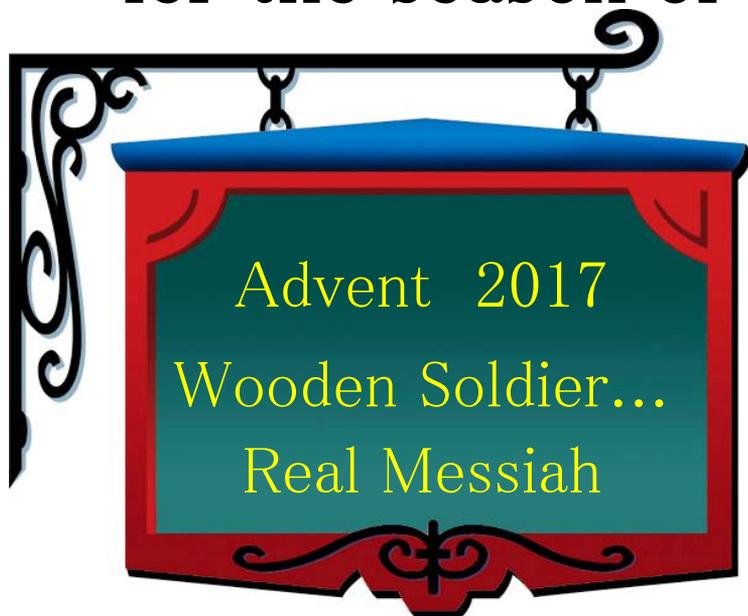


Prayers, readings
& mediations
for the season of



**Assiniboia
Alliance
Church**



An Advent Reflection From Pastor Greg

Shelly has an extensive collection of Christmas Nut-Crackers, over 100 of these fine fellows appear around our house during the Christmas Season! I was thinking this fall about the appeal of the Nutcracker story, while best known as a ballet, it was a folk tale long before that. Nutcrackers in the form of wooden carvings of a soldier, king or other profession have existed since the 15th century. A folk tale recounts a German puppet-maker won a nutcracking challenge by creating a doll with the mouth a lever to crack nuts. Modern nutcrackers in this style serve primarily as a decoration, especially at Christmas time.

Ernst Hoffmann published the “Nutcracker and The Mouse King” in 1816. Alexandre Dumas revised the story in 1844, which inspired a two-act ballet, choreographed by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov, scored by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky.

(sourced from Wikipedia).

The original story is quite horrific to modern ears, the updated version far more palatable. In this classic story telling technic, an imaginary or inanimate object comes to life to become the hero, or at least, aid the hero toward a successful resolution of the crisis at hand.

Humans have an innate default toward hope, to seek joy and peace, to long for a hero who might rescue us. This need is a reflection of God’s purpose in creating us for relationship with Him; as Blaise Pascal is often quoted: “within each of us is a God-shaped vacuum only God can fill.” When this need is unfulfilled, and our hero is not discovered or revealed, we seek for understanding in the waiting. As a result our literature gives us all kinds of symbols, allegories and possibilities for our needed hero.

While the story of a wooden soldier coming to life captures our imagination and speaks to our need, it is a story, a fable. Many would claim that his baby born in a manger, this Saviour-hero we celebrate at Christmas, is also a fable; yet another story of a deity we have invented up to give life to our need for hope, peace and joy.

History, the Bible and experience demonstrates that Jesus is no wooden nutcracker come to life in a fable. He is God himself, born human for the most epic heroic act ever recounted. In short, **Jesus is... a real Messiah.** We still celebrate His birth because it was (and is) monumental. 'Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.' (Philippians 2:6-7) We still celebrate His birth because the story did not end there, Paul continues; " And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!" Jesus came to provide a successful resolution to our crisis of sin and separation from God. We celebrate Christmas because of the sacrifice of Easter and the promise of the 2nd Advent, when the real Messiah will return → this time as the King of Kings to usher in His Kingdom in it's fullness -the end of days and the beginning of eternity. Christmas is a focus on the past, in order to remember that this past points to a glorious future. *This Christmas, may you know the presence of the real Messiah as you celebrate His birth!*

We wish you a Merry Christmas,
Pastor Greg & Shelly
December 2017

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My Prayer Requests for Advent 2017:

Week One: December 3rd – December 9th
The Real Messiah: Christ Our Hope

Scripture readings:

Sunday 3 rd	Isaiah 63:16 – 64:8 Psalm 80:1-7 1Corinthians 1:3-9 Mark 13:32-37
Monday 4 th	Matthew 3
Tuesday 5 th	Colossians 1:9-23
Wednesday 6 th	John 18:33-37
Thursday 7 th	Isaiah 43:1-21
Friday 8 th	Hebrews 10:11-25
Saturday 9 th	Zephaniah 3:14-20

Reflection: Colossians 1:27 “To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” To have found God, to have experienced him in the intimacy of our being, to have lived even for one hour in the fire of his Trinity and the bliss of his Unity clearly makes us say: “Now I understand. You alone are enough for me.”

Carlo Carretto *The God Who Comes.*

Points for prayer:

- Pray for God’s anointing on those preparing to take part in the Christmas Services.
- Pray for families and individuals who are struggling to make ends meet as they face the most expensive time of year.
- Pray that people will discover salvation as their gift this Christmas.

Prayer: Jesus Messiah, guide me this advent season into a new and fresh understanding of your hope, it’s presence and working in my life through you, the one who is hope to me.

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess,
for he who promised is faithful. Hebrews 10:23

Week Two: December 10 – December 16
The Real Messiah: Jesus Our Peace.

Scripture readings:

Sunday 10 th	Isaiah 40:1-11 Psalm 85:8-13 2Peter 3:8-15a Mark 1:1-8
Monday 11 th	Luke 1:5-25, 57-80
Tuesday 12 th	Matthew 4:1-6; 28:18-20
Wednesday 13 th	Matthew 3:1-12
Thursday 14 th	Isaiah 62
Friday 15 th	John 1:6-34
Saturday 16 th	Mark 1:1-8

Reflection: The world talks of peace, and by peace it means the absence of war. What it overlooks is that there is another meaning of the word, namely, tranquility of heart, and without that kind of peace the peace of the world will continue to be but an unattainable dream. A.W. Tozer

Points for Prayer:

- Pray that Christians will know a fresh touch of the peace of Christ at work in their lives through the Holy Spirit.
- Pray that those for whom Christmas has no “spiritual meaning” may sense the mystery, awe & wonder of God.
- Pray that the staff and students of local schools, during this busy time of year, would discover the peace of Jesus.

Prayer: Jesus Messiah, guide me this advent season into your peace in everything I do. I invite you Holy Spirit to fill me and bring the peace that transcends all understanding in Christ Jesus.

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to humanity on whom his favour rests.
Luke 2:14

Week Three: December 17 - December 23
The Coming Of Christ: Christ Our Joy

Scripture readings:

Sunday 17 th :	Isaiah 61:1-4 Luke 1:46b-55 1Thessalonians 5:16-24 John 1:6-8, 19-28
Monday 18 th :	Mark 13:1-13, 24-37
Tuesday 19 th :	Luke 21:25-36
Wednesday 20 th :	Revelation 1:1-8
Thursday 21 st :	Ezekiel 34:1-10
Friday 22 nd :	Luke 12:35-48
Saturday 23 rd :	Acts 1:1-11

Reflection: Joy is distinctly a Christian word and a Christian thing. It is the reverse of happiness. Happiness is the result of what happens this is agreeable. Joy has its springs deep down inside. And that spring never runs dry, no matter what happens. Only Jesus gives joy. He had joy, singing its music within, even under the shadow of the cross. S.D. Gordon

Points for prayer:

- Pray for God's comfort on those for whom Christmas is a time of loss and separation, especially who have lost loved ones this year.
- Pray for God's touch on those confined at home or hospital this Christmas, to know the Joy of the Lord.
- Pray for God's strength & joy for those who are caring for elderly relatives and the chronically ill.

Prayer: Jesus my joy, guide me this advent season into a deeper appreciation of your joy. Let me be an instrument of your joy in the lives of others.

“The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.” Psalm 28:7

Week Four: December 24 - December 25
God Is With Us: The Love Of Christ

Scripture readings:

Sunday Dec 24th: 2Samuel 7:8-16
Psalm 89:1-4, 19-24
Romans 16:25-27
Luke 1:26-38
Monday Dec 25th: Isaiah 7:10-17

Reflection: The fire of God, which is his essential being, his love, his creative power, is a fire unlike its earthly symbol in this, that it is only at a distance it burns –that the farther from him, it burns the worse, and that when we turn and begin to approach him, the burning begins to change to comfort, which comfort will grow to such delight that the heart at length cries out with a gladness no other gladness can reach, “Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing upon earth that I desire besides you!” George MacDonald

Points for prayer:

- Pray for families who are separated at Christmas by distance as well as sharing the commitment of faith.
- Pray for those who have to work over the festive season, especially members of emergency services, staff in care homes, hotels, restaurants and oilrigs.
- Pray for those ravaged by war, poverty and injustice, that they might discover and look ahead to the Kingdom of Heaven and it's freedom.

Prayer: Jesus Messiah. Guide me this advent season deeper into your love that I may celebrate your birth in expectation of your second coming.

“And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.” Romans 5:5



Christmas Services December 24th

- 11:00am Worship Service
- 7:00pm Christmas Eve Candle Service

Participation is welcome, would you like to sing, play, recite? Contact Pastor Greg.

Assiniboia & District Ministerial
Annual Blue Christmas Service -A Time To Remember Weds Dec 20th

7:30pm at Piche-Hawkins-Grondin Chapel. A place during the season to reflect and express our losses and hope.

Advent Conspiracy Offering: Each Christmas Eve service we dedicate the entire offering to a special project; “**Word Of Life.**” This year we are looking to provide Bibles, via a translation project, to the U-People that Sheila works with in the Asian Spice Region. This group does not have a full Bible translation in their heart language. Our lives are mostly deeply touched by the Word of God when it is spoken in our heart language. Your gift will help bring the Word of God to a peoples that are among the least reached in our world today.
