

Kensington Presbyterian Church Growing in faith and sharing God's love since 1786

In and out of the lion's den

December 8, 2024

WELCOME, we come to you from the un-ceded lands of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation.

We are offering a variety of ways for people to gather. We are welcoming people to worship in person, as well as through Zoom, YouTube, and this printable PDF. If this is how you are worshipping, know that you are not alone... and if you like, you can invite others to join you. Clicking on or tapping blue text will take you to a web-site.

If you have any prayer requests, ideas, or just want to talk, please reach out to your elder or Rev. Peter (Peter@Kensingtonchurch.ca).



Singing: Sundays at 10 opportunity to run through the day's music, and sometimes other tunes.

Friday's Fabulous Food & Film Festival: pizza at 6:30, movie at 7:00 Dec 13: Dr Who Christmas Carol

Carolling: Dec 20

6:30 walking to our neighbours and singing (and hot chocolate) 7:30 gathering around the piano

Blue Christmas: Dec 22 at 7 pm

A quiet worship service for those with struggles.

Jesus & Java: Join us as we share the joys and questions of faith. Thursday, 3:30 pm at Beetz, 5914 Sherbrooke @ Clifton



Daniel in the Lion's Den - B Rivière

Drop Box: Food donations are welcome for the local Food Pantry, diapers for young mothers through Head & Hands.

Zoom Prayer Group: Wednesday at 6:30 a.m. us04web.zoom.us/j/773730107? pwd=eUo2M09YMEw5dkZvdm9uQmpHNlUrUT09

Workshop with Rev. Dr. Pat Durcher-Walls
Biblical Foundations for Narratives of Hope
online - Sat., Jan. 11th from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m
register here: presbyterian.ca/2024/11/25/online-workshop-biblical-foundations-for-narratives-of-hope

Contacts

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I note: that the footnotes are not as thorough as an academic paper.



Approaching God

Call to worship

In a world too often divided, we gather to embrace the gift of peace.

We come with hearts open to reconciliation and understanding.

We light the second candle of Advent, a symbol of God's peace in a troubled world. (Light the candle of peace)

□ Advent Song Chorus.....pg 8

May the light of this candle guide us as we seek to fulfill our calling as peacemakers.

Holy One, strengthen us by your Spirit to commit ourselves to standing against injustice in our communities and the world. Affirm within us a dedication to foster your peace. In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen.

 □ Hymn: Immortal Invisible.....pg 9 (290) www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfu1dgKCGd8

Prayer of Approach

O LORD, our Lord,

how majestic is your name in all the earth! open our hearts in welcome,

that your Son, Jesus the Christ, may find a place to live in us.

We share in the wonder that you, Creator of the universe,

live in and around us.

and invite us to live in you.

Merciful God.

you forgive all who truly regret and turn to you.

We humbly confess our sins and ask your mercy.

We have not loved you with a pure heart,

and we haven't loved our neighbour as ourselves.

We have not pushed for justice,

loved kindness

or walked humbly with you, our God.

Please forgive us.

And may your Spirit take us and mould us into a people that honours you.

Recognizing that one of your tools is the Lord's prayer, we ask you use it to shape us as we sing it this morning:

The Lord's Prayer (please use a version you are comfortable with)

Our Father in heaven.

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours

Amen.



Listening to God

🗼 Children's Time

What is a scary animal? a powerful animal? the king of the animals?

A lion can often be the answer to these questions - especially the last one. For a very long time lions have been used by kings as a symbol of them being a king - they put them as a part of their logo, crest, or coat of arms.



Today while you're making exploring symbols of Christmas we're going to hear a story from before Jesus was born. It involves a king and lions. Back then kings would keep lions to hunt. For them not being killed by the lion, but killing it meant more than just being able to kill it. This was also a symbol that showed that they were powerful and ruler over creation.

But in the story we're going to hear God was able to stop the lions from killing without killing it. God could get the lions to lay down peacefully so that people were safe.

What does this symbolize?

Is God more powerful than the lions?

Does God think killing is how to show you're strong?

Symbols are everywhere and they help us understand more about things - including God.

prayer

Dear Jesus, thank you that you are so powerful, and don't need to hurt anything or anyone to show it.

Amen.

rayer for Illumination

Lord, open our hearts and minds through the power of your Holy Spirit, that we may keep our focus on you.

Amen.

★ Intro to the readings

Today's passage comes from the book of Daniel. This is the most peculiar book in the Older Testament - at least that's the opinion of one of the biggest Jewish experts in the Hebrew Bible. A few of the reasons include

- two very different sections chapter 1-6 are a nice narrative chapter 7-12 are wild apocalyptic dreams that unlike the prophets predicting what might happen, these are what will come to pass.
- the first chapter and a bit are written in Hebrew, with lots of language mistakes, and the rest in Aramaic.
- Historically speaking, there's lots of mistakes.

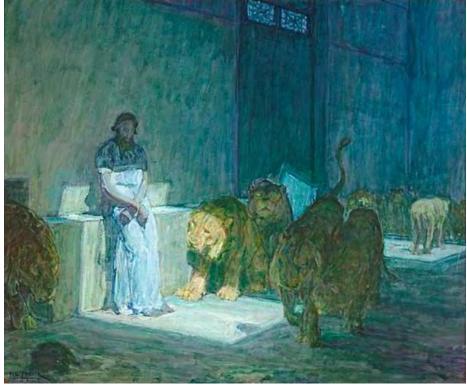
One of the conclusions from this, and that the Jews have never included it in the Prophet's section, is that it isn't intended to be taken as historical fact. The use of languages and references suggest it is the most recent book in the Older Testament - 150 years before Jesus. I'll get into the more in the sermon. The point here is to remember that the intent is not to document something historical, but something else.

While this story doesn't show up in the Common lectionary, I expect you're familiar with it as it's probably in every children's Bible. While fun, I opted not to use those. Listen for what's in this passage.

Reading: Please look up the passages in your own

Bible,² or click on the name to be taken to an online version.

Daniel 6: 1-27



Daniel in the Lion's Den - Henry Ossawa Tanner

Sermon: In and out of the lion's den

Dear Lord, please bless these words

and the meditations of our hearts. Amen.

Daniel and the Lion's Den is a great story, and just because it's in Children's bibles doesn't mean there aren't lessons for adults.

There are many ways to consider the text and what God is

trying to tell us through it. Let's start by taking the story as it is. Here I see two big themes.

The first is about God (although, is there anything that isn't about God?). In this story we have the all powerful Darius, King of the Medes and the Persians. He rules the most powerful Empire known - having taken the Babylonian Empire that was at the beginning of Daniel. Despite this, he is powerless to help Daniel with both the law and the lions. It's reminiscent of the Pharaoh who didn't know what to do and turned to Joseph, or the Pharaoh who couldn't stop God with Moses, or the King of Persia with Esther who seems to be used by everyone, or Pilate who, despite having the power of the Roman Empire, gives in to the crowd... and is shown to be even more powerless when Jesus comes back. In all these examples of powerful leaders, they have no power compared to God.

The second theme is the question of how to live in a society that isn't entirely yours. What do you go along with to be a part of the culture you live in? You could join in because you want to be successful, or to avoid persecution. Daniel and his friends not only co-operated with the empire that had taken over their country, but worked well enough within the system to become the top administrators. This wasn't some covert plan to overthrow the empire. They honestly worked well "so that the king might suffer no loss."

That said, there were things they would not compromise on. In chapter one they refused to eat food that wasn't kosher. Later Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (their Babylonian names, not their given Hebrew names) refused to worship the king's gods and were thrown into the fiery furnace (they came out okay). Today Daniel refuses to give up praying towards Jerusalem and towards God.

Here we have people who will help the larger society do well,

² If you'd like a new Bible with helpful notes, I recommend the 'Life with God Bible' NRSV from Renovaré. ISBN 0061834963 or for the more academically inclined, The New Oxford Study Bible NRSV

but not give up their hope for Jerusalem and worship of God. While this puts them in danger of losing their careers and life, God looks after the faithful.

This is a lovely lesson, especially for a children's story. In the larger picture of the Bible it can be a little more complicated. Many of the prophets suffer abuse because they faithfully deliver God's messages. Some are killed for following God - including the Son of God.

While the story is set in the 6^{th} century BCE, it most likely comes from the early to mid 2^{nd} century BCE. What did it mean for these original listeners of the story?

Their situation was very much like the characters in the story. While they weren't in exile, the Greeks had taken over about 100-150 years earlier. With them came their culture of different names, different foods, different architecture, bath houses, athletes wrestling naked, a pantheon of gods - which was on the money, etc etc. What should a good Jew do? Do you take a Greek name to try and smooth things over? How about some Greek food? If you use money with Greek gods on it does that mean you're supporting them? What about those informal business meetings that happen in the bath house?

And this became a bigger question as the latest King³ placed a statue of Zeus in the Holy Temple, banned circumcision and the Sabbath. The Maccabees felt this needed a violent response. Not everyone agreed. The book of Daniel presents an alternative. God doesn't use violence to subdue the lions. God doesn't use violence on the king. Instead the king changes to support God by seeing how Daniel lives - that Daniel is faithful, and so is God. Bonhoeffer said it like this, "Your life as a Christian should make

nonbelievers question their disbelief in God."

Those hearing the story of Daniel and his friends are reminded of God's power, and to focus on God. Live in your community and do your best to help it - even if this includes a foreign invader. However, don't turn away from God.

Which are good reminders for us too.

We're not in danger of being thrown to the lions, but we do live in a culture that isn't Christian. There are many things in common, but not everything. We need to remember that God is greater than any of the leaders. We also need to figure out what we go along with, and what we don't. Does it matter what our name is? What we eat? As Christians we aren't worried about food being kosher, but we are concerned with helping others. Fair Trade isn't talked about much anymore, but farmers earning a living wage is still an issue with foods that end up in our stores. It would be hard not to use money, but what does it represent? You may not be supporting Zeus, but what are you supporting? And Christmas is a good time to consider this as our society pressures us to buy presents for loved ones... or yourself. What presents help share God's love? and which aren't needed?

What other aspects of Christmas does our culture push on us? There's songs, TV specials, parties, being joyful... or cynical. Is there a place for 'peace on earth and good will to all'?

The 'good will to all' brings out another perspective to our theme of living in the world, but not of it. We've been looking at this as the minority - and Christians are a minority. However we also experience privilege in our global village - and even here in Montréal. If we were observing a group like Daniel's accusers who go looking for ways to tear down the achievements of others -

5/12

³ Antiochus IV in 168 BCE

especially those who are different than us - what do we do? Perhaps it's a different church that is making a connection with their community, and we criticize their theology instead of considering how they are sharing God's love. Perhaps it's a government that tries to change foreigners for their own good - with a foreigner being anyone not like them. This can go horribly wrong, as seen with the treatment of Canada's indigenous peoples. As people of privilege, do we humbly make room for Daniels who worship and live differently than we do?

If you encountered Daniel and the Lion's Den as a child it might just have been an exciting story with lions. It might have included the lesson that God protects and rewards those who are faithful. For us, as for the characters in the story and the original listeners, there's much more.

There's the reminder that God is more powerful than nature and people - and works in ways that are different from earthly kings... such as through the example of faithful people. That we are to participate in the world, helping it to be a good place for all, including those who believe differently than we do, but that we shouldn't compromise what makes us Christians. And there's the reminder to humbly respect others who are also trying to live out their faith as best they understand it - because we know we haven't always got it right.

To God be all the glory Amen.



Responding to God

☐ Hymn: Lo! Christ comes with clouds......pg 11 (120)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=suz0cQbjwm0

FaithTalk: These are some questions for you to discuss with somebody... or many somebodies.

Do what you feel safe (and practice stretching a little).

Etching: If you had to draw and write about something in the Daniel story, what would it be? Describe what you would include.

Values: What values do you find in common with your society (friends, government, or media)? What values do you feel are different?

Actions: How do you preserve the values you find society doesn't care as much about?

Values: If you want to pick up on valuing others, consider going through the new Presbyterian Church confession to Indigenous Peoples. presbyterian.ca/canadian-ministries/indigenous-ministries

Actions: As we are in Advent, how do these thoughts help you prepare for the coming Christmas - and coming of Christ?

Prayer: ...that we will do a good job balancing living in society and maintaining our focus on God.



To my surprise we had 7 new people at the movie night on Friday. One of our regulars had been telling his friends about it and they finally came. Afterwards I received an email of thanks for providing a place where they felt welcome and that God was humbly shared. This is God's Spirit at work through us.

Offering

Financially, we have set up a donation option on our **website**: <u>kensingtonchurch.ca</u>. Just click the '**Donate Now**' button, and then the pretty button. It gives you various options that are easy to follow.

You can also donate through **interac e-transfer**. Our name is Kensington Presbyterian Church and the e-mail address is info@kensingtonchurch.ca.

Mailing a cheque or signing up for Pre-Authorized Remittance (**PAR**) are also good options.

♪ Prayers of the people

This week we are going to try bringing the prayer book back. Those in the building will have a chance throughout the early part of worship to write down what they are thankful for, or concerned about. These thoughts will be worked into the prayer.

Those of you at home may use this as a guide.

Gracious God, we pray for the faithful all over the world, that all who love you may be united in your service. We pray for the church . . . Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We pray for the peoples and leaders of the nations, that they may be reconciled one to another in pursuit of your justice and peace.

We pray for the world . . .

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We pray for all who suffer from prejudice, greed, or violence, that the heart of humanity may warm with your tenderness. We pray especially for all prisoners of politics or religion and for all refugees.

We pray for all who are oppressed \ldots

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We pray for all in need because of famine, flood, or earthquake, that they may know the hope of your faithfulness through the help of others.

We pray especially for the people of . . .

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We pray for the land, the sea, the sky—
for your whole creation, which longs for its redemption.
We pray that we may live with respect for your creation
and use your gifts with reverence.
We pray for the creation . . .
Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We pray for all who suffer the pain of sickness, loneliness, fear, or loss, that those whose names are in our hearts, in the hearts of others, or known to you alone, may receive strength and courage.

We pray for those in need . . .

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Now the wait - ing has be - gun; Think of hum - ble shep - herds, who

Advent Song (Light the Advent Candle)

C/E

2. Light

the Ad - vent can - dle, one:

the Ad - vent can - dle, two:

God of compassion, into your hands we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy now and forever.

Amen.4

☐ Hymn: Ye watchers and ye holy ones.....pg 12 (607)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=3w4D3Atcdyw

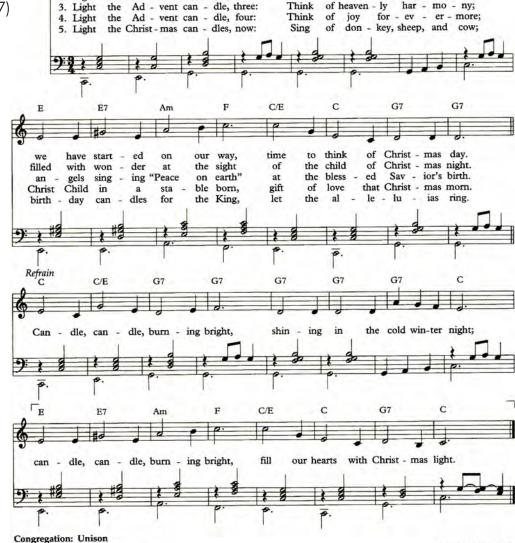
🗚 Benediction (Ephesians 3:20-21)

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine,

to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever.

Amen.





4 Worship Sourcebook 4.4.18

Rev. Peter Rombeek K4nsington Presbyterian Church WORDS: Mary Lu Walker (Luke 2:1-20)

MUSIC: Mary Lu Walker © 1975 Mary Lu Walker ADVENT CANDLE SONG

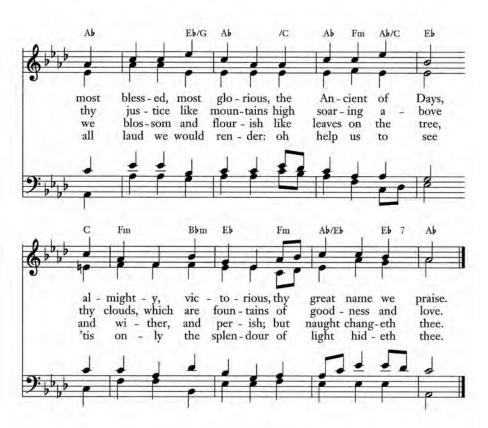
77.77 with Refrain

Immortal, invisible, God only wise



Words: Walter Chalmers Smith (1824–1908) Music: Welsh folk song from Caniadau y Cyssegr 1839; arrangement, John Roberts (1822–1877); descant, C.S. Lang (1891–1971)

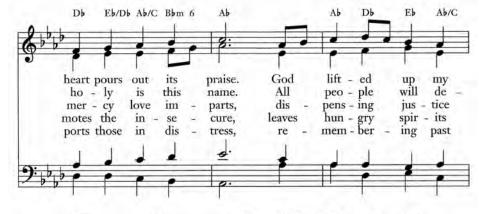
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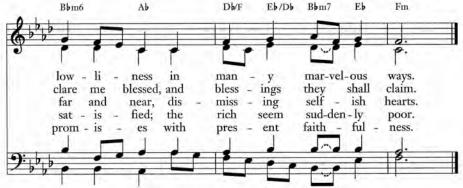


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My soul gives glory to my God







Words: Miriam Therese Winter (1938-) Music: anonymous, 1811; in Wyeth's Repository of Sacred Music 1813; harmony, C. Winfred Douglas (1867-1944) CCLI #4440603

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Rev. Peter Rombeek

MISSION MOMENT

Sunday, December 8

In Ghana, 12-year-old Abigail Awini became physically challenged shortly after birth, which left her unable to walk. Abigail's father died when she was just four years old, and shortly thereafter, her mother left. Abigail's grandmother, a poor farmer, became her caregiver. During a community survey, Abigail was registered for support from PWS&D's partner, the Garu Centre. With their



advice, her grandmother enrolled her in school. Unable to move independently, Abigail's grandmother carried her on her back daily until Abigail got too big and had to drop out of school. However, the project supported Abigail with a tricycle to enhance her mobility. "The life of my granddaughter has changed," shares her grandmother. Abigail found independence and was able to resume her schooling.

DAILY PRAYERS

Sunday, December 8 (2nd Sunday of Advent) We pray for those who grieve the death of someone they love—whose presence they miss with an ache too deep for words. Help us not to fear our grief, for it is a sign of how much we loved the one who now rejoices with the saints in God's presence.

Monday, December 9 We pray for Knox College students as they complete the Fall semester and journey through this Advent season to Christmas, for rest and renewal in time spent with family and friends.

Tuesday, December 10 (Human Rights Day of Prayer) We give thanks that women leaders in Nicaragua are receiving training in small business development with PWS&D support and are becoming better able to meet their families' needs.

Wednesday, December 11 We pray for people who are experiencing challenges conceiving or adopting children.

Thursday, December 12 We pray for the Continuing Education Grants Committee which meets this month and for grant recipients as they use their learning to enrich the ministries.

Friday, December 13 We pray for the proposed new pathway to ordained ministry for prospective Indigenous ministry students, which will help heal the relationship between Indigenous people, the church and country.

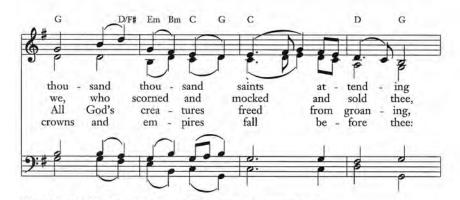
Saturday, December 14 As people gather with families and friends during the Christmas season, we pray for those who are experiencing loneliness.

Lo! Christ comes with clouds

HELMSLEY 878747



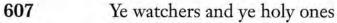




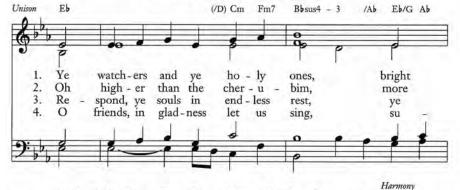
Words: Charles Wesley (1707–1788), alt; v.3, James P. Martin (1923–) Music: adaptation, Thomas Olivers (1725–1799)

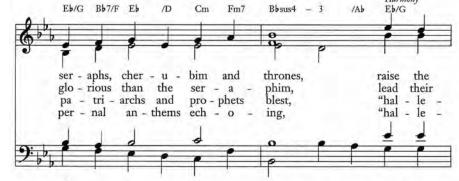
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LASST UNS ERFREUEN 884488 with hallelujahs







Words: John Athelstan Laurie Riley (1858–1945) Music: Auserlesene Katholische Geistliche Kirchengesänge, Cologne 1623; harmony, Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

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