

Prepare the Way . . .

Every year, once the Halloween candy is all handed out, the costumes are put away – Christmas decorations, gifts, chocolates, and advertisements begin to fill the aisles of stores and the airwaves of our television screens. It seems that we are always rushing ahead to get ready for the next holiday, not allowing a moment to breathe and rest before we jump into the festive season.

For a season that is meant to be festive – all about joy, family, and generosity – there is a lot of busyness, a lot of frustration, a lot of greed in our culture’s celebration of Christmas. There are presents to buy, dinners to cook, plans to be made, and quickly we arrive at Christmas Day and are glad it’s over. Glad to put away the decorations, stop listening to the carols, and move on to New Year’s parties and resolutions and the like.

As Christians we can get a little caught up in this spirit of the age – jumping right into Christmas and the busyness and frustrations that come along with it. But when we do we skip over one of the most important seasons of the Christian year: Advent.

Advent is a season of waiting; a season of preparation; a season of expectation; a season of not yet. It is a season of preparation for Christmas – yes. But more than that it is a season where we await the coming of God’s Kingdom here on earth, where we await Jesus’ second coming and the fulfilment of all of history. Advent isn’t merely a thoroughfare to Christmas, it isn’t Christmas-lite – it is important for us not to be in such haste to get through it, or to make everything about Christmas already.



During the 4 weeks of advent we hear the stories of waiting, of preparation, the stories of Mary waiting for the child to grow inside her, the stories of John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus’ coming. Waiting. Preparation.

Perhaps we need to practice a little spiritual waiting and preparation during this season of Advent; perhaps we need to dwell within the season of Advent, in the season of preparation and waiting; perhaps we need to take on practices which let us dwell in Advent rather than Christmas.

Maybe this year you could wait to listen to your favourite Christmas Carols until Christmas Eve and reclaim the traditional 12 days of Christmas following. Maybe this year you could hold off your Christmas shopping to the last few days before Christmas, and not allow the busyness to overwhelm all of the season. Perhaps like in Lent you could take on a spiritual practice as a discipline to prepare for the joyous season of Christmas.

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Let us all practice the ways of waiting, practice the ways of preparation. Let us all reclaim the season of Advent . . . and just maybe we might again rediscover a new found appreciation and wonder for the great feast of Christmas.

In Christ,
Rev. Graham

The Practice of Prayer

Our prayer lives can sometimes get stuck in a rut. Over the next few months, let me suggest a few things that might help us get unstuck.



Helpful Hints: Special Time vs. Anytime

Sunday at church is a nice place to pray, but there are a lot of distractions. Squeeze in time after a workout, before work, during lunch, at stoplights, in the bathtub, while waiting for water to boil or coffee to brew.

Like a good cardio workout, it's a good idea to aim for 20 minutes or more. Like the rest of life, trying to find 20 minutes in a row that's uninterrupted is a challenge. Start with 20 seconds if you need, so long as you try a little bit as often as you can.

Bumps on the Road: Clinging/Recreating

Every time you pray or enter into contemplation, it will be different. You may have a powerful experience that you want to have happen again. Chasing after it is a fool's errand. Every breath is different. Every time you talk to God it will be different. That's good news! He's transforming you!

Try This: Walking Prayer

Walking and thinking are like peanut butter and chocolate. Try going for a long walk-and-talk with God. It doesn't have to be at a special time or place.

Consider finding a Labyrinth to walk on. There are several around town, and I can help you find at least three of them.

How do you walk a Labyrinth? There are no right or wrong ways. Try this: Start with the intention to walk with God. Imagine

holding your cares and concerns and letting them drop as you walk toward the centre. Spend some time with Christ when you reach the centre. When you feel ready, walk back out of the Labyrinth the same way you walked into it. Notice insights, connections, and ideas you have as you walk. Let your mind rest and wander. It will be a little different every time.

Let's Pretend: Sitting with Jesus

Sit in a quiet place. Close your eyes. Imagine Jesus sitting next to you, or right behind you, or leaning against you, or holding your hand. Be quiet together for just a few moments.

Extra credit: Imagine what his clothes smell like. Imagine feeling him move as he breathes.

Extra extra credit: Realise this is God, the creator and sustainer of everything, including black holes and galaxies and mice and absolutely everything. Yes, the same human being who loves you and wants to be near you right now.

May God Make His Face Shine Upon You,
Alice J. Stewart, Associate Pastor

Weekly Services

Sunday	8:45 a.m.	Sung Eucharist
	10:30 a.m.	Sung Eucharist
Tuesday	9:00 a.m.	Morning Prayer
Wednesday	10:15 a.m.	Said Eucharist
Thursday	9:00 a.m.	Morning Prayer

Christmas Services

Christmas Eve

Monday, December 24

4:00 p.m.	Family Service
7:00 p.m.	Casual Service
11:00 p.m.	Midnight Service

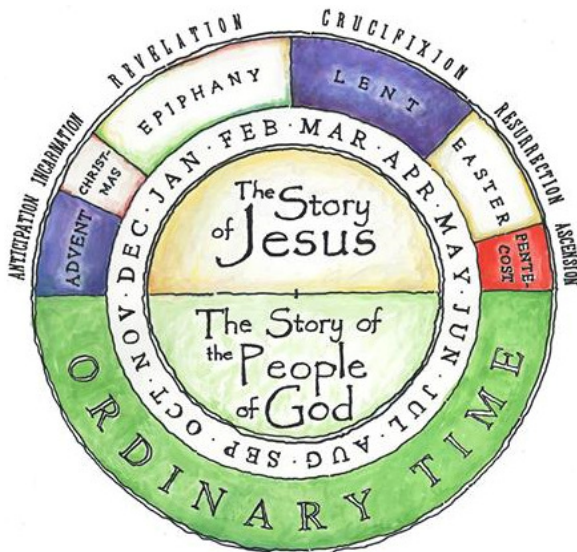
Christmas Eve

Tuesday, December 25

9:00 a.m.	Service
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The Season of Advent

One of the things I really appreciate about the Anglican Church is the pattern and traditions of the church year. We use a series of readings called "The Revised Common Lectionary" most of the time (excepting our reading of the prophets this fall), which takes us every year through different postures, reliving and learning the story of waiting in hope, celebration of the incarnation, penitence, and resurrection, just to name a few.



Beyond changing the colour of the linens and stoles to blue, what does Advent entail? By the way, blue is a colour for hope, expectation, and heaven, and in traditional iconography, Mary wears blue, and she's an important part of the stories we're about to read!

On November 11, we observed a period of silence in our service to reflect upon the sacrifices made by those who served and serve in Canada's military, to remember the cost of war, and to be reminded to work towards peace. Graham challenged us with the words of the prophet Zechariah, "Do not be like your ancestors." Perhaps our culture's vision of peace has brought us to a desire for a life of comfort and affluence, with our hope being for a feeling of ease and a lack of difficulty.

As we enter into Advent, we will continue to hear words of prophets – this time more from Isaiah. The voice may be slightly different than the minor prophets we've just

read, but the message is similar, pointing us to take on a posture of readiness for Christ's coming:

- return to God, in humility and repentance
- seek after God's ways of justice
- know that your saving is only through God's action
- hope in these promises: that the desert will bloom, salvation is coming for all, the oppressed will find joy; listen for so many beautiful promises in our readings!

The prophet's call is not:

- be better fighters, ready for war, so that Israel will dominate its neighbours
- be more impressive in your achievements
- do everything you can to have the riches and wealth of those around you
- do everything right, and you will deserve to be saved

Advent is a deeply subversive reminder: we are called to be quietly hopeful, waiting on God for our salvation, which will only come to pass by God's doing, not ours. In the meantime, we are to live according to the priorities of the Kingdom of God, unlike the priorities that are often prescribed by the advertising everywhere around us.

Our world's calls are more like:

- Be better and you'll find happiness!
- Hustle for your worth!
- If you were just (thinner, more put together, had a bigger house, more talented, more confident, luckier, paid better, a better daughter/son, what else?) then you'll finally be good enough.
- Humility is stupid. Step on others to get ahead. You're limitless.
- Pretend you have no flaws, make no mistakes, and cover up your brokenness.

The problem is, *we are all broken*. The shiny attractiveness of the hustle is that perhaps if we try just a little harder, we might be able to save ourselves from shame and unworthiness.

False.

God's call is simple and generous:

- return to me
- seek my ways
- know my love and peace
- hope in eternal salvation by my hand

God does not save us from our brokenness, but rather, God comes to us and saves us in the midst of our brokenness. Sometimes God or others lift us out of our brokenness, but regardless, God is present with us through all situations.

So as we enter Advent, I entreat you to seek out quiet. Know that your salvation is, and is to come, by the hand of God. You are made worthy by God's love. Peace is yours, not to be comfortable, but to know a real hope in the midst of chaos. The power of brokenness is broken, and not just for you, but for the whole world.

The festiveness of Christmas beckons already, but in this season, we are called to wait in hope of Christ's coming again. What might that look like? Here are a few ideas, in case any of these "strike a chord" with you:

- Save shopping for as close to Christmas as possible, to wait in hope and expectation.
- Choose to do less. Feel free to question expectations you have for yourself and others. Say no sometimes.
- Turn off the radio to let there be less noise in your life.
- Reflect on God's generosity and abundance, on the promises of the prophets.
- Find an Advent hymn text to memorise
- Light some candles, or an advent wreath, representing love, hope, joy, and peace.
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And at the end of it all, we shall, God-willing, arrive at Christmas on the evening of December 24, and celebrate well for a full 12 days, full of carols and feasting.

Rachel Colman

Daylight Saving Time Begins Sunday, March 10, 2019.

Please remember to set your clocks **AHEAD** one hour before you go to bed on Saturday.

Parish Events

Advent Study: Introduction to Indigenous Engagement with the Rev. Julie Golding-Page. Come to a three-week coffee & conversation study. We will watch "First Contact," a reality show where Canadians with limited exposure to Indigenous peoples travel across the country to meet Indigenous families and communities - sometimes with surprising results. All questions are welcome, and no previous knowledge is required. Sundays, December 2, 9, & 16 from 12:15 - 1:30 p.m.

Lessons & Carols Service: Sunday, December 9 at 4:00 p.m. An evening of music, prayers, and readings from Isaiah & Luke, finding hope and expectation in a season of dark and cold. With special guest Brenton Chan, cello.

Carol Singing, Christmas in Popular Song, & English Tea: Songwriters of popular music try to capture the meaning, joys, and sorrows of Christmas. Some songs are widely known, whereas others would only be familiar if you knew the singer or songwriter. In any case, you would not hear them sung in a church service. As we prepare for the Christmas season, join us as we listen to some of these songs and reflect on what the writer is trying to express, along with singing carols. Saturday, December 15 at 1:00 p.m. in the Narthex.

New Creation is a worship service that values diverse voices, and encourages diverse expressions. What can you expect at a *New Creation* service?

- A warm welcome when you enter,
- A reading of scripture,
- A time to interact and reflect creatively through the work of your hands,
- A gathering of our creations and prayers and bodies at the Table,
- A breaking of bread and sharing of wine, and
- A peaceful return to Creation as a New Creation.

Come gather around the Table on Sundays, December 23 and January 6, at 4:00 p.m.

Lenten Retreat: Saturday, March 23 at the Sisterhood of St. John the Devine. Watch the bulletin in February for more details.

Reflection on a Hymn

All things bright and beautiful,
all creatures great and small,
all things wise and wonderful,
the Lord God made them all.

Hymn written by Cecil Frances Alexander in 1848

We know we can learn things from other people, but have you ever wondered what we can learn from animals. I



read a devotional article written by Dr. David Jeremiah in "Turning Points" where he pointed out things we can learn from animals. I always thought that we humans were the superior beings and there was nothing we could learn from "dumb" animals. After reading Dr. Jeremiah's article, I must confess that I was surprised by what can be learned from the animal kingdom. (There is work involved; you will have to pull out your Bible and read the scripture references, if you are not already familiar with them). According to Dr. Jeremiah, here is what scriptures tell us that we can learn from the animal kingdom:

- We can learn diligence by watching ants do their work (Proverbs 6:6)
- We can learn trust from the sparrows (Psalm 84:3)
- We can learn safety from the hen with her chicks (Mathew 23:37)
- We can learn confidence from the eagle (Isaiah 40:31)
- We can learn discipleship from the sheep (John 10:4)
- We can learn surefootedness from the deer (Habakkuk 3:19)
- We can learn obedience from the horse (Psalm 32:9)
- We can learn wisdom from the badger (Proverbs 30:26)
- We can learn faith from the raven (Luke 12:24)
- We can learn gentleness from the doves (Matthew 10:16)
- We can learn courage from the lion (Proverbs 30:29-30)

Wow! Did you know that there is so much that we can learn from the animal kingdom?

No wonder Cecil Frances Alexander wrote the song about all things being wise and wonderful because God made them all. Perhaps God created these animals to teach us something about our sense of superiority, or that there is something to be learned from all of God's creation, even an ant. So, next time you see animal, ask yourself, "What I can learn from it?"

Nadia Murray

A Reply to "In Flanders Field"

We are the living, today and tomorrow,
We honour, we remember and still feel
sorrow.

The torch is ours to hold up high,
And shine the light for those who died.

On our shirts, the poppies stay,
To represent the bodies that lay;
In Flanders Field, between the crosses,
That will always remind us of our great
losses.

Thanks to your sacrifices, we are now free,
And promise to always cherish thee.
We hope your souls will rest forever;
Knowing that we will always remember.

*by Ms. Shoniker's Grade 8 Class
General Crerar Public School*

Submitted by Carol Welch

This is Your Newsletter

We hope you will contribute to the articles. If you have attended a conference or an event either inside or outside the parish, tell us about it. Tell us in what activities your group is engaged. Send us information about upcoming events. Feel free to send photographs or clipart, and we will try to include them. Submissions can be sent to communications@gracechurchscarborough.com (be sure to have "Newsletter" in the subject line).

The deadline for the next newsletter will be March 10.

The Rt. Rev. Chris Harper's Ordination on November 17



Bishops Gathering for the Consecration
St. John Cathedral, Saskatoon



Chris with Anastasia and Julie



Tracy Harper with Julie and Anastasia



With The Rt. Rev. Charles Arthurson (retired),
the first Indigenous Bishop in Canada,
who ordained Steve and Julia as deacons in 2007

Photos from The Rev. Julie Golding-Page

Regular Events and Activities

(check the bulletin for schedule changes and more information)

Wednesday	11:00 a.m.	Bible Study
Wednesday	11:00 a.m.	Quilting/Knitting Group
Thursday	7:00 p.m.	Choir Practice
2nd Saturday of each month	12:00 noon	Community Lunch
2nd Saturday of each month	2:00 p.m.	Craft Workshop
4th Monday of each month	7:30 p.m.	Advisory Board

Our Leadership

Incumbent

The Rev. Graham McCaffrey

Honorary Assistants

The Rev. Julie Golding-Page

The Rev. Steve Page

Secretary

Doreen Brown

Choir Director

Rachel Colman

Pastor of Outreach & Mission

Alice Stewart

Children & Youth

Jonelle Douglas

Churchwardens

Jonelle Douglas

Nadia Murray

Deputy Churchwarden

Craig Gustafson

Bulletin Bloopers (or maybe they aren't)

The church will host an evening of fine dining, super entertainment, and gracious hostility.

Pot-luck supper Sunday at 5:00 p.m. – prayer and medication to follow.