

THIS WEEK AT ST. ANDREW'S



ISSUE # 289 December 4, 2025

Open Church: Sanctuary
Wednesdays at 12:00 - 1:30 pm

Meditation Hour: Sanctuary
Wednesdays at 4:00 - 5:30 pm

Activity Group: The Gathering Room
Thursdays at 10:30 am - 12:30 pm
Cancelled until January 8 2026

Worship Service: Sanctuary
Sundays at 10:30 am - 12:00 pm



From the Pulpit

This Sunday we consider the role of Joseph the carpenter in the Christmas story. Joseph is engaged to Mary, but he discovers she's pregnant. Now, what is he going to do? *Joseph's fiancée is pregnant!* Joseph is a good man, a righteous man, a man who wants to do the right thing. That's great, *but how do you know what the right thing is?* In this week's sermon we explore how Joseph handles this dilemma.

- Rev. Wes Denyer

A Time Called the Christmas Season

God has come among us. After centuries of looking up to find God, people looked down into a mother's arms to see the face of God. In becoming human, God shows absolute commitment to humanity and creation. Things can never be the same again. What can this event mean to me?

Historical Roots of the Christmas Season

In our Canadian reformed tradition, we have come to think of the time after Christmas Day as "the 12 days of Christmas," but this is a time known, in liturgical calendars, as Christmastide or Twelve Holy Days. And, of course, this season is best known popularly by that repetitive song which we love to hate –The Twelve Days of Christmas! This season leads us to Epiphany on January 6. These twelve days celebrate the Light that is entering the world.

Finding Meaning in the Tradition

In our homes, the Christmas season is usually a time of winding down and tidying up after the excitement of Christmas Day. So it is in the church. As we wonder at the birth of the Christ child, we reflect on the story's many surprises: a faithful pregnant virgin, a baby born in a make-do setting, and the announcement, not to monarchs, but to shepherds going about their everyday lives. Christmas reveals the mystery of grace and God's presence with us, coming unexpectedly and intimately. It takes more than one day, once a year, to reflect on these things. It takes a season.


Questions for Personal Meditation


1. What questions would I like to ask God about the Christmas story?
2. What is my favorite part of the Christmas story?
3. How does Christmas challenge the idea that God is out there someplace?
4. What part of Christmas most affects my faith?


- Jerry Verwey


(From PCC website)


Announcements


 **TWASA HOLIDAYS:** The last TWASA issue for 2025 will be published on Thursday, December 18th. Please send your submissions in no later than Wednesday December the 17th. The first issue in the new year will be published Thursday, January 9th.


 **THE LINK:** Contribute to St. Andrew's monthly newsletter! Next month's deadline for submissions is **Sunday, December 28th**. To contact the editor or make submissions please email: thelink@standrewsvictoria.ca.


 **WARM TOES:** Let's share the joy of a warm pair of socks with those in need! All sock donations will go to [The Mustard Seed Street Church](#). A donation bin is set up in The Gathering Room to collect socks.

 **SHARE THE JOY:** Let's share the joy of a warm meal with those in need! We're collecting monetary donations for [Christmas hampers](#). All donations are in support of [The Mustard Seed Street Church](#). For cash or cheque donations use your regular donor envelope labeled "Share the Joy". For e-transfer donations please send the transfer to treasurer@standrewsvictoria.ca with "Share the Joy" in the comment section.

 **SOAP FOR HOPE:** Do you have a hygiene product that don't work for you hiding under your sink? [Soap for Hope](#) can repurpose them to help vulnerable people. We're looking for: **New or gently used:** Shampoo, conditioner, body wash, and body lotion. **New or unused:** Deodorants, toothbrushes, toothpaste, incontinence products, menstruation products, lip balm, razors, brushes, and combs. The most needed items are highlighted. You can drop off your donations in the bin by the church office until January. Shannon will transport them to Soap for Hope's warehouse. Thank you for your support!

 **MUSIC OUTREACH VIOLIN RECITAL:** Presented by St. Andrew's Music Outreach program on Saturday December 6 at 2:00 pm in the Sanctuary. An afternoon of music from violin students from the studio of Ann Elliott-Goldschmid at the UVic School of Music. Entrance is by donation and everyone is welcome.

 **THE GIFT OF CHRISTMAS MUSIC:** Presented by St. Andrew's Music Outreach program on Thursday December 11 at 12:00 pm in the Sanctuary. An afternoon of seasonal choral and instrumental music, as well as sing-along Christmas hymns! Holiday treats and refreshments will be served. Entrance is by donation and everyone is welcome.

 **CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE:** Join us for a special Christmas Eve service on Wednesday December 24 at 7:00 pm in the Sanctuary. Everyone is welcome to attend!



Gaza Aid Brings Relief

As violence persists in Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, humanitarian needs on the ground are extreme and the ability to deliver aid continues to be challenging.

With thousands of families displaced, schools and hospitals bombed, thousands of children killed, and famine conditions, the impetus to act is greater than ever. Despite the challenges, PWS&D has been responding through ecumenical networks and partnerships at ACT Alliance and Canadian Foodgrains Bank to provide food and other humanitarian assistance where and whenever possible.

Ibrahim was a participant in a recent Canadian Foodgrains Bank food distribution. The food package he received made a big difference—not only easing his financial burden but also improving his son's health. "This food parcel alleviated his suffering and provided my child with the necessary food," he shared. "Food aid distributions like this are essential." [This Advent season, faithfully respond](#) to help provide food and humanitarian assistance for people in crisis.

“O come, o come Emmanuel”: Reflections on Themes in the Cycle of the Christian Year

The haunting and popular Advent hymn, “O come, O come Emmanuel” (122 in the Book of Praise), is a poetic translation of words first written in the 8th century. The hymn has evolved and expanded over time but maintains much of its original form and many of its primary imagery from the Hebrew Scriptures. While the words are familiar to many of us from having sung them so often, the context of the Biblical images, along with the understanding of that imagery at the time the hymn was written, presents current-day singers and readers with challenges and opportunities. How should we understand words rooted in a context that is more than a thousand years old? And how should we treat its imagery?

Perhaps the most significant matter for our times is the use of the image of “Israel” in the first stanza, which reads, “...come and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lowly exile here until the Son of Man appear.” The biblical allusion appears to refer to the time when God’s covenant people were taken into exile to Babylon, beginning in 587 BCE. God later rescued them, maintaining the covenantal promises made to Abraham.

First, the church must resist the flawed and catastrophic supersessionist interpretation of the word “Israel” in our worship. Supersessionism, rooted in anti-Judaism, claims that with the coming of Jesus, Christians replace Jewish people, who did not accept Jesus as the awaited messiah, as God’s chosen people. The Latin text of “O come, O come Emmanuel” is more fraught with anti-Judaism, with its heightened focus on the lost condition of Jewish people: “release captive Israel, who groans in exile, deprived of the Son of God.” The PCC has spoken clearly against supersessionism and affirms that the Church does not replace Israel as the chosen people of God but instead completes the people of God, fulfilling the promises made to Abraham. (For more information, see the “Statement of The Presbyterian Church in Canada on our Relationship with the Jewish People” (A&P, 2011, p. 42–44) and “One Covenant of Grace” (A&P, 2010, p. 291–355).) (See [more](#).)

In Bible reading, preaching, praying, liturgies and teaching, we guard against any notion that the relationship between Jewish people and God is incomplete because they await a messiah, while Christians confess Jesus as Messiah.

But there is another interpretive danger to resist as we understand who or what “Israel” means in hymns and liturgies. More often than not, the word “Israel” in the Bible refers to the people with whom God has made covenants and stands in a relationship of loving-kindness, fidelity, and obedience, rather than a reference to a geopolitical entity.

The issue of Zionism, the flawed and catastrophic colonial project of claiming all of Palestine for the modern State of Israel, requires examination in our worship, devotion, prayers and teaching. Christian Zionism is an ideology that the PCC has rejected as inconsistent with Reformed doctrine (A&P, 2012, pp. 289–292, 35). Therefore, when we employ the word “Israel” in our liturgies, we must guard against unacceptable Zionist interpretations.

So, if we sing “O come, o come, Emmanuel,” what are our options?

Some will avoid using certain hymns, scriptures, or poems that contain images that could be misinterpreted. However, the cost of this strategy is that it misses valuable opportunities for enquiry, research, reflection and learning.

Some will use the original words of the hymn; however, they will preface the hymn with a comment about the image’s origin and the potential for misunderstanding.

Some will update the language of ancient poems and hymns to present a theology consistent with the church’s teaching. And others might substitute modern poetic allusions for those whose immediate cultural understanding has faded over time.


Finally, some will opt to ignore the issue entirely. But to ignore these matters is a choice with consequences. Our collective experience teaches that language, such as some of the phrasing in this hymn, can be misappropriated and co-opted to support dangerous Zionist and supersessionist ideologies.

In the Reformed tradition, we understand that faith ought always to be restlessly seeking understanding. The third stanza of “O come, o come Emmanuel” articulates this lifelong search beautifully, so we pray with the hymn that God’s Wisdom come from on high and “to us the path of knowledge show and cause us in her ways to go.”


Through preaching, prayer, study and the renewing of our minds, we not only have our faith reformed and expanded but our witness and service in the world perfected.


- presbyterian.ca


Community Events

 **YULE:** Presented by the Early Music Society of the Islands on Sunday, December 7 at 4:00 pm in the Sanctuary. ‘Catalina Vicens, on organetto, will join the voices of ‘Trio Mediæval’ for a program of Scandinavian traditional Christmas folk songs and hymns, English medieval Carols, and two contemporary works! For more information and tickets go [HERE](#).

 **NOLLAIG CHRIDHEIL:** Join the Victoria Scottish Gaelic Choir for our annual Christmas Concert on Sunday, December 7th! Enjoy a warm and cheerful afternoon of traditional Scottish Gaelic music and holiday favourites. There will be tea and light refreshments following the performance. Doors at 1:15 PM. The concert begins at 2:00 PM. At 2964 Tillicum Road, Trinity Presbyterian Church. Tickets are \$15 and are available [HERE](#). Please purchase your tickets in advance. Tickets may not be available at the door. Please bring your electronic or printed ticket to the concert.

 **HOLIDAY CONCERT:** Join Mike Edel and other musicians from Hollydene Church for an evening of subdued holiday music on Friday December 12 at 7 pm at Knox Presbyterian Church. Tickets can be purchased at [Showpass](#). ‘Tears and laughter have a way of getting along,’ sings Canadian singer-songwriter Mike Edel on the title track from his 5th full-length-album and documentary [‘casseroles & flowers.’](#)

 **AETHELING:** Presented by Ensemble Laude on Sunday, December 21 at 3:00 pm in the Sanctuary. A concert of richly woven medieval-inspired works on the theme of children, including the fantastic piece A Ceremony of Carols by Benjamin Britten, with Keri Lynn Zwicker, harp. Go [HERE](#) for more information as it becomes available.

 **A CHILD’S CHRISTMAS IN WALES:** Presented by Vox Humana on Wednesday, December 24 at 2:30 pm in the Sanctuary. Go [HERE](#) for more information as it becomes available.

 **ANNUAL RECOVERY CHRISTMAS DINNER:** Presented by St. Andrew’s and the Recovery Christmas Dinner Committee on Thursday December 25 at 12:00 - 2:00 pm in the Kirk Hall. Everyone is welcome to enjoy a free buffet style Turkey dinner at St. Andrew’s Kirk Hall. Email recoverychristmasdinner@gmail.com for more information about the event.



The poster features a purple background with festive holly leaves and berries in the corners. At the top, it says 'SHELBOURNE Community KITCHEN' with a logo of three stylized figures. Below that, 'HOLIDAY FOOD DRIVE' is written in large white letters, followed by the dates 'November 19 - December 19' and the slogan 'Getting Good Food to Good People'. A white rounded rectangle contains a list of 'Most Needed Donations' with green checkmarks next to each item. At the bottom, it provides the donation drop-off location and times, a QR code for cash donations, and a thank you message with the website URL.

Most Needed Donations

- ✓ **Canned Proteins:** canned plain beans, canned tuna/salmon/ham, peanut/nut butters, dried beans and lentils
- ✓ **Vegetables/Fruits:** Low-sodium canned vegetables, low-sugar canned fruit, apple sauce, fruit cups for kids lunches
- ✓ **Canned Tomatoes**
- ✓ **Drinks/Dairy Alternatives:** Coffee, tea, juice boxes, shelf-stable unsweetened milk alternatives (rice, soy, almond, coconut etc.)
- ✓ **Grains:** Rice, pasta, whole grain cereals, oatmeal, crackers, granola bars, gluten-free options
- ✓ **Kitchen Essentials:** pasta sauce, cooking oil, sugar, spices
- ✓ **Instant Meals:** baked beans, canned soups, stews, instant noodles, craft dinner. Low-sodium and gluten-free alternatives in high demand
- ✓ **Toilet Paper**

Foods must be unopened and in their original package

DONATION DROP OFF: 101-3787 Cedar Hill Rd.
Tuesday 4PM - 7PM
Wednesday & Thursday 10AM - 1PM

Cash Donations



Thank You for Your Support

www.shelbourncommunitykitchen.ca