

Worship on November 28, 2021 (CCLI: License Number #3156883)

(Welcoming Elder: Kevin Johnston)

Order of worship

We Gather

- Welcome and Announcements
- Call to worship (Advent Hand out)
- Praise song – O Come, O Come Emmanuel
- Prayer for worship + Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination
- Scripture: Isaiah 9:2-7
- Sermon: Advent 1 – Meaning of Christmas
- The Lord's Table

We Respond

- Offering & Dedication
- Song for the Journey – BOP 292 – Father I adore you

We Serve

- Benediction

Announcements:

. Welcome! Grace and peace to you all who are worshipping God with us. This is Sunday, November 28th¹, 2021. This is the first Sunday of Advent. As we wait for the Lord's coming, let us bring our hearts and lives to him. May the grace and love of God be with us all.

. We will have the Lord's Table during today's worship. Please pick up the prepack communion elements and prepare your own elements.

. Thank you for your support with your gifts. As we give our offering to the Lord, let us offer up our whole lives and our hearts.

As we come into the presence of our God, let us calm down our hearts and minds, and focus on our Lord.

Lighting up the Advent Candle Hope Is A Star (BOP#119)

Vs. 1: Hope is a star that shines in the night
Leading us on till the morning is bright
When God is a child there's joy in our song
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong
And none shall be afraid

Advent Call to Worship

One: Advent is a time for waiting.

All: We wait for God, who appears like a tender branch growing from a stump.

One: Advent is a time for hoping.

All: We wait for God, who comes with justice and righteousness.

One: Advent is a time to worship.

All: We wait for God, praising the One who comes to fulfil promises.

Praise song – O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Vs. 1 O Come O Come Emmanuel And ransom captive Israel That mourns in lonely exile here Until the Son of God appear	Vs. 2 O Come our wisdom from on high Who ordered all things mightily To us the path of knowledge show and teach us in her ways to go	Vs. 3 O Come the branch of Jesse's tree: Free them from Satan's tyranny That trust Your mighty power to save and give them victory over the grave
Vs. 4 O Come O Key of David Come and open wide our heavenly home Make safe the way that leads on high and close the path to misery	Vs. 5 O Come desire of nations Bind in one the hearts of all mankind O bid our sad divisions cease And be Yourself our King of peace	Chorus Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you O Israel

Prayer For 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.

This time we come to you in prayer that you taught us how to pray: (The 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.**

Words of Assurance

Sisters and brothers in Christ at St. Andrew's, The One who comes with justice also comes with mercy. The God of Judgment is truly the Christ of compassion. God offers us forgiveness today, in the hope we will receive it gladly. Do not be afraid but rejoice in the God who comes to us.

Prayer for Illumination:

Spirit of God, move within us and among us today, to open God's Word, read and proclaimed, for us. Shine a clear light to guide us to your truth. Just as we read the signs of the seasons, help us to discern and understand the signs that are in your Word, pointing us to Christ, your Living Word. Amen.

Scripture: Isaiah 9:2-7

2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined.

3 You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.

4 For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

5 For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

6 For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

"This is the word of the Lord / Thanks be to God."

SERMON: Meaning of Christmas

Title: Advent 1 – Meaning of Christmas

Today's title is "Meaning of Christmas."

Beginning of Christmas season is called Advent.

The word Advent comes from the Latin adventus, meaning "arrival" or "coming" from the word ad venire (ad – "to" venire – "come") Advent is a reminder of how the Jewish people waited for the Messiah and how Christians and Messianic Jews wait for the second coming of Christ, today.

Advent marks the start of a season of **preparation that looks forward to the celebration of Christmas and the second coming of Christ**. It is a time of reflection in preparing our hearts for the coming of Christ. We remember how our Saviour humbled Himself to be born as a baby and to live among those He would save. We remember the perfect life Jesus lived doing the will of His Father, His sacrificial death on the cross, and how He was raised from the dead three days later, having paid the penalty in order to save all who would believe. Christians remember Jesus' promise to return again one day and restore everything fully. This season invokes feelings of expectation and hope!

Starting today, we will be talking about Hope, Preparation, Joy, Love, and on Christmas eve, CHRIST.

Week 1 – hope (or promise)

Week 2 – Preparation (or waiting or prophecy)

Week 3 – Joy (or peace)

Week 4 – Love (or adoration)

On Christmas Eve – Christ

Why do people celebrate advent with a **wreath and candles**?

The Advent wreath first appeared in Germany in 1839. A Lutheran minister working at a mission for children created a wreath out of the wheel of a cart. He placed twenty small red candles and 4 large white candles inside the ring. The red candles were lit on weekdays and the 4 white candles were lit on Sundays.

Eventually, the Advent wreath was created out of evergreens, **symbolizing everlasting life in the midst of winter and death.** The circle reminds us of God’s unending love and the eternal life He has given us. Advent candles are usually nestled in the evergreen wreath. Additional decorations, like holly and berries are the new life that Jesus brings through His resurrection. Families begin lighting a candle on the fourth Sunday before Christmas, and they light another candle each subsequent Sunday.

The **first candle** symbolizes **HOPE** and is called the “**Prophet’s Candle.**” The prophets of the Old Testament, especially, Isaiah, waited in hope for the Messiah’s arrival. (that’s why I chose today’s text.)

The **second candle** represents **FAITH** and is called “**Bethlehem’s candle.**” Micah had foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, which is also the birthplace of King David.

The **3rd candle** symbolizes **JOY** and is called the “**Shepherd’s Candle.**” To the shepherd’s great joy, the angels announced that Jesus came for humble, unimportant people like them, too.

The **4th candle** represents **PEACE** and is called the “**Angel’s candle.**” The angels announced that Jesus came to bring peace. He came to bring people closer to God and to each other again.

The **5th candle** represents light and purity and is called “**Christ’s candle.**” It is placed in the middle and is lit on Christmas Day (Or Christmas Eve)

So, we talked about Christmas wreath and the candles, and the meaning of Advent.

Now, I am going to talk about the Calendar date for Christmas.

Most of us today probably can’t imagine Christmas on any other day than December 25th, but it wasn’t always that way. In fact, for the first 3 centuries of Christianity’s existence, Jesus Christ’s birth was not celebrated at all. The religion’s most significant holidays were **Epiphany** on January 6th, which commemorated the arrival of the Magi after Jesus’ birth, and **Easter**, which celebrated Jesus’ resurrection. **The first official mention of December 25 as a holiday honoring Jesus’ birthday appears in an early Roman calendar from 336 AD.**

But, was Jesus really born on December 25th? NO. The Bible does not mention his exact birthday, and the Nativity story contains conflicting clues. For example, the presence of shepherds in the field at night with their sheep suggest a spring birth. When church officials settled on December 25th at the end of the 3rd century, they wanted the date to coincide with

existing pagan festival **honouring Saturn (the Roman god of agriculture) and Mithra (the Persian god of light)**. That way, it became easier to convince Rome's pagan subjects to accept Christianity as the empire's official religion.

The celebration of Christmas spread throughout the Western world over the next several centuries, but many Christians continued to view Epiphany and Easter as more important. Some, including the Puritans of colonial New England, even banned the observance of Christ's birth because they viewed its traditions as linked to paganism. The offering of gifts and decorating trees are pagan traditions. In the early days of the United States, celebrating Christmas was considered a British custom and fell out of style following the American Revolution. It was not until 1870 that Christmas became a federal holiday. So, it's pretty new tradition.

These days, Christmas has become a secularized and commercialized season. But, there's a saying. **"the abuse of something shouldn't be allowed to destroy its proper use."** The best cure is for Christians to celebrate the real meaning of Christmas.

So, how can we do that? And What should we pray for during Advent honouring the true meaning of Christmas?

1. Pray for attentiveness to what truly matters, without being distracted by trivial things.
2. Pray opportunities to learn something new regularly.
3. Pray for discernment of how God would like you to set your priorities and the ability to focus on them consistently to fulfill His purposes in your life.
4. Pray for the grace to be able to rest, become aware of God's presence, and enjoy it.
5. Pray for strong relationships with other people in the bond of loving community.
6. Pray for peace in all situations, no matter what the circumstances.
7. Pray for an enlivened imagination that helps you contribute to the world in creative ways.
8. Pray for freedom from all that burdens you – past mistakes, fears, destructive habits, hurts other people have inflicted, and more.
9. Pray for joy and a sense of humor.
10. Pray for confidence in God's love for you and trust in His power to work things out for the best in your life.
11. Pray for a clear mind and the ability to clearly communicate what you value to others.
12. Pray for purity so you can grow as a person and encounter God more fully.
13. Pray for openness to the Holy Spirit's guidance.
14. Pray for a genuine awareness of God's grace in your life and the humility to extend grace to others.
15. Pray for a passion to pursue justice.

What topics do you like? We will continue to talk about the meaning of Christmas in following weeks. Is everyone getting the community email every week? I am sending the whole worship script every week. So, if you want to go back to these prayer topics, please use the worship script.

As we wait for the Lord's coming and celebrate the birth of Jesus, may our hearts and our minds and our faith come closer to God.

Let us pray.

Gracious and loving Father God, thank you for the hope we have in you. You are our source of hope and our source of life. You alone are our true hope. As we worship you and as we wait for your coming, fill our hearts with truth and true hope in you. There are too many things in our minds hindering us to focus on you. Clear our minds. Or at least, help us feel the need of you at this season, so we may take the first step closer toward you. We believe in you. Strengthen our faith. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

The Lord's Table THIS is time for the Lord's Table.

As we come to this table, we are reminded that this is the table of Jesus Christ, a banquet prepared for everyone. All who seek to be nourished and sustained in the journey of faith, all who seek wholeness and compassionate paths to peace and justice, are welcome here.

(Great Prayer of Thanksgiving:) **(Please say BOLD print together)**

L: The Lord be with you. **P: And also, with you.**

L: Lift up your hearts. **P: We lift them to the Lord.**

L: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **P: It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

L: Blessed are you, Breath of peace, Giver of all life, Source of love that knows no boundaries. Through the words of your prophets, you gave your people hope by promising them the Redeemer. And now we rejoice that in your Son, Jesus Christ, the Saviour has come and will come again in power and glory making all things new. In excitement and hope, we wait for you. O Come, Emmanuel. **We lift our hearts in joyful praises.**

(Sanctus) Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might, Heaven and earth are full of Your glory, Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

L: Holy and merciful God, you gave your Son for the life of the world, who, being truly and eternal God, took flesh and became human for us and for our salvation. Not as we ought but as we are able, we offer you heartfelt thanks for his incarnation, for his life on earth, for his suffering and death upon the cross, for his resurrection from the dead, for his glorious return to your right hand until he comes again in glory. With our whole hearts, **we proclaim the mystery of faith:**

P: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

L: By your Word and Spirit, O God, sanctify these your own gifts of bread and wine, that the bread which we break may be to us a communion in the body of Christ, and the cup of blessing which we bless may be a communion in the blood of Christ. In union with Christ and the whole church in heaven and on earth, we present ourselves to you, O God, to be a living and holy sacrifice.

Through Christ, by Christ, with Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory is yours, O God and Father Almighty.

Breaking of the BREAD and Pouring the WINE – prepare your Bread and Wine

Take, eat, remember, and believe that the precious body of our Lord Jesus Christ was given for the complete forgiveness of all our sins. (BREAD)

“This is the **body** of Christ, broken for you.” (Let us take it)

Take, drink, remember, and believe that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was shed for the complete forgiveness of all our sins. (CUP)

“This is the **blood** of Christ, poured out for you.” (Let us drink it)

Prayer after Communion:

We thank you, God, for breaking into our world and pouring into our lives and our experiences. We thank you, God, for this meal of thanksgiving and the stories of love, grace, and hope. We thank you, God, for your salvation. Your love is all around us. While we wait for your birth celebration and while we wait for you to return to us to renew everything and make whole again. Thank you for the hope we have in our hearts. Magnify our hope in you as we worship you and wait for you.

Beautiful God, awesome God, we thank you for your presence among us. As we come and pray to you at this time, fill our hearts with you. O come, o come, Emmanuel, God with us.

We pray for our people, your precious church. There are too many people suffering from their physical pains. Backpain, cancer, breathing problems, legs, dementia, and more. Loving Father God, you are good. There are reasons and purposes for all the things that seem not too great for our eyes. Help us have your eyes and heart. Help us have faith in your goodness and give us strength to be in you, stay with you. Hold us with your loving arms, almighty arms, with your unending and unfathomable love for each and everyone of us. Place your hands upon us and heal us. Restore our strength. Restore our faith. Restore our hearts. Restore our joy. Christ came to be with us. With you, in your light, there's no pain or tears. Help our faith, Lord. With your love, help us step down from the throne of our lives and let you sit and take the control of our lives.

God with us, Emmanuel, God. Fill our hearts with joy and excitement and thankfulness. Just for you, we have reason to be hopeful beyond everything we are experiencing. Be praised and be glorified through our own lives. In Jesus' precious and beautiful and powerful name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering: This is the time for offering.

We make our 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. Let us pray for our offering.

Offering prayer:

Holy and Righteous God, we offer our gifts with humble hearts, knowing the need in your world is great and our gifts alone will never fill that need. We offer our gifts in hope that you will bless them and use them to help fulfil your purpose revealed in Jesus Christ, Saviour of us all. Use us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Song for the Journey BOP#109 All earth is waiting

Vs. 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 cried out for justice and searches for the truth	Vs. 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
Vs.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	Vs. 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

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world. Have the hope in the Lord. Jesus came for us and he is for you. He died for all humankind, but he would have done it for yourself alone. He loves you. Be in his love.

Benediction

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, And the Love of God, And the intimate fellowship of the Holy Spirit, Be with us all, now and always. Amen.