

Message from Archbishop Anne – the Second Week of Advent

December 11th, 2024

“Peace be with you, my peace I give you.” (John 14.27)



Ukrainian Christmas Tree – “Let us glorify Him.”

Two candles burn on the Advent wreath this week; the first for Hope and the second for Peace.

Peace in our turbulent world, remains an elusive yet more essential treasure than ever. It is not merely the absence of war but the presence of ‘shalom’, the wholeness of body, mind and spirit. The wholeness that God desires for every human and for the whole world. True peace transcends external conflicts but reaching deep within, fosters compassion, understanding and unity among people.

Peace is the quiet strength that bridges divides, that heals wounds and that offers hope amid chaos. Jesus offered this kind of peace with his wounded hands outstretched as he appeared to his frightened followers in the Upper Room following his resurrection. “*Peace be with you,*” he said as he breathed on them. Then he went on to say, “*As the Father has sent me, so I send you.*” (John 20.21) Covered with the breath of God we are to carry that message of peace out into our world.

“*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards all people,*” (Luke 2.14) the angels sang as they announced the good news of Jesus birth to shepherds in a field outside Bethlehem. Through Christ, all humanity is offered peace with God, inner peace, and the hope of peace among all people.

On Sunday afternoon members of our Cathedral presented a beautiful nativity play to the wider community. It was titled *Unto Us a Child is Born*. Through music, words of scripture and we heard again the story of Christ’s birth. Much to the delight of everyone present there was even a real baby Jesus. Delightful!

One of the highlights of the occasion was a mural painted by Helen-Mary Carter and Karen Nisbet and constructed by Don Hernden. It remains in the narthex of St. Luke’s and is dedicated to the people of Ukraine as they continue to live in the midst of war while longing for peace. Helen Mary and Karen were inspired by Dean Emeritus James McShane’s poetic lyric, created for the choir to remember the Ukrainian people during the ongoing conflict. “*We pray for peace, that guns may cease, that skies be free of bombs, your Spirit comfort those distressed, and those who fear the dawn.*” (McShane) In the Second Week of Advent we offer that prayer for people everywhere who are living in a state of war that God’s peace may reign.

In this Second Week of Advent, as God’s faithful people let us pray in hope and expectation:

To a fearful and divided world.

Come, Lord Jesus.

To all places torn apart by violence.

Come, Lord Jesus.

To the peoples of Ukraine

Come, Lord Jesus.

To the peoples of Sudan.

Come, Lord Jesus

To the peoples of the Middle East

Come, Lord Jesus

To the leaders of the nations

Come, Lord Jesus

To all who are homeless and hungry

Come, Lord Jesus

To all weighed down by fear and despair

Come, Lord Jesus

To those who are sick in body, mind and spirit

Come, Lord Jesus

To those in the valley of the shadow of death

Come, Lord Jesus

To your broken body, the church

Come, Lord Jesus

To each one of us

Come, Lord Jesus

With love and compassion

Come, Lord Jesus

With judgment and mercy

Come, Lord Jesus

In power and glory

Come, Lord Jesus

In wisdom and truth

Come, Lord Jesus.

(Prayer from Church of England Morning Prayer Monday December 9th, 2024)

May the peace of Christ reign in your hearts as we continue our journey through Advent.



Description of the Ukrainian Christmas Tree by Helen Mary Carter.

“Our Ukrainian Christmas tree is created in the Ukrainian folk-art style and includes specific and traditional symbols of the Ukrainian people. The octagon star is the symbol for joy and is often carried by carolers. The **Didukh** or sheaf of wheat stalk symbolizes ancestor's spirits that, during holidays, spend time with their families. It symbolizes harvest prosperity, wealth, immortality and the spiritual life of Ukrainians. It is also a talisman of the family. **Pavuchky**, or little spider, symbolizes good luck and is found in every Ukrainian Christmas tree. Our tinsel comes from the web story of the spider. The Ukrainian flag uses the colours of the blue sky and yellow of the wheat fields. In our mural, those colours are represented in the trident that is an independence

Petrykivka or floral motifs and fruits along with birds and animals are depicted along with fantasy shrubs and plants. These motifs are decorative and can be found in clothing and fabrics. Our border print represents the red poppy of the shed blood of the Cossacks and commemorates victims of the World Wars.

Our colours are very specific in their meaning. White represents purity, light, birth. Yellow is the sun, stars, moon, harvest, warmth, youth and happiness. Orange is endurance, strength and ambition. Red means happiness, hope, passion, sun. Blue stands for sky, air, good health. Green means spring, hope, freshness and renewal. Brown is Mother Earth. Black is the darkest time before dawn, eternity and respect for the dead. The traditional Christmas greeting is "Christ is Born" and the response, "Let us Glorify Him".

The Christmas story you will recognize in our mural: Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem with Mary on a donkey, the three wise men, Melchior from Persia, Gaspar from India, and Balthazar from Arabia. The angel Gabriel visiting the shepherds and the stable where Christ is born amid the Ox (St. Luke's symbol) and the donkey, the lambs and the dove of peace.”



Helen Mary Carter, Karen Nisbet and Don Hernden with the Ukrainian Christmas Tree