



Hope

Peace

Love

Joy

Advent and Christmas 2021

Pembina Parish

Advent greetings. The season of Advent is a time of waiting, of anticipation, and hope. And so, we gather around the ancient story that is born of hope and longing. A story that draws us into God's peace, Christ's love, and a Spirit of deep joy.

We invite you to join us in worship and reflection during this season. Most of the scripture texts and reflective readings that follow are drawn directly from those that will be used in our worship services with a few extras just for you at home. You may wish to light a candle each week of Advent as you take time to read, reflect, and pray.

May this season be a time of making room. Making room in our minds and hearts; room also in our life together. We pray that God's word would be born in us anew so that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, God's splendour might shine in us and through us.

Let us draw near to the Word of the Lord.

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Nov. 28 – Advent 1

“The days are surely coming, says the LORD...”

Prayer

God of the cosmos, of earth, moon, and sun, God of the distant, of galaxies and big bangs, God of the past, of history’s story passed down to us, God of the future, still to be written, still to be cast, may we approach afresh the old, old story of incarnation: God with us.

Give us the enthusiasm and excitement of a child opening the first door of their new Advent calendar. May we see beyond the story to the timeless hope and expectation that you are with us, always, no matter what. May we see in the signs around us glimmers of you at work, and may we never cease in anticipating that your kingdom will come and your will be done. And so we pray in the way of Jesus who came to make your kingdom real on this earth. Our Father...

Scripture: Jeremiah 33:14-16, Luke 21:25-36

Reflection - The Hope In Waiting

Thinking of the future. Looking to tomorrow. Will it get any better? Global pandemic, climate crisis, history shaping our lives, creating fear and uncertainty.

Thinking of the present. Looking to here and now. And I am waiting... Waiting for what? The signs of coming out of the troubled times? The light at the end of the tunnel? Still uncertain. Still seeking. Deep within my soul I cannot help wondering is there hope in waiting? Is there hope to come?

Spending days searching for hope surrounded by the silence in waiting. We do not have to be alone. We do not have to wonder endlessly. Our hope comes when we remember the One. Our hope comes

when we seek the One. Our hope comes in the presence of the One.

Lord God, the One. Only you are our hope. You are our hope in waiting.

As you reflect this week, think about what you long to see change in the world. Write your thoughts down and place them in your Bible.

Blessing

In the sun and moon and stars, we look for God. In the seasons and in the trees, we look for God. In the places where we live and move, we look for God. May God be revealed as we look and long and hope. Amen.



Dec. 5 – Advent 2

“See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me...”

Prayer

Blessed are you, the Lord God of Israel and all the nations, for you have looked favourably on all of your children, and you have redeemed them. You raised up for us a mighty one from the house of David, one who would bring salvation and peace. May we join with the prophetic words spoken across generations that inspire us with hope: that from amongst us, in your very image, are being raised up those who will speak truth, who will serve without fear, those who, even today, like John long before, are preparing the way of the Lord, seeking to build a kingdom that shines light in the darkness, breaking the dawn upon us, and guiding us all in the way of peace. In Advent hope we pray in the way of Jesus who is our hope. Our Father...

Scripture: Malachi 3:1-4; Luke 1:1-25, 57-80

Reflection - The Silence In Waiting

There is a silence in waiting:
stillness,
cleansing,
renewal.

It centres the soul to the beginning.
There is an anticipation in waiting:
suspenseful;
beguiling;
profound.

It centres the soul to be ready.
There is a redemption in waiting:
joyful;
praising;
favourable.
It centres the soul to God.

Word who comes to us, Word who lives with us, Word who disturbs and heals: silence our chattering fears, waken our unconscious faith. (More Voices 20 “God of Still Waiting” vs.3)

In silence, consider what fears chatter within you. Invite God to still your fears and awaken your faith.

Blessing

Out of fear and into hope, God has called us. Out of stark clarity and into the mystery, God has called us. Out of distraction and into deep peace, God has called us. May God grant us the courage to walk into hope, into mystery, into peace today and tomorrow. Amen.



Dec. 12 – Advent 3

“I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming...”

Prayer

Loving God, wherever we are we gather our hearts in praise, hope, and thanks. As your beloved children, we come seeking the wisdom to know your desire for us, and to live as you have instructed. As a community of Christians, we give thanks for your eternal support for us as we try to be faithful in our attempts to be your church; to be a community of pilgrims, journeying together on the road towards the light of your glorious kingdom. We bear witness to that call as we pray in the way Jesus taught his friends and disciples. Our Father...

Scripture: Zephaniah 3:14-20, Luke 3:7-18

Reflection - The Preparation In Waiting

Messengers prepare the way, scanning the horizon, interpreting the signs, warning, announcing, guiding.

What are they announcing today? Of what are they warning? It is worth listening carefully for that one voice that pierces deeply through all our defences, signalling for us a way forward. Not built on whim or voyeurism or fancy, but on a solid foundation of grace that inhabits and love that transforms.

Pay attention to the messenger who is preparing the way. For then we might know the path we must follow and discover, along the way, the gifts that sustain and equip for the new work to which we are being called.

Consider what work or action God has called you to in the past. How has God invited you to turn or be transformed in the way of Jesus in your life?

Take time to pray for a person or group that you think is bringing support and care in the way of Jesus for those in your local community.

Blessing

From two coats to one, from gluttony to enough, we are invited to turn. From false striving and competition to deep love and connection, we are invited to turn. From defensiveness to repentance, we are invited to turn. As we go into our week, may we be guided in our turning. Turning to hope, turning to peace, turning to love as we prepare for the coming of Emmanuel, God with us. Amen.



Dec. 19 – Advent 4

“And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord..."”

Prayer

Holy God of Joy, we rejoice in the reality of who you are – Creator of heaven and earth, the One who gives food to the hungry, the One who enacts justice for the oppressed. We live within the joy of your love for us. Our contentment comes and goes. Our happiness ebbs and flows. Our feelings depend upon our circumstances, our physical health, our brain chemistry. But our joy is deeply rooted in our identity as your beloved children. Out of love for you we seek your kingdom of goodness, nourishment, and freedom and so we give thanks and pray in the way Jesus taught his friends and disciples, for we are his friends and disciples too. Our Father...

Scripture: Micah 5:2-5a, Luke 1:39-55

Reflection - The Transformation In Waiting

This is what hope looks like... Not squeezing our eyes tightly shut and believing everything will work out but persisting in the face of all the signs to the contrary that God’s promise holds true, that a glimmer of light will persist in the darkness, that the proud will be scattered, the lowly lifted up, the rich sent away empty handed, and the hungry will be fed.

How? By the work of those whose hope is in God: in God, who strengthens us for the fight that lies before us; in God, who gives us courage to never give up but to keep on reaching for the impossible; in God, who lives among us and walks beside us as we work to make a difference where we can, however we can!

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.

Consider where you have witnessed glimmers (or full-blown flames!) of God’s transformative power in the past. Where have you seen signs of true joy?

Blessing

The Lord is near, and we are witnesses. Witnesses to the dawning of Christ’s light in the world. May we go from this place with faces turned to the stable and the child who lies within, so that we might reflect the light, warmth, and love of new life among us. Amen.



Dec. 24 or 25 – Christmas

“Glory to God in the highest heaven...”

Prayer

Creating God, you turn night to light; your glory shines in the deepest darkness; your grace breaks the power that would keep us down. You are the giver of life and bringer of hope; answering the yearnings of our hearts. You point to a different way, where justice, righteousness, and peace blossom; where sorrow is swapped with rejoicing, and where joy abides forever. Great Giver of Gifts, this night we celebrate you. We wonder with shepherds, rejoice with angels. We hear again that ancient story made new in us once more that warms our hearts and reminds us of mercy, fashioned in flesh and bone. With the angels, and with countless generations through the ages, we cry: ‘Glory to God in the highest!’
Our Father...

Scripture: Isaiah 9:2-7, Luke 2:1-20

Reflection - The Love Born In Waiting

How can this happen tonight? How can the creator of the universe be stretched into skin?

Can you fit, all that... imagination? All that you, O God, have seen, from the dawn of light to this moment tonight.

Can you fit all that... emotion? You have been broken by previous generations, from wilderness and exodus, exile and beyond.

Can you fit all that... wisdom? That has designed commandments and spoken prophetic words, inspired psalmists and moved artists hands.

Can you fit all that... love? That has moved mountains and bent rainbows, counted the stars and named them with our names Can you fit all of that... into skin?

Tonight you do and you can. All of that and more, every hope and every ounce of love becomes flesh tonight. So as the darkness deepens and the hour stretches and the manger prepares, let us gather there and believe you can fit God into skin.

Blessing

God is born among us, God woven into us, God radiant beyond us. May we gladly take the joy and hope God offers in Jesus and share it generously this Christmas and always. Amen.