

**ZOOM Worship for, November 28, 2021  
First Sunday of Advent**

**Territorial Acknowledgment and Announcements**

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is situated upon traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron - Wyandot, the Haudenosaunee and later the Mississauga of the Credit First Nations. The territory is mutually covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibway and other allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.

Today, this remains the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in their community, and to share and respect Mother Earth.

**Centering Music: "Lo How A Rose" VU 8**

Lo, how a rose e'er blooming from tender stem hath sprung,  
of Jesse's lineage coming, as seers of old have sung.  
It came a blossom bright,  
amid the cold of winter, when half spent was the night.

Isaiah 'twas foretold it, the Rose I have in mind,  
with Mary we behold it, the virgin mother kind.  
To show God's love aright  
she bore for us a Saviour when half spent was the night.

**Call to Worship and Opening Prayer**

One: Come into the Advent waiting time, and listen for God's call.

Two: *God calls to us on our couches and in our kitchens,  
as we work and play and rest.*

One: Come into the Advent preparing time, and be attentive to our stories of faith.

Two: *We listen for stories of prophets and young women,  
for signs to come and signs of the time.*

One: We come into Advent celebrating God's hope in the world,

Two: *we come into Advent with excitement and anticipation.*

One: Now come into worship over your screen, or in your pew,

Two: *gathering in different ways to answer God's persistent invitation.*

One: Let us worship God together across distances and across the room,

Two: *God is with us in each place, and each moment.*

One: We pray together:

God of our waiting times and our anxious times.  
our preparing times and our restless times ,  
give us a the clarity to know your Advent path for us.  
Help us to see your vision of peace and wholeness  
in sweeping revelations and in tiny signs of hope.  
Stir our hearts that we might be a hopeful people,  
and keep us from growing weary of waiting,  
so that we may shine with your light as we walk  
our Advent path together.

Amen

**Opening Hymn: “Come Thou Long Expected Jesus” VU 2**

Come, thou long-expected Jesus,  
born to set thy people free:  
from our fears and sins release us,  
let us find our rest in thee.

Israel's strength and consolation,  
hope of all the earth thou art,  
dear desire of every nation,  
joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver;  
born a child and yet a king;  
born to reign in us for ever;  
now thy gracious kingdom bring.

By thine own eternal Spirit  
rule in all our hearts alone;  
by thine all-sufficient merit  
raise us to thy glorious throne.

**Lighting the Advent Candle of Hope**

One: Our journey to Christmas begins with a declaration of hope  
represented in the light of a small candle.  
In a world that continues to know pain and loss,  
fear and separation, we proclaim that hope is part of our lives.  
*The first Advent Candle is set alight*

Two: In a world filled with doubt, fear, and uncertainty,  
we are called to reflect God's hope so that it shines into the world.

One: It is a hope that does not rely on our physical presence together,  
but rather on the choices we make to continue to be community in new ways.

Two: Hope was a part of every prophet's declarations –  
hope that God's justice would be done,  
hope that the world might change.

One: Hope is found whenever hearts and hands share generously,

Two: hope is found when we face the future together knowing God  
journeys with us.

One: God grant us the courage to find and share this hope,

Two: as we prepare the way in our hearts and minds  
for the coming of the hope of the world  
Jesus, God-with-us, Emmanuel.

**All: Through our words and actions, may God's hope light up the world.**

**Sung Response: “Shine the Light of Your Love”**

Shine the light of your love, like a candle in the darkness of our lives.  
Shine the light of your love, Lord. Come and shine the light of your love.  
Come and shine the light of your love.

**Scripture Readings:**

Jeremiah 33:14–16

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'

Luke 21:25–36

The Coming of the Son of Man

'There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in a cloud" with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.'

Then he told them a parable: 'Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

'Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.'

**Choir: Shine the Light of your Love**

**Reflection: "Looking for Advent"**

**Hymn: "God of Still Waiting" MV 20**

God of still waiting,  
God of deep longing,  
God of the heart's true rest:  
hold us in fathomless peace,  
guard us with unwaning love.

Spirit of promise,  
Spirit of purpose,  
Spirit of ceaseless prayer:  
bathe us in life full and free,  
kindle our wonder and hope.

Word who comes to us,  
Word who lives with us,  
word who disturbs and heals:  
silence our chattering fears,  
waken our unconscious faith.

Word true and faithful,  
hope-bringing Spirit,

God of enfolding love:  
come in your fullness and grace,  
work through our lives for your praise.

**Offering:**

One: In this time of waiting and preparing,  
we bring, send, share what we have  
with grateful and hopeful hearts.

Two: *Accept, O God, this money offered,  
these gifts given,  
the goodwill of our hearts,  
that disappointment may be turned to hope,  
and worry may be turned to anticipation,  
as we await with wonder the birth of Christ. Amen.*

**Sung Response: tune 'Good King Wenceslas'**

**God of hope and God of peace,  
God of joy and loving,  
here we bring our gifts to share,  
humbled by your blessings.  
As we wait for Love's rebirth,  
hearts and minds preparing,  
bless the givers and the gifts,  
lights in this world's darkness.**

**Prayers of the People** *from the Iona Community*

One: You keep us waiting.  
You, the God of all time,  
want us to wait  
for the right time in which to discover  
who we are, where we must go,  
who will be with us, and what we must do.  
Thank you . . . for the waiting time.

Two: *You keep us looking.  
You, the God of all space,  
want us to look in all the right and wrong places  
for signs of hope,  
for people who are hopeless,  
for visions of a better world which will appear  
among the disappointments of the world we know.  
Thank you . . . for the looking time.*

One: You keep us loving.  
You, the God whose name is love,  
want us to be like you—  
to love the loveless and the unlovely and the unloveable;  
to love without jealousy or design or threat;  
and, most difficult of all,

to love ourselves.  
Thank you . . . for the loving time.

*Two: And in all this,  
you keep us.  
Through hard questions with no easy answers;  
through failing where we hoped to succeed  
and making an impact when we felt we were useless;  
through the patience and the dreams and the love of others;  
and through Jesus Christ and his spirit,  
you keep us.  
Thank you . . . for the keeping time,  
and for now,  
and for ever.  
Amen*

**The Lord's Prayer (sung) VU 959**

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 glory are yours  
now and forever. Amen

**Closing Hymn: "O Day of God, Draw Nigh" VU 688**

O day of God, draw nigh  
in beauty and in power,  
come with your timeless judgement now  
to match our present hour.

Bring to our troubled minds,  
uncertain and afraid,  
the quiet of a steadfast faith,  
calm of a call obeyed.

Bring justice to our land,  
that all may dwell secure,  
and finely build for days to come  
foundations that endure.

Bring to our world of strife  
your sovereign word of peace,  
that war may haunt the earth no more  
and desolation cease.

O day of God, draw nigh  
as at creation's birth;  
let there be light again, and set  
your judgements in the earth.

**Commissioning/Blessing**

May God, who sang the universe into being, go with you.  
May Christ, who is God's love song to the world, attend you.  
May the Holy Spirit continue to sing God's love  
into each and every heart, each and every day.

**Musical Benediction: "We Are Walking a Path of Hope" MV 221**

We are walking a path of hope,  
We are walking a path of hope,  
We are walking a path of hope,  
lead us home,  
lead us home.  
We are home.

**Reflection**  
**"Looking for Advent"**

Happy New Year! We are entering a brand new liturgical year as we enter the season of Advent. Here as we worship together, we celebrate Advent with our wreath lighting and with prayers and songs for the season, with a sense of anticipation, with preparation and sometimes with study or contemplation.

Outside the church community most people don't really observe Advent except as a countdown to the arrival of the gift-bearing Santa and Christmas Day. Advent Calendars filled with candy, toys or other treats have become very popular, with themes ranging from superheroes to snowy scenes to Santa – and even occasionally our Christmas story. This year I saw a wine advent calendar, with a small bottle to open each day in December! I do admit that those Advent calendars were a part of our family preparations for Christmas with my own children, but paired with active involvement in the Advent season as we lit our own family Advent wreath each Sunday, and added to our homemade felt Advent calendar each day that would eventually create the nativity scene when all the pieces were in place.

Yet even for a family (and church family) that intentionally includes our Christian faith and heritage in our Advent time, do we really observe Advent? Do we really take the time and patience needed to walk through each week, contemplating what hopeful waiting really means? The pressure from society around us is that there seems to be a rush to that nativity, that warm and comforting scene of shepherds and angels and the tiny baby Jesus lying in a bed of straw. The urge to enter that story can be so overwhelming that Christmas – which actually BEGINS on December 25<sup>th</sup>, often seems over by the 26<sup>th</sup> as first Boxing Day and then New Year's celebrations push onto our calendars.

So what is Advent for us, really, as people of faith seeking to follow Jesus' path? And how do we find it, create space for it, celebrate it in our own lives and as a church family? First, from today's prophetic readings we might get a hint that Advent is about the future, about what may be coming – but at the same time what has been foretold. Advent is a season when we might get the sense that linear time,

or *chronos*, measured by calendars and clocks, does not constrain God. In God's *kairos* time, past and future are woven together for the sake of today.

So we may take some moments in this Advent season to step away from those calendars and clocks, away from gift wrapping or gift buying, away from baking or preparing to gather with others as safely as we can. Perhaps we sit quietly in a chair and pray, or just contemplate what was, what is, and what is to come with hope, peace, joy and love in our thoughts and our hearts. We might ponder what the world would be like if Jesus were to come again, or if we all acted as the hands and feet of Christ in the world today, brining healing and inclusion and a radical voice.

We know the story of a promised birth, of angel visits to a young woman and her betrothed. But these events do not begin our Advent time in the scripture pattern we follow. Instead, our reading today comes from the end of Jesus' ministry, and next week we hear from John the Baptist who proclaimed Jesus at the beginning of his ministry, 30 years beyond that nativity story at the heart of Christmas. In our Advent this year perhaps we listen for prophetic voices in our own time – young climate activists and Indigenous elders, members of black communities across the country, leaders in the LGBTQ+ family. These are the voices that speak of what was, what is, and what may come, individuals seeking justice and righteousness for all God's people and all God's creation.

Jesus speaks of signs that will herald God's love once again breaking into the world – but they are not easy to hear when what we want is the baby in the manger, Joy to the World and a Silent Night. It will not be easy, Jesus tells his followers, it will be a strange time. But in this strange time, that is when we should be alert for God's presence. So where do we find Advent? Wherever we see signs that God is doing a new thing, wherever we notice that God's hope and love is alive in the world, whenever hope is offered and received, Advent is 'happening'.

So as we venture into hybrid worship, God is doing a new thing. As our children begin to be vaccinated against covid-19, we may experience hope for now and for the future. While groups, including our Applewood United Church community, begin collections of food and other needed supplies hope may be received by others through our actions.

Advent can be that time set apart, outside our schedules, in which we listen and find inspiration, discover and spread hope, and allow ourselves to be open to every new thing God may have ready for us.

Amen