

Welcome. I am so glad you are here. Let's open with a word of prayer.

Creator. We are entering a season of anticipation. Give us patience as we grow tired of waiting. Give us hope as we grow weary along what at times feels like a difficult journey. Amen.

You wouldn't necessarily know it from looking at my desk, but I appreciate it when things are tidy. When I see a tea towel hanging askew, I am compelled to straighten it. I also like for things to be fair. If I was pouring chocolate milk for me and my siblings as a child, it was at eye level to ensure we had the exact same amount. I like it when things are tidy and fair.

There are so many things right now in our world that feel untidy and unfair. There are times when I listen to the news or scroll on Instagram, and I see the way people are treating each other so poorly and I feel more than a little hopeless. It feels like an impossible problem. There are too many tea towels askew, and some people have gallons of chocolate milk while others have less than an ounce. What are we to do? How can we handle this injustice?

It is when my thoughts get stuck on this particular hamster wheel, that I desperately need seasons like Advent. Advent reminds me

that even though the days are short, and getting colder, and the nights are dark and long, we have something to look forward to.

Today's advent chapel is about hope.

Luke 21:25-31

"Signs will appear in the sun, the moon and the stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish, distraught at the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the earth. The powers in the heavens will be shaken. After that, people will see the Chosen One coming on a cloud with great power and glory.

When these things begin to happen, stand up straight and raise your heads, because your ransom is near at hand."

And he told them a parable: "look at the fig tree, or any other tree. You see when they're budding and know that summer is near. In the same way, when you see all these things happening, know that the reign of God is near."

The late archbishop Desmond Tutu said, "Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness."

Things feel dark right now, but we know that there is light ahead. Advent means “arrival” – we are waiting for the arrival of this thing that will bring us hope. But it’s not here yet. We are still waiting.

We are beginning the first of our four weeks of waiting. Waiting is hard. Sometimes anticipation is thrilling, and sometimes it is daunting. We are going to practice anticipating together. We are anticipating that something better is coming. We are peering ahead for the small pinprick of light in the darkness. We look toward the future with hope. But for now, we wait.

WAIT FOR THE LORD

Story Introduction:

Over the next four weeks, we will be listening to a story by Stuart Mclean. Stuart Mclean’s voice was the soundtrack to my family’s road trips. We would check out the tapes, yes tapes, from the library and listen to his stories together in the car for hours. He tells stories mostly about a family of four, consisting of parents, Dave and Morley, and children Sam and Stephanie. In many of these stories, Morley is solving the problems Dave creates. I want to add a disclaimer that there is some gendered language and stereotypes about “boys” in this section and I am sorry for this in advance. We know that stereotypes like this can be reductive and harmful and we will try to do better in the way we speak to one another than Stuart does here.

I also want to draw your attention to the chair at the front. You'll understand why this is here soon, but you need to know that Ms Fast has graciously lent us this chair for our advent chapels. This is a very special chair. It is on this chair that Ms Fast rocked her very first baby. Think of this chair like a piece of art - to be looked at, but not touched.

You are just going to listen to a recording of the story. There will be no moving images to hold your attention so it might be tricky to stay engaged. However, I hope that you will be able to do it. Let your mind create images as you listen. Listen to where the hope is in the story. Let's get to know this family a little better.

Video (6 minutes)

Recap:

Morley is so hopeful when she brings forward this idea of making each other presents. It is only September, but she is looking into the future and seeing something lovely. She is imagining a beautiful Christmas morning with her family sharing gifts made with love. But her family is not nearly as enthusiastic as she imagined. They don't like the idea at all. She is so full of hope when she starts making the chair - she has big dreams. But it's not as easy as she thought. It is hard work. But she isn't in it alone. She needs help to get started because she (quite literally) doesn't have the tools to get it done. But even though the course is helpful,

it still requires so much time and effort, on top of all her regular responsibilities. She keeps working at it, and even though it is difficult, she loves the work.

Sometimes being hopeful is hard, and sometimes we feel like we are all alone, or like it is too much effort. And it is hard. It is okay to ask for help when you have trouble seeing the light in the darkness. Sometimes you might need to help those around you see the pinpricks of light poking through.

Candle

This advent season we are waiting for the Lord. We are waiting for God to renew creation. Emmanuel means God with us. As you sing this next song, I encourage you to think about asking God to come and be with us.

SONG

Closing

Some of you may have entered this space full of hope. I encourage you to use that uplifting energy to care for the people around you. Some of you might be feeling hopeless and overwhelmed by the weight of the world. I encourage you to ask for help. There are people here who care about you and want to help you see the light.

Wherever you find yourself, I have a challenge for you. Christmas in Canada is a time of immense consumption. I believe that one way we can practice hope is by caring for the planet - by acting like it's possible to turn the tide of this climate disaster. Anabaptists believe in living simply. How can you embody principles of simple living and practice hope for our planet at the same time? Can you be like Morley and gift something homemade, maybe gift an experience, like going out to activate? Can you buy presents on Facebook marketplace or at thrift stores? Or support a small business? Can you suggest drawing names and buying fewer total presents? As you make your own Christmas list, can you suggest buying things locally or second-hand? It might feel awkward, but I think it is worth the discomfort. This is one way we can shine hope into a broken world.

Sending - go forth with hope in your hearts. Be the light in the darkness. Be the hands, serving the broken world. Be the voice, speaking for the oppressed. Be the feet, comforting those who hurt.