24 November 2026

Dear friends in Christ,

Advent is nearly upon us! This is one of my favourite seasons of the church year. There are so many wonderful things that happen this time of year. I love visiting Christmas markets and setting up our Christmas tree, eating Christmas cookies and drinking hot chocolate, singing Advent and Christmas hymns and carols. But even more than that, I love this season's spiritual meaning, the chance for us to reflect upon Christ's coming to us. This, of course, is what "advent" means – it means coming!

The medieval monk Bernard of Clairvaux writes that the season of Advent helps us focus on three different ways that Christ comes to us. First of all, most obviously, we think about Christ's birth to the Virgin Mary – the manger, the angels, the shepherds, all that we celebrate at Christmas.

Second, we remember the promise that, as the Apostle's Creed puts it, Christ will "come again to judge the living and the dead" – that he will return in glory to make all things new and wipe away the tears from every face, that we will live with him forever. This is why many of the Advent readings have a perhaps surprisingly apocalyptic feel. We'll be hearing a lot about Christ's return the next few weeks!

There's a third advent too, according to Bernard. Between Christ's first advent in humility in the Bethlehem manger and his final advent in glory, Christ also comes to each and every one of us, to dwell in our hearts, to share his love with us and invite us into new life. And so I'd like to encourage each of you this Advent to make time and space for Jesus to come anew into your heart.



One way to do this is by joining together in worship and receiving Jesus through his Word and Sacrament. On the First Sunday of Advent (29 Nov), we will be worshipping together with the United Church at 11 am in their building (470 B Avenue Bethany).

We will be back at St. Simeon's from then on. On the Second Sunday of Advent (6 Dec) we will be meeting,at our usual 10 am time, but for the Third Sunday (13 Dec) the service will be at 10:30 instead, and we will be joined by the United Church. After the service, there will be a sugar camp meal – please join us! This will be a time for us to particularly honour our former priest the Rev. Paul Tidman and his wife the Rev. Cathy Hamilton as they prepare to move to the Townships.

The Fourth Sunday of Advent (20 Dec) will be our annual Lessons and Carols service, which is always wonderful. I know Janis and Edna have already put a lot of work into preparing it! And Christmas Eve worship will be at 4 pm at St. Simeon's with the United and Presbyterian Churches – what a wonderful opportunity for us to gather with other Christians across Lachute to celebrate the tremendous gift of Jesus!

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Another way to draw closer to Jesus this season is by studying his Word in community with other Christians. Susan Sioui and Edna Hall will be leading an Advent Bible study for us once again. We will meet Wednesday mornings at 10:30 am from November 25 – December 16 at the Rotary Apartments lounge (400 Thomas St). Each Wednesday, we will look at one of the Bible readings we will hear next Sunday and a sermon based on that reading from the Episcopal priest Fleming Rutledge. She's a mentor of mine and I think she has a really unique and interesting approach to the Advent season. A big thank-you to Susan and Edna for their work leading this!

Finally, one amazing way that we as Christians can connect with Jesus is through prayer. There are so many ways we can pray – some more formal or liturgical, others off-the-cuff and spontaneous – but Jesus hears them all. I want to suggest two practices of prayer to you this Advent and Christmas. First of all, every Sunday, I'll be praying morning prayer at 9 am (10 am on 29 Nov only) and evening prayer at 3:30 pm at St. Simeon's.Consider joining me for some of these services; they are short prayer services of about 20 minutes and are excellent ways to prepare for or reflect upon our main service that Sunday. Second, try a simple daily prayer practice. One of the oldest Christian texts we have outside the New Testament, called the "Didache" (it's Greek), instructs Christians to say the Lord's Prayer three times every day. What if, right when you woke up, around lunchtime, and before bed, you took a few minutes to connect with God, thank him for his gifts, ask him for what you and your loved ones need, and pray this prayer that Jesus himself gave us? I'd encourage you to give it a try!

I am so thankful that I get to be your priest, and I am so looking forward to walking through this season with you. You can always reach me at therevbencrosby@gmail.com with any pastoral needs or to set up a time to talk. I am praying for each of you, that this Advent and Christmas season would be one in which you come to know God's love for you even more deeply.

Yours in Christ,
Ben