waste away,
like flowers that wither and decay.
4. To heal the sick, stretch out thine hand,
and bid the fallen sinner stand;
shine forth and let thy light restore
earth's own true loveliness once more.
5. All praise, eternal Son, to thee,
whose advent sets thy people free,
whom, with the Father, we adore,
and Holy Spirit, evermore.

"On Jordan's bank." Words (Latin) by Charles Coffin. Translation by John Chandler. 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 tend to judge others without compassion. We have been slow to welcome others, especially if their cultures or convictions differ from ours. You call us to repentance, but we resist acknowledging what needs to 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, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

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.

Prayer for Understanding

God of whispers and shouts, you proclaim the good news of peace from all corners of creation. As we turn to our scriptures, may the words inspire us to dream of a world where peace thrives among us. Amen.

Scripture Readings

❖ Malachi 3:1-6a

“Look! I’m sending my messenger on ahead to clear the way for me. Suddenly, out of the blue, the Leader you’ve been looking for will enter his Temple—yes, the Messenger of the Covenant, the one you’ve been waiting for. Look! He’s on his way!”
A Message from the mouth of GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies.

²⁻⁴ But who will be able to stand up to that coming? Who can survive his appearance? He’ll be like white-hot fire from the smelter’s furnace. He’ll be like the strongest lye soap at the laundry. He’ll take his place as a refiner of silver, as a cleanser of dirty clothes. He’ll scrub the Levite priests clean, refine them like gold and silver, until they’re fit for GOD, fit to present offerings of righteousness. Then, and only then, will Judah and Jerusalem be fit and pleasing to GOD, as they used to be in the years long ago.

⁵ “Yes, I’m on my way to visit you with Judgment. I’ll present compelling evidence against sorcerers, adulterers, liars, those who exploit workers, those who take advantage of widows and orphans, those who are inhospitable to the homeless—anyone and everyone who doesn’t honor me.” A Message from GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies.

^{6a} “I am GOD—yes, I AM.

❖ **Matthew 3:1-12** Thunder in the Desert!

¹⁻² While Jesus was living in the Galilean hills, John, called “the Baptizer,” was preaching in the desert country of Judea. His message was simple and austere, like his desert surroundings: “Change your life. God’s kingdom is here.”

³ John and his message were authorized by Isaiah’s prophecy:

Thunder in the desert!

Prepare for God’s arrival!

Make the road smooth and straight!

⁴⁻⁶ John dressed in a camel-hair habit tied at the waist by a leather strap. He lived on a diet of locusts and wild field honey. People poured out of Jerusalem, Judea, and the Jordanian countryside to hear and see him in action. There at the Jordan River those who came to confess their sins were baptized into a changed life.

⁷⁻¹⁰ When John realized that a lot of Pharisees and Sadducees were showing up for a baptismal experience because it was becoming the popular thing to do, he exploded: “Brood of snakes! What do you think you’re doing slithering down here to the river? Do you think a little water on your snakeskins is going to make any difference? It’s your life that must change, not your skin! And don’t think you can pull rank by claiming Abraham as father. Being a descendant of Abraham is neither here nor there. Descendants of Abraham are a dime a dozen. What counts is your life. Is it green and flourishing? Because if it’s deadwood, it goes on the fire.

¹¹⁻¹² “I’m baptizing you here in the river, turning your old life in for a kingdom life. The real action comes next: The main character in this drama—compared to him I’m a mere stagehand—will ignite the kingdom life within you, a fire within you, the Holy Spirit within you, changing you from the inside out. He’s going to clean house—make a clean sweep of your lives. He’ll place everything true in its proper place before God; everything false he’ll put out with the trash to be burned.”

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Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church. **Thanks be to God.**

Message Prophetic Peace

Some of you may remember the tv series called Columbo. The main character of the murder mystery series revolved around this person who appeared to be a bumbling detective asking obscure questions. He always showed up at inconvenient times for those who were suspects, but he always got the right person. The thing about this particular show was that you pretty much always knew at the start of the show who had committed the crime. The first scenes showed you the who, what, when and how. The part that intrigued viewers was watching Columbo put the pieces together as he figured out the clues.

It seems to be the way for us as well as we read scripture. As we sit here, we know that our faith, our way of doing life, revolves around this person of Jesus. We are called followers of Jesus. But the scriptures hold clues and keys to who Jesus was, his purpose, his life, death, resurrection, and ascension. We don't know every detail, but we are given enough to understand. We don't solve the mystery of our faith in our lifetimes, but each day we can question, have more clarity, and in some ways solve the mystery that is God come to us in the person of Jesus and what that means for our lives.

People in the Bible such as Isaiah, Malachi, and John the Baptizer, all point to the person who is going to come and change things. They point to a person coming who will separate those who live lives that honour God, follow the ways of the Lord, those who are humble and love justice and mercy, from those who love power and create conditions of injustice and harm.

Also, for these prophets, the person will do this work of separating in ways that seem strikingly harsh and harmful in its own way. As you listen to these images described, hear them for the powerful acts they are meant to help us imagine. Malachi speaks of a white-hot furnace, a refiner's fire, soap as strong as lye to cleanse. Isaiah talks of the power of nature where one will hear thunder in the dessert and roads becoming smooth and straight. Now all of this happens with mighty power. John speaks about this person as one who will "clean house—make a clean sweep of your lives. He'll place everything true in its proper place before God; everything false he'll put out with the trash to be burned."¹

Whoever each of these prophets are describing, it is someone who changes everything. John the Baptist does know that it is Jesus. In a story that follows this in the Gospel of Matthew, we will hear of Jesus coming to be baptized by John. However, here we are at the second Sunday of Advent and you may be wondering how do any of these scriptures relate to the serene images of a peaceful barn full of animals where a mother has just given birth to a little boy and a father lovingly looks over them.

To that one might say, "Oh how we have sanitized the birth of Jesus!" You need to think about the birthing process, the smell of animals, the lack of a sterile environment, the scream of birth pangs, the fear of loss, the sounds and smells of animals, the cool of the night, the sweat on the brows of both mother and father and a pool of birthing fluids, and the cry of a baby that has just come through the birth canal.

Advent is a time of expectant hope, but it does not come packaged in peace, and love. Advent, and Christmas itself, come through times of fear, injustice, and the power of empire. It comes in this child born to people who will have to flee for their lives and become refugees in Egypt for a time. Advent also points to a yet to come anticipated return of Jesus, when as Revelation 21:4 says, "He'll wipe every tear from their eyes.

¹ [The Message \(MSG\)](#) Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by [Eugene H. Peterson](#)

Death is gone for good—tears gone, crying gone, pain gone—all the first order of things gone.”²

But for today we have this voice in the wilderness. The voice of John the Baptizer who is telling everyone to repent, which basically suggests that one must change their mind and or heart. This time of Advent is a time of reviewing, reflecting, and relearning. It is a time of discovery as we look at our own ways of being in the world to see where we have let the power of the empire, that of governments, of leaders, of those who do harm, where have we let those things run rampant. We ask the question, “How are we complicit in the injustice of the world?”

It may be why all these prophets spoke with such fiery passion; they needed to get the attention of those around them and to get our attention as well. They are pointing the way to one who will come to change our way of thinking and being in the world. Thing is, this change happens one person at a time until communities are transformed. It is about changing our minds and hearts to see where there is injustice, inequity, and hurting people, and bring about justice, equity, and healing to ourselves, to individuals, and to entire communities of people.

This may sound like a lofty ideal yet it is possible to change the world. This starts with changing your corner of the world, it starts with you and me. It starts with us looking at ourselves and seeing how we participate in the injustice and pain. Do you offer yourself grace but also turn from the thinking that has you judging yourself, or not offering yourself forgiveness, something that is offered to you because of the love that Jesus has for you...because you are a child of God? It is hard to think of others as valuable if you don't value yourself.

On the other hand, there are some who think too highly of themselves and judge others harshly, if you are one of those you also need to rethink or change your mind and heart. As is written in the commentary for this series called *The Will to Dream*, “If we find ourselves too comfortable with what the current empire promises, it is time to reorient our minds. If we find ourselves disillusioned or indifferent, it is time to reorient our minds.”³

We need a reorientation of our hearts, systems, and society. To that end, where or how do we reorient our minds and our hearts?

How many times do you hear from someone, including me, that our systems our broken? Health care, education, government, religion? We know that things are broken, they have always been broken, but that does not suggest that we should give up working for change. I would hazard to say that the brokenness we see in the world comes from injustice, power wanting power, people wanting control over people.

² Ibid.

³ © 2025 Illustrated Ministry, LLC. All rights reserved. 34 WORSHIP LITURGY THE WILL TO DREAM.

We stand here in the footsteps of Jesus, one who spoke to and against the power of empire, and changed the world. We are here today because of the person of Jesus. The disciples that continued the work of Jesus, the communities of faith that have been established since, though imperfect, we all stand against the injustice of power that says that one person is worthy and another can just suffer. This is not okay!

We cannot stand silent as people suffer under the strong arm, the weight of injustice. We are called to be people who stand in the face of power and say, no more can people be left to endure hardship.

John the Baptist came preaching a word of prophetic peace. He did not do it with soft words to cushion our discomfort, he came with words of judgement, and action. The peace that the world offers is dependant on domination, silence, and stability for a few. We need to realize that peace is not an avoidance of conflict. That is not true peace.

Peace is something that Christ brings. It is a peace that transcends our understanding. It is peace in the midst of conflict. It is peace that brings hope, joy, and love into the world. It is peace born in people who want to see change that uplifts those who are suffering under the weight of power that wants to control...power that diminishes the beauty of creation and humanity.

It is our work to see where there is injustice and to hold accountable those who perpetrate the injustice whether that be commerce, leadership, governments, or anyone else that holds power that creates fear and oppression. We need to see where that power has taken hold in ourselves and we need to see where that kind of power has taken hold in the world. Then we need to act for change so that all people can know the peace of Christ and live with the love, joy, and grace that is promised in Christ Jesus.

And let me say, this does not mean that everyone has to become a Christian, but it is to say that our love as coming in and through Christ is the catalyst and people should experience that love from us whether they recognize it as Christ's love or not.

This is a tall order, but do not lose hope. Each day do what you can to bring the peace of Christ to someone or some situation. Even if it is not a crisis you face in the moment, look for ways to be a presence of peace, a sign of hope, allowing the Holy Spirit to open your eyes and heart to see what is happening around you, to change your heart and mind, to reorient you to the message of the gospel of Christ where peace for all is a promise.

I speak to you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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 peace with justice, make us better stewards of the gifts you give us.

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 peace with justice, make us better stewards of the gifts you give us.

God of steadfast encouragement,

St Paul called the followers of Christ to live in harmony, and welcome those perceived as strangers to them. Thank you for welcoming us when we were strangers to a new community, a new church and a life changed by unexpected circumstance. We pray for people who are apprehensive about 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 peace with justice, make us better stewards of the gifts you give us.

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 by exploiting others. Open our hearts to share what we can, even in these difficult times.

God of peace with justice, make us better stewards of the gifts you give us.

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:

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.

There are various ways that people give to this congregation for our work as God's people, through signing up for a monthly donation, or sending an e-transfer.

Check out the opportunities to support St. Andrew's ministry at our website, [St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay, ON – Part of the PCCWeb network of churches](#)

Hymn

Comfort, comfort you my people

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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.

"Comfort, comfort you my people." Words (German) by Johannes Olearius. Translation by Catherine Winkworth. 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.

This liturgy is from The Presbyterian Church in Canada Worship Planner 2nd Sunday in Advent. December 7, 2025. Year A.