

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church**

*traditional land of the Three Fires Confederacy: the Odawa, Potawatami and Ojibwe.*

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**Worship This Week Dec 31, 2024**

**Piano prelude** – Marilyn Wranich

**Sound/powerpoint/livestream** –

**WELCOME – PRAYER**

**SONGS** – 166 Once in Royal David's city, 173 We Three Kings

**YOUNG & YOUNG AT HEART** – Rita

**Kid's PRAYER** –

**SONG** – 373 Jesus loves me

**RECEIVE OFFERING** –

**ANNOUNCEMENTS** –

**GOOD NEWS MOMENTS** –

**PRAYER REQUESTS/PRAYER** –

**SCRIPTURE** – [Luke 2:21-40](#)

*Before we read the scripture, consider the logistics. We know that Mary and Joseph traveled from their hometown of Nazareth to Bethlehem to be counted in the census. It's about 150 km, which today would take about two and a half hours by car. On foot, it would take 36 hours – several days. Given the distance, It's likely that the family remained in Bethlehem because it was only about eight km to the Temple in Jerusalem, where God-fearing Jews would present their children to the Lord at the appropriate time. This would have been more than a month after the birth because a woman would not be allowed to enter the Temple until she was ritually pure – which would be 40 days following birth.*

Eight days later, when the baby was circumcised, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel even before he was conceived. Then it was time for their purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so his parents took

him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. The law of the Lord says, “If a woman’s first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the Lord.” So they offered the sacrifice required in the law of the Lord—“either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.” At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying, “Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace, as you have promised. I have seen your salvation, which you have prepared for all people. He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!” Jesus’ parents were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them, and he said to Mary, the baby’s mother, “This child is destined to cause many in Israel to fall, and many others to rise. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose him. As a result, the deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your very soul.” Anna, a prophet, was also there in the Temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. Her husband died when they had been married only seven years. Then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshipping God with fasting and prayer. She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem. When Jesus’ parents had fulfilled all the requirements of the law of the Lord, they returned home to Nazareth in Galilee. There the child grew up healthy and strong. He was filled with wisdom, and God’s favour was on him.

**MESSAGE –** How many of you are currently waiting for something? It could be a package in the mail or a letter. It could be test results. It could be the return of a family member or friend you haven’t seen in years. It could be something that you’ve always wanted to do but were waiting for the right time. Or it could be an answer to prayer. And so on. We are all waiting for one thing or another.

Waiting is not enjoyable. Imagine Simeon and Anna. We’re not told how old Simeon is, but we get a clue: he “was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord’s Messiah.” We do not know

exactly what the Holy Spirit told Simeon. All we know is that he was told to go to the Temple on that day. The next thing we know, the baby Jesus was in Simeon's arms and he declared: "Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace, as you have promised. I have seen your salvation, which you have prepared for all people. He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!"

**There was no** indication that Simeon was surprised to find the Messiah in the form of a six-week-old child. This is because the Spirit had prepared him for that. The Spirit told Simeon, and he believed. This indicates Simeon's ability to trust. Contrast that with Zechariah – the father of John the Baptist – who didn't believe the angel who told him that his wife would become pregnant at an advanced age. Contrast that with Serai, the wife of Abraham, who laughed when she was reminded by another angel that she would bear a child.

Then along came Anna, who Luke called "a prophet." We know she is elderly because we are given a number, 84. It's entirely possible that she was much older than this. Depending on how the words are translated into English, it's possible she'd been a widow for 84 years, which would make her at least 100. Luke adds the comment: "she was very old." Unlike Simeon, who could then be able to be at peace, Anna "talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem." She was the bearer of Good News.

It was a similar situation with the shepherds after the angels gave them the good news that a Saviour had been born. "And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger." After seeing the Christ child, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished."

**So here we** have a few shepherds, and two elderly people who were graced with Great News and given permission to spread it far and wide. However, the news didn't exactly go viral. People were told, but it didn't capture the imagination of the people. It was not God's plan for the Christ child to be immediately recognized as the Messiah. His time would come.

The words of the shepherds did register with Mary and Joseph and they remained with them. The shepherd's story of the angels did have an impact on Mary, who "kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often." (Luke 2:19.) We are told

that “Jesus’ parents were amazed” at what Simeon said about their child. Then Simeon blessed them, and he said to Mary . . . ‘This child is destined to cause many in Israel to fall, and many others to rise. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose him. As a result, the deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your very soul.’ ”

The disciple Luke included this in his Gospel, which was published 30-40 years after the crucifixion. This and the other Gospels only became widely accepted about 300 years after that. The quest is: why did God greatly bless the shepherds, Simeon and Anna with this news, only for it to go nowhere beyond the parents – and for subsequent generations through the Gospel of Luke?

**We can only** take the facts and draw conclusions based on our knowledge of how God works and the guidance of The Holy Spirit. What I am being led to conclude is that the shepherds, Simeon and Anna are inspiration for all people at any time in history to be open to Great News concerning revival in the church. You might ask, “what about the Magi, the Three Kings from the East, who traveled afar, following the star and brought expensive and useful gifts?” Only the Gospel of Matthew mentions them and it’s likely that they arrived anywhere from 40 days to two years after the birth. Because they were important people, their appearance was not unnoticed. When King Herod got wind of it, all hell broke loose – literally. He ordered the killing of every male child under the age of two. Unimaginable. But this is a brutal reminder of how the devil is working in our world, how he stops at nothing in his attempts to destroy the church.

This is one reason why God often works quietly, sowing seeds, tending the orchards, caring for the flock and doing the harvest just at the right time. God makes His appearances on a big stage from time to time, but only when necessary. This is why the first 33 years of Jesus life were spent quietly. With the exception of the birth and the dedication at the Temple, they were under the radar. The news only went viral when Jesus began his public ministry. And that only lasted three years.

Our story today concerns the shepherds, Simeon and Anna.

**Consider that** they were ordinary people. Sheep herding was low on the economic scale at that point in history. A modern equivalent might be someone who cares for young children or for the elderly. They are vital occupations but they do not get the appropriate

respect or income. As for Simeon and Anna, there's no indication that they were wealthy or important – only that they were faithful.

**They were** dedicated to what they did. The shepherds didn't work 9-5. During the seasons when the flocks were outside, they cared and protected them day and night. Anna spent her entire days in the Temple, praying. If she didn't actually live in a room there she would have lived nearby.

**We can be** inspired by the faith of the shepherds and the ordinary people of Jesus day – Simeon and Anna especially. These two precious souls were praying and waiting patiently for the Next Big Thing. We are invited to do the same. The church is ready for renewal because it is badly needed – the modern institution was developed hundreds of years ago and we still operate as though it's 1950. The First World is desperate for a Great Awakening, a massive outpouring of the Holy Spirit which is received by people who are in desperate need of hope, peace, joy and God's love.

When it comes, it will likely be delivered to faithful who live simply and in great expectation. When it arrives, we are invited to take it in our arms, bless it and praise God.

They believed. They had what Jesus would call "childlike faith." Later in the Luke's Gospel, he recorded Jesus prayer of thanksgiving: "At that same time Jesus was filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit, and he said, "O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike. Yes, Father, it pleased you to do it this way. My Father has entrusted everything to me. No one truly knows the Son except the Father, and no one truly knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." (Luke 10:21-22)

The inspiration for us today is that God is more likely to touch and inspire ordinary people. God can speak to people from all walks of life – and I have no doubt that he speaks to the rich and famous, but only if they actually seek Him. The sad truth is that many of us in North America and the developed world, who are wealthy by world standards, are increasingly less likely to believe. Many of us don't see a need for God. Some of us actually think we are our own gods and when we die we are able to reappear in a new form, either in the spirit world or by reincarnation. I understand the thinking,

because on a rational/logical level, the God of the old and new testaments doesn't fit with logic.

The reality is that God isn't supposed to fit this world, because the world has been given over to Satan. And the human heart is naturally evil. Jesus knew that and didn't trust any one of us completely. That's why we need God to be our salvation from this mess and our hope and strength.

This is the truth which was revealed to the sheep herder, and the ordinary but very faithful people who were drawn to God and the Temple. It is the same truth which is eagerly accepted by those with faith today, those who see that the world is a mess and that God in three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – is the only way out.

**HYMN** – 811 Standing at the portal

**BENEDICTION** –

**PRAYER** -- Requests may be sent to the pastor, either for sharing or in confidence. If a need is not listed here it's because the family has opted for privacy.

**NEW PRAYER**

1. Blessings upon the upcoming marriage of Emma Richards to Craig Denys on Jan. 6.
2. New hope, peace and joy and love from whatever our situation as we prepare to welcome a new year.

**CONTINUE TO PRAY**

Health and healing –

1. Ellen Robinson healing from triple bypass.
2. Doug Robinson healing from a stroke.
3. Bruce Stephens: pain, radiation treatments and scheduled surgery
4. Colin Paterson, radiation therapy for prostate cancer
5. Rev. Mary Templar, brain injury: difficulty reading
6. Park Street Place: residents, staff and owner
7. For all those recovering from surgical procedures.
8. Pat McKinnon's friend Linda, Becky Desjardine, Margaret Follows, Ron Mason, Bette Northcott, Karen Northcott, Tom O'Neill, Cherie Pegg, Sandra Pegg, Julie Shaw, Sandra Whitson
9. Anyone seeking or undergoing treatment for addictions
10. Anyone wrestling with anxiety and depression

Seniors and shut ins – Betty Bradley at Albany Retirement Home Petrolia, Dianne Richards at Park Street Place, Jim Lusk at Oaks Wallaceburg, Lane Douglas and Ross Fuchs at Fairfield Park in Wallaceburg, Aubrey Butler at home.

Elders on session – Mark Labadie 519-359-4842, Cindy Brewer 519-683-4113, Sheila Eves 519-683-4148, Andrew Neely 519-359-8903, Mark Richards 519-809-9175 and Julie Shaw 226-627-1953.

Board of managers – Wendy Weston (chair), Will Brewer, Linda Malott, Jenn Mason, Von Parking, Mark Richards, Jodie Rich, Bob Vriesema and Mike Wicks.

**WE'RE HIRING:** [A new administrative assistant](#). To start anytime.

### **WHAT'S UP:**

Edict of Ordination – Bob Vriesema, a member of this congregation, has been nominated and duly elected to the eldership by this congregation, and has been approved by the session. Unless some valid objection has been given to the moderator, we will be ordaining him as ruling elder during our regular time of worship on Sunday, January 7, 2024.

Chair Funding – Have you ever considered giving a Christmas gift to the church? This is the year. Session and the Board of Managers have purchased 40 chairs for Rutherford Hall. You are invited to contribute any amount of money towards the Chair Fund.

Weekly email – Send announcements and new info to [standrewspcdresden@gmail.com](mailto:standrewspcdresden@gmail.com)

Presbytery consultant– Grant Fairley met with session and the board on Nov. 25 and will prepare a report prior to a followup meeting early in the new year.

### **DATES**

Dec. 31 – Worship 10:30 a.m.

Jan. 3 – St. Andrew's hosts the Dresden Ministerial at 9 a.m. in Rutherford Hall. Help preparing coffee/snacks is invited. See Pastor Andy

Jan. 7 – Ordination of new ruling elder Bob Vriesema during regular worship

Jan. 8 – Board of Managers 7 p.m.

Jan. 9 – Session

Jan. 23 – 3 p.m. new weekly Bible study begins. We will be reading and discussing scripture. Exact content to be determined.

Feb. 11 – Congregation annual meeting

### **MINISTRY LINKS**

[Renewal Fellowship](#) – Pastor Andy is employed at 40% time as RF's Executive Director. St. Andrew's is the other 60%.

[Dunamis Fellowship Canada](#) – Pastor Andy serves on the Board of Directors.

[Community Counselling Centre](#) of London – Pastor Andy is a Therapist Intern as he works towards a degree in Psycho-Spiritual Counselling and registration as a psychotherapist.

## **WAYS OF GIVING:**

E-transfer [st.andrewspcdresdenon@gmail.com](mailto:st.andrewspcdresdenon@gmail.com). If required by your bank, our treasurer's name is Linda Moore. Her number is 226-627-2727. If you are asked for a security question, please contact your local bank branch.

Bring envelope on Sunday or if you have a key, leave it in the treasurer's mailbox.

Mail it to the church, PO Box 93 Dresden. NOP 1M0.

Gift Cards – You pay face value for the gift cards and the church buys them at a discount through Chatham Christian Schools. Next deadline Jan. 29. Cards will be available for pickup at the church on Feb. 2nd or will be distributed in church on Feb. 4th. Gift card orders are on the website. <https://standrewsdresden.ca/> under the “giving” tab

Send e-transfer AND order forms to [st.andrewspcdresdenon@gmail.com](mailto:st.andrewspcdresdenon@gmail.com). Normal deadline (the last Monday of the month) returns in January.