

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth**  
**December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020**  
**Fourth Sunday in Advent**  
**Guest Worship Leader: Rev. Beryl Orok**

**Call to Worship**

The God who speaks comfort to us call us here.

**The God who addresses us with tenderness meets us here.**

The God who guides us with gentleness cares for us here.

**We came to prepare a way for the Lord.**

We come to ready ourselves for the transformation of our lives.

**For the Glory of God will be revealed, and all people will see it.**

**Amen**

**Prayer of Invocation**

God of Love, we come into Your presence with the awareness that  
 Your love for us is from everlasting to everlasting.

Your love penetrates to the depth of our souls. There is nothing to  
 compare to such love.

You loved us before we were even born, and You will love us  
 throughout our lives and into eternity.

Fill us to overflowing with Your loving presence this day, and help us  
 to love others, as we are loved by You. **Amen**

**Hymn #706:**

**“Come, Let Us Sing”**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XCSx7ZZ3-2I>

1. Come, let us sing of a wonderful love,  
 tender and true, tender and true;  
 out of the heart of the Father above,  
 streaming to me and to you:  
 wonderful love, wonderful love  
 dwells in the heart of the Father above.

2. Jesus the Saviour this gospel to tell  
 joyfully came, joyfully came,  
 came with the helpless and hopeless to dwell,  
 sharing their sorrow and shame:  
 seeking the lost, seeking the lost,  
 saving, redeeming at measureless cost.

3. Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet;

why do they roam? why do they roam?  
 Love only waits to forgive and forget;  
 home, weary wanderers, home:  
 wonderful love, wonderful love  
 dwells in the heart of the Father above.

4. Come to my heart, O thou wonderful love;  
 come and abide, come and abide,  
 lifting my life till it rises above  
 envy and falsehood and pride:  
 seeking to be, seeking to be  
 lowly and humble, a learner of thee.

### **Call to Confession**

Psalm 51: 1

Let us pray: Have mercy on us, O God, according to Your unfailing love, according to Your great compassion blot out our transgressions. Now let us take a few moments in silence to recall our personal sins.

### **Prayer of Confession –Responsive**

Give ear merciful God, to our confession this day

**Forgive us, O God**

Forgive us the wrong things we have done

**Forgive us, O God**

Forgive us the things we have left undone;

For the people we have hurt and the relationships we have broken

**Forgive us, O God**

For the Injustices we ignore in our society

**Forgive us, O God**

We are in such need of Your grace Lord

**May the blood of your son, Jesus, cover us and so remove our sins as far as the east is from the west.**

We are so undeserving, but we come to You in faith today and believe You have forgiven us and will restore us to right relationship with You

Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. **Amen**

### **Assurance of Pardon**

God has given ear to our confession today.

In the name of Jesus Christ, you and I are saved; saved from our sins; saved by the love sacrifice of our Savior, whose steadfast love is gifted to the world.

**Amen.**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**Our Father, Who art in heaven  
Hallow'ed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come;  
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive our debts as we  
forgive those who have debts against us.  
Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from the evil one.  
For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory  
Forever and ever amen.**

**Hymn #119: "Hope is a star" (No lyrics on screen)**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iuZgdGD\\_Aq4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iuZgdGD_Aq4)

1. Hope is a star that shines in the night,  
leading us on till the morning is bright.

Refrain:

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.

2. Peace is a ribbon that circles the earth,  
giving a promise of safety and worth.

3. Joy is a song that welcomes the dawn,  
telling the world that the Saviour is born.

4. Love is a flame that burns in our heart.  
Jesus has come and will never depart.

### **"Lighting the Advent Candle of Love"**

People of love, Jesus desires followers who are not afraid to risk everything and respond to his invitation to enter the Kingdom of God.

**Make us those loving disciples.**

Jesus longs for his disciples to overcome prejudice and fear. Jesus wants bold and loving companions to walk with him on his path.

**Make us those loving companions.**

Jesus yearns for his friends to listen to the Holy Spirit to discover his creative ways to invite seekers and the lost into loving community.

**Make us those loving friends.**

**(Light the Candle of Love)**

Let us pray together:

**God of love, we thank you for the invitation to live in your love.  
Bring light to our path as we await the coming of the Lord of  
love. Amen.**

**Responsive Reading**

**Psalm 89: 1-4, 19-26**

I will sing of the LORD's great love forever;  
with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known  
through all generations.

**I will declare that your love stands firm forever,  
that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself**

You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one,  
I have sworn to David my servant,

**'I will establish your line forever  
and make your throne firm through all generations.**

Once you spoke in a vision,  
to your faithful people you said:  
"I have bestowed strength on a warrior;  
I have raised up a young man from among the people.

**I have found David my servant;  
with my sacred oil I have anointed him.**

My hand will sustain him;  
surely my arm will strengthen him.

**The enemy will not get the better of him;  
the wicked will not oppress him.**

I will crush his foes before him  
and strike down his adversaries.

**My faithful love will be with him,  
and through my name his horn will be exalted.**

I will set his hand over the sea,  
his right hand over the rivers.

**He will call out to me, 'You are my Father,  
my God, the Rock my Savior**

**Ministry of Music:**

**“A Candle is Burning”**

**By Richard & Jay Hendry**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O\\_GAPq0REV0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_GAPq0REV0)

**Scripture Reading:**

**Luke 1: 26-36**

### **Birth of Jesus Foretold**

**26** In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, **27** to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. **28** And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” **29** But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. **30** And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. **31** And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. **32** He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, **33** and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” **34** And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” **35** And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. **36** And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **Prayer for Illumination**

Gracious God;

By the presence of Your Holy Spirit, bless this our proclamation of Your Word; that we may receive the gift of Your grace and share it with those who we will meet on this journey, to which we are called. Speak to us this day, for we are listening. **Amen**

**“The Gift of Love”**

## Love Never Fails

There are many books written, commentaries and documentaries shared' movies portraying and songs sung about love.

But today; we focus on God's love; the only true and pure love; the greatest love of all! There is none to compare with God's love.

John 3; 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son; so that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

This scripture verse is one known far and wide, by most every Christian, in every generation.

My friend's dad, who came to know the Lord at the young age of 78, posted this scripture reference in the back window of his little Volkswagen car. He took every opportunity he could to share the love of God. He used to go to a local park in his town and sit to read by the water. There was often a group of young boys there practicing their skate boarding skills. One of them inquired of him one day why he had John 3:16 displayed on his back windshield and what was its meaning.

He told the young man his personal story of salvation; of experiencing God's love through Jesus. Some of the others then began to ask questions. He developed quite a following in that group, who eagerly asked questions and listened. It was the greatest joy in his life to be able to tell these young guys about the Lord. His life was so overtaken by the Love of God and I'm sure those young guys felt it in him.

Today we focus on God's love; Agape love. Agape is that transcendent love of God; the highest form of love and is contrasted with eros, or erotic love and philia, or brotherly love.

Agape love, or God's love, for all humanity is expressed throughout the scriptures. It is indeed the theme of the entire Bible.

It has been said that the Bible is God's love letter to us. It made all the difference to me in how I read and interpreted the Bible, when I heard this as a young Christian.

We can feel the love God extended towards us. My friend's dad was so filled with God's love for him, that it just naturally spilled over to others. God and love cannot be separated; God who sacrificed His only Son to redeem us and restore us to right relationship with Him. Such love is so underserved and sad to say, often so unreciprocated.

There are so many scripture references to love and our obligation to love others, because we are loved by God.

A young man in seminary came to Horatio Bonar one day. "Dr. Bonaire, I love to preach, but nothing happens when I preach?"

Dr. Bonar looked intently at the eager young man in front of him and answered "You love to preach young man, but do you love people?"

Therein lies the crux of the matter.

1Corinthians 13: 1-13

1 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am y a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to be burned, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered and it keeps no record of wrongs.

6 Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices in the truth.

7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres.

8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part.

10 But when completeness comes, what is in part disappears.

11 When I was a child, I talked like a child; I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.

12 For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

13 So now faith, hope and love abide; but the greatest of these is love.

This is God's Word and it has told us plainly that we can do many wonderful things in God's name, but if we do not love— our actions are like empty brass and clanging cymbals.

1 Corinthians. 16: 14 – tells us we are to do all things with love and 1 Peter 4:8-tells us, "Above all, love one another, because love covers over a multitude of sins."

John 15:12 puts further emphasis on the admonitions to love; "My command is this; Love one another as I have loved you."

Hosea, the Old Testament prophet, records God's words about the Israelite nation in Chapter 11:4, "I led them with cords of human kindness and with bands of love!" This verse tells us God led the Israelite people with kind, loving, tender ways, while they were in the wilderness; until He brought them to Canaan's land. Sometimes we feel like we are on a grueling journey in life where we can't see the outcome or the destination. We can be assured, that as God led the Israelite nation, who was a rebellious lot for sure, that He will lead us, in like manner; in kind, loving ways.

God loves us with an everlasting love and we, if we allow Him, are gently guided by that divine love. In fact, we are held in the embrace of God. Our names are engraved on the palms of His hands; right next to the prints of the nails that pierced Him on our behalf.



All our willfulness, our stubbornness, our outright refusal and neglect to walk the path of peace and justice, cannot destroy His love for us. We are loved eternally. There is nothing in us that merits that love and we cannot earn it. But acceptance of it can change our way of living. Love given and received is transformative. A life filled with love ---of God, of self and of others, is in stark contrast to the life without His love.

In fact; it is God, who in His creative mastery, made us able to love and be loved. What a precious gift to humanity.

Living in this gift of love, imparts to us, the gift of being able to care for others. Yes, love will cost us something.

There is a story about an elderly woman living in poverty who owed more than she could ever pay and her rent was way overdue.

One day there was a knock at the door. The old woman was so frightened and thought that it was her landlord, coming to collect rent. The knocking persisted and became more urgent. She was so fearful, that she crawled under the bed in sheer panic. Would he break the door down and take even the bed she hid under to sell for money to pay her rent? She was imagining being homeless. But the knock just persisted; so finally, she decided she might as well face him.

But when she opened the door, she stood face to face with a clergyman. She knew of him from the parish down the street, but she had never attended there.

The pastor greeted her with a pleasant hello and held out a receipt that read; paid in full. "I have come to tell you that we heard of your situation, and we gathered together as friends and neighbors and paid off your rent debt. We want you to know that we are offering your assistance, should you need it again too!

That's God's love being exhibited in a tangible way.

We have to acknowledge though that some folks just aren't easy to love!

I like this little story about St. Theresa of Avila and her relationship with the Mother Superior of the Abby.

Apparently, this Mother superior, whose power within the Abby was absolute, was being particularly difficult and irksome.

Theresa was having a terrible time getting along with her.

One evening in her prayers, Theresa spoke frankly to the Lord; “Lord, she prayed; if I had my way that woman wouldn’t be Mother Superior here.”

There was silence, finally God answered, “Theresa, if I had my way, she wouldn’t be here either.”

Because we are in the season of Advent, in anticipation of Christmas, we need to look at the topic of love in a few of the lives of those involved in the Christmas story.

Let’s begin with Joseph and his love for Mary; which is an incredibly important part of the story.

. Matthew 1:18-19 “Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place this way. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.”

You might be thinking –Joseph was engaged to Mary, so of course, he loved her. After all, this was the woman he was going to marry! But, in that day and time, being in love did not always dictate the action of marriage.

Marriages were typically arranged affairs; orchestrated by the parents of the spouses, often for social or economic reasons; never mind romance.

But we know Joseph did love Mary and it was his choice to marry her. His response to learning that Mary was pregnant, during their engagement, tells it all.

You see Joseph had several options; he could go ahead and marry Mary anyways; even though he knew the child was not his. But, as a man

committed to God, that went against his convictions, and God came first in Joseph's life.

He could have had her dragged before the tribunal and had her tried for adultery. This would have been a vindictive act; resulting in the least, in Mary's public disgrace, and at worst, a death sentence by stoning. So, as the Scripture we just read tells us, he decided to divorce her quietly. In his mind, that would be what was best for both of them. They would both be spared the trial experience, and it would be a loving remedy; which would result in the least shame and humiliation.

You see love; even when wounded always wants to protect.

1Corinthians 13:7 says " Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres."

In the end, we know, that God sent a dream to Joseph explaining Mary's situation to him. He trusted God and married Mary; remaining celibate until after Jesus was born.

He was with Mary at the birth of Jesus, supporting her and exhibiting his love and devotion to her.



Then there was Mary's love for Jesus.

Luke 2:6-7 "While they were there in Bethlehem, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. And she wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the inn for them.



Here we have a picture of a loving mother; tenderly caring for her newborn—a natural instinct arising in Mary. After all, she had carried this baby in her body for 9 months. She knew the words the angel spoke to her; that this baby would free the people from their sin. Elizabeth had pronounced blessing over her; above all women, because God had favored her with becoming the mother of His Son.

In all of this, Mary was still a very human mother, who loved her baby.

During the visit of Mary, Joseph and Jesus to the temple, to fulfill the requirements of the Law of Moses for purification for Mary; Simeon gave Mary cause to ponder.

In Luke 2: 34-35 Simeon tells Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed, so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed ---and a sword will pierce your own soul too.” These words warn Mary that she will suffer along with her son, as He fulfills God’s work.

In his early teens, when Jesus was at the temple, Mary and Joseph were frantic to find him. Her boy was lost! What a terrible feeling for a mother who loved her son. His actions were not always easy for her to understand, but she played a mother’s role throughout His life and ministry.

At the wedding feast of Canaan; it was Mary, who told them, “Whatever he tells you to do, do it.” Because of her instructions, the way was paved for Jesus to perform his first miracle; turning water in to wine.

At the crucifixion; Mary suffered deeply, as Jesus died and his last earthly, loving gesture to his mother was to ensure she would be cared for by John.

Throughout His earthly life Mary, as I said, didn't always understand his actions and choices, but she loved him; as God knew she would, when He selected her to be the mother of His only begotten son; the personified, incarnate gift of God to the world!

Love leads us to action; eager to serve, but God's love in us never leaves us unchanged or unchallenged; but rather has a significant effect on us. The Samaritan woman, after encountering Jesus at the well, left her water pots and went in to the village to tell others about meeting Jesus. These people, she was now approaching to tell about meeting Jesus, were the same people she was avoiding, and the reason she was at the well in the heat of the day, when no one else would be. She was compelled by the love of God to share what Jesus had done for her.

*love is...*



*...what helps you through hard times.*

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*love is...*



*... an emotional workout.*

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New Zealand artist Kim Casali created a series of cartoons in the 1960's. These originated from a series of love notes from her husband. She published them first in booklets. In 1970 they appeared in various newspapers. There was always the caption: love is, followed by an expression of endearment or encouragement.

She had some really cute ones! Romantics at heart

loved them, and I will say no more; lest I incriminate myself!

Today I would submit to you that Jesus' entire life can be entitled "Love Is."

Love is \_---Jesus holding little children close to him and saying "such is the kingdom of God."

Love is ---Jesus standing at the tomb of Lazarus and weeping with Mary and Martha.

Love is--- Jesus saying to an adulteress, “I do not condemn you, go and sin no more.”

Love is –Jesus reaching out and touching a leper and making him clean.

Love is –Jesus dining with a despised tax collector named Zacchaeus, and by this friendship, transforming Zacchaeus’ life, from one mastered by greed, to one mastered by grace.

Love is –Jesus, as He told of the Good Samaritan who crossed the road to help an injured man.

Love is ---Jesus, driving from the Temple, those who would profane the sacred things of God, and take advantage of others.

Love is—Jesus, sharing a conversation with a Samaritan woman, breaking all social norms of the day.

Love is –Jesus, holding the cup and the loaf saying,” This is my body, broken for you, eat, and this is my blood, the blood of the new covenant shed for you, drink this in memory of Me.”

Love is ---Jesus, praying from the cross, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.”

Love is –Jesus, after the resurrection, appearing to the disciples and commissioning them to go and make disciples of all men; and reminding them, “Lo, I am with you always.”

John 3: 16 For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have eternal life. Such love ---we can’t fathom that kind of love; but we can be the recipients of it.

If you ever doubt God loves you –just think about the Christmas story and the life of Jesus.

Think about these things:

About the Baby Jesus, born in a humble cattle shed;

About Jesus, the boy, teaching His Father's word in the temple;

About Jesus, the Man, teaching and preaching, healing those who came to Him for help,

About Jesus the Savior –who died on that cross for you.

And finally;

About Jesus the King, who is risen and ascended into heaven, where He is seated at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us, and who will come again to take us unto Himself.

These words in Romans 8: 38-39 say it best of all

I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus Our Lord.

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good and His love endures forever Psalm 107:1

Thanks be to God for His amazing love!

**Hymn:**

**“Mary Did You Know?”**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXmfkFoX-PE>

Mary did you know that your baby boy would one day walk on water?

Mary did you know that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters?

Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?

This child that you've delivered, will soon deliver you.

Mary did you know that your baby boy would give sight to a blind man?

Mary did you know that your baby boy would calm a storm with his hands?

Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod?  
When you kiss your little baby, you've kissed the face of God.

The blind will see, the deaf will hear, and the dead will live again.  
The lame will leap, the dumb will speak, the praises of the lamb—

Mary did you know that your baby boy is Lord of all creation?  
Mary did you know that your baby boy would one day rule the nations?  
Did you know that your baby boy is heaven's perfect Lamb?  
This sleeping child you're holding is the great--I--- AM---

### **Offering**

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3)  
**We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer.** This note from our treasurer.

**E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. [standrewsperthoffering@gmail.com](mailto:standrewsperthoffering@gmail.com) Please include your Offering Envelope # in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (eg Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.**

### **Invitation to Offering:**

**Sisters and brothers, God's ancient, steadfast love is not a love that simply waits for us to stop wandering and return home. God's love comes seeking us, and gives to us the gift of Jesus, so that we might have life abundant.**

**Our giving this morning, whether we have been lost and wandering, or secure and safe, expresses our firm conviction that God is with us; Emmanuel!**

**Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude, and in heartfelt praise for His great love!**

### **Offertory Prayer**

Loving God we are grateful to have this opportunity to give back a portion of what You have blessed us with. May this offering be used for the furtherance of Your kingdom to bring blessing to many. **Amen**



## Pastoral Prayer

Loving, Eternal God:

Our hearts are carrying many burdens today and so we bring to You those things that weigh heavily on our hearts; confident that You hear us when we pray, and that You care about us.

Father we are all concerned about the pandemic as we hear the numbers of those infected rising steadily, day after day, at an alarming rate. We pray God that at this time more people will turn to You and we will have opportunity to share the gospel of hope, peace, joy and love, that only Jesus can offer.

We pray for the leaders of our Government at all levels, federal, provincial and municipal that You would give them wisdom as to how to best manage this situation.

We continue to pray for all those involved in our education system that they would be safe teachers, students, custodial persons, and parents. We hear of outbreaks in our schools in our area and it creates anxiety for many. Holy Spirit be with them to bring peace.

We are mindful of those with connection to our congregation specifically; but all those, who are residing in long term care and senior's residences, who are isolated from their loved ones. May those who care for them be Your hands extended to them during this difficult time.

Like never before our world needs you Lord!

For the Leadership of St. Andrew's, we pray for discernment, and direction. Thank you for those who labor faithfully in various capacities to ensure the needs of the congregation are best met.

For all those listed in our Prayers for the People; some with encouraging reports of late; but all seeking healing. May the healing virtue of Jesus Christ flow through their bodies. Thank you for their faith, which is an example to all of us.

We are forever grateful Lord for Your loving presence in our lives.

And so, we pray in Jesus Name **Amen.**

## Closing Hymn #707:

## "More Love to Thee"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jmhTUT-aQZc>

More love to Thee

More love to Thee

Hear Thou the prayer I make

On bended knee

This is my earnest plea

More love, O Christ to Thee  
 More love to Thee  
 More love to Thee  
 Then shall my latest breath  
 Whisper Thy praise  
 This be the parting cry  
 My heart shall raise

This still my prayer shall be  
 More love, O Christ to Thee  
 More love to Thee  
 More love to Thee

This still my prayer shall be  
 More love, O Christ to Thee  
 More love to Thee  
 More love to Thee

More love to Thee  
 More love to Thee  
 More love to You, Sweet Jesus  
 More love to Thee

### **Benediction**

Be People of Love.

Let love live in your heart and share the love of Christ with all you meet.  
 Share love by truly loving those you see regularly in your family and your community.

Share love by praying for the world.

Let us be Advent people sharing hope, peace, joy and love with all those we meet.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord and each other

**Amen**