



**Prayer of Thanksgiving:** God's wisdom is a gift to anyone who asked him in faith. **"5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind."** (Jas 1:5-6 ESV)

Please do not forget to pray for all the shut-ins and isolated brothers and sisters in our congregations Mrs. Jack and C. Campbell (Fredericton) and J. Steffes (Caribou, Me), Mr. Ross Bathurst, P. Ward (Saint John) and others.

**Open Hand Food Bank – Moncton** - is in need of grocery plastic bags to give out food to those in need. If you are interested in donating your unused grocery bags, you can bring them to church and someone will collect them and bring them over. Those who want to bring food to give to the **Open Food Bank** may do so by bringing to church and giving it to **Michael M.** of the Moncton congregation.

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**ACTIVITIES FOR THE MONTH OF September 2018**

Times of worship services: **Moncton** – 10:30 AM every Sunday

In **Saint John**, worship services will be October 14 and 28

**Communion**- on the second and fourth Sunday of the month.

**Address: Moncton**—70 King St. —Sage building;

**Saint John**—50 Newport Cres., Portland United church.

**Friday, October 5 and Saturday, October 6** – Thanksgiving celebration same venue as last year – Congregational Christian Church of Moncton, 1530 Ryan St, Moncton.

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**Please** thank God that the GCI members were not affected by the tornadoes that caused so much destruction in the Ottawa and Gatineau area on the weekend. The most damage incurred was one of our GCI member having a few shingles ripped off from his roof. Please pray for all our other brothers and sisters from other denominations living in those areas as well as everyone affected by this very sudden and powerful tornado.

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**The good news of the gospel is a message to be shared with others.** Please pray that God will give us the love and wisdom to be able to share this message with others in a loving, clear and confident matter as we participate in his missional work on the earth in our generation. **"5 ¶ Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. 6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person."** (Col 4:5-6 ESV)

**Please pray** that God will put an end to the senseless violence happening in North America continent and other parts of the world.

**Pray that we will see the good works that God has prepared for us in advance** so that we can enthusiastically participate in the on-going work He is doing now on this earth in bringing people in relationship with him in Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

**Please pray, as per Jesus instructions, the disciples prayer, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. <sup>10</sup>Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"** (Matt 6:9-10) as our world is suffering so much and in need of complete restoration by the King of kings, Jesus. As we are his royal priesthood, let us proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light, as we are instructed in 1 Peter 2.

**Pray for the world and for all people:** we live in a world that does not know the way to peace. Important to pray as we are instructed by the apostle Paul — **"1 ¶ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful**

### **ABOUT WORSHIP MUSIC**

Posted by GCI Update on September 19, 2018 under [From the President](#) |

Dear Brothers and Sisters,



Joseph and Tammy Tkach

One of the great blessings I've enjoyed during my 22 years as GCI President is sharing worship in multiple languages and styles with GCI congregations around the world. At times the worship music was so joyously uplifting that I had a hard time standing still! I always appreciated it when the music was carefully coordinated with the theme of the service and presented at a volume that was just right. I enjoyed it when the worship leader provided fitting short segues from one song to the next, thus facilitating a seamless flow. Yes, there were those times when the music was not well-planned and presented. On a few occasions, members apologized to Tammy or me for music that was of poor quality. I mention this, not to embarrass anyone, but to encourage all who plan, lead and perform worship music to offer their best to God and to their congregation.



A skillful worship team leading worship in GCI's Columbus, OH, congregation.

Though we have skilled singers and instrumentalists in many of our congregations (like the one pictured above), not everyone has the skill needed to lead or perform worship music well. This doesn't mean that to be on a worship team you must be a musical genius like Johann Sebastian Bach. After playing one of Bach's choral preludes, Felix Mendelssohn said, "If I had lost all my religious faith, this thing alone would be sufficient to restore it." Though Bach worked various jobs to support himself, his great passion in life was proclaiming the gospel through music. It's always a delight to be led in worship by people who are both passionate and gifted for this vital ministry.

I know that many of our congregations do not have access to gifted worship leaders or musicians. I join them in praying that God will bring those human resources their way. In the meantime, there are multiple resources they can

draw upon in providing worshipful music in their church services each week. Toward that end, let me offer some related observations concerning worship music. These observations come from my own experience and comments I've received from many people.

#### **Volume**

Tammy and I recently visited the worship service at a medium-size church not far from our home. I was investigating the possibility of being a guest preacher there in the future. As the worship music began, Tammy and I could feel the bones in our chests vibrate and our ears begin to hurt. Tammy went to the back of the hall and an usher asked if he could help. She explained that she was trying to locate a place where it was not so loud. When he offered her earplugs, she thought he was kidding (we discovered that this is how the congregation assists people who feel the music is too loud). To avoid the pain she continued to feel, Tammy remained in the lobby until the music ended.

My point in mentioning this is that worship music need not be painfully loud to be impactful. God is not hard of hearing. The purpose of music in worship is to help people share in Jesus' worship of the Father, and when the volume creates pain, it causes people to focus on their discomfort rather than on God. Some of the most powerful worship I've participated in is when the congregation was singing acapella (without instrumental accompaniment). But no matter how the music is presented, the focus should not be the music itself, but Who the music refers us to—our triune God, celebrating his nature and character.

#### **Commentary between songs**

Effective worship leaders avoid mini-sermons between songs. They understand that the goal of worship leading is not to be the star of a great performance, but to be an unobtrusive prompter who helps the congregation focus on our triune God. Though we all enjoy stories, the space between songs is not the time to tell them. Lengthy comments are also unhelpful and distracting, especially when they are theologically unsound. I once heard a worship leader invite Jesus into the service (as though he was absent). Perhaps they were unaware that Jesus, as God, is omnipresent. A better comment

would have been, "Let's join with Jesus, our true worship leader, who promises to be with us, even if only two or three of us are gathered." Comments introducing a song should relate the song to the theme of the service as reflected in the Scripture readings and sermon. When all elements of the service follow one theme, there are fewer distractions and people are helped to focus on one, central word from the Lord.

### Orderly worship

Careful preparation leading to orderliness avoids "worship killers." Perhaps you've been in a church service in which the music was provided using CDs or DVDs. But the operator was unfamiliar with the equipment and the order of songs and so there were multiple, embarrassing starts and stops. Having the song list ahead of time enables the sound crew to make sure the transitions are smooth and the volume is consistent. In that way distractions are minimized and the worship has a harmony and coherence that aligns with who our Triune God is.

#### Introducing new songs

I've been in services where the worship leader introduced several new songs, then lamented the congregation's lack of participation! It is not helpful to introduce new songs each week. Let your congregation get used to a repertoire so they can sing the worship songs well and thus participate fully without too much effort. When a new song needs to be introduced, a good way to do so is to have it performed during the offering when members can focus on the words and be moved by its message. Please don't introduce a new song to close a service. It's best that most of the songs be ones the congregation knows well. This not only helps regular attenders, it helps visitors to be comfortable—imagine what a visitor experiences when they see most of the congregation struggling through a song.

### Conclusion

I love visiting GCI congregations and sharing worship with them. I want all our members, as well as our visitors and guests to experience the joy that comes with worshiping our triune God in song. When we worship together, from the heart, we experience part of the communion shared by the Father, Son and Spirit. Enabling and enhancing the congregation's worship of God in song is a high calling and I hope these thoughts will help those who provide this important ministry week in and week out.

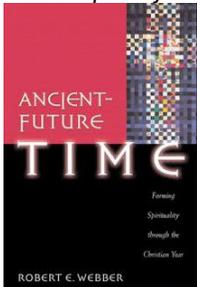
Always worshipping,  
Joseph Tkach

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## Inhabiting the Christian Worship Year: Advent

Posted: 19 Sep 2018 03:01 PM PDT (from [http://thesurprisinggodblog.gci.org/2018/09/inhabiting-christian-worship-year-advent.html?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+gci%2FzGUy+%28The+Surprising+God%29](http://thesurprisinggodblog.gci.org/2018/09/inhabiting-christian-worship-year-advent.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+gci%2FzGUy+%28The+Surprising+God%29))

This is part 2 of a journey through the Western Christian Calendar, inviting us to think deeply about how its liturgy helps us inhabit, and so be shaped by the gospel. For part 1, <http://thesurprisinggodblog.gci.org/2018/09/inhabiting-christian-worship-year.html>



The Western Christian worship year begins with Advent—a season spanning the four Sundays prior to Christmas (in 2018 the first Sunday of Advent is December 2). Writing about the meaning of Advent, Robert E. Webber in *Ancient Future Time: Forming Spirituality through the Christian Year* offers this comment: "Advent is the time when God breaks in on us with new surprises and touches us with a renewing and restoring power. In Christian-year worship and spirituality we call upon God for a new breaking in, a fresh outpouring of his Spirit. (p. 38)"

The Advent Season is a powerful and important reminder that God is not remote, aloof or uninvolved. It tells us that God has come, is coming and will come again ("advent" means "coming"). This truth helps offset a

message that is prevalent in our me-centered, self-sufficient, individualistic culture: *I can do it on my own, thank you!*

As shown below, the Year C Revised Common Lectionary (RCL) scripture readings include passages from the Old Testament book of Isaiah. The prophet Isaiah lived in the presence of God (e.g., Isa. 6:1, 3)—quite a contrast with how most people (Christians included) live life in a world where signs of God's glory are drowned out by the "noise" of everyday existence. Isaiah bids us look beyond what we normally focus on to see the presence of the Lord who judges us, heals us and restores us. What a powerful truth to remember as we begin a new worship year—a year of inhabiting and so being formed anew by the gospel story.

Date	First reading	Psalm	Second reading	Gospel
<b>First Sunday of Advent</b> December 2, 2018	<u>Jeremiah 33:14-16</u>	<u>Psalm 25:1-10</u>	<u>1 Thess. 3:9-13</u>	<u>Luke 21:25-36</u>
<b>Second Sunday of Advent</b> December 9, 2018	<u>Malachi 3:1-4</u>	<u>Luke 1:68-79</u>	<u>Philippians 1:3-11</u>	<u>Luke 3:1-6</u>
<b>Third Sunday of Advent</b> December 16, 2018	<u>Zephaniah 3:14-20</u>	<u>Isaiah 12:2-6</u>	<u>Philippians 4:4-7</u>	<u>Luke 3:7-18</u>
<b>Fourth Sunday of Advent</b> December 23, 2018	<u>Micah 5:2-5a</u>	<u>Psalm 80:1-7</u>	<u>Hebrews 10:5-10</u>	<u>Luke 1:39-45, (46-55)</u>

Isaiah's message to God's people was to repent---to get a fresh vision of God; to lay aside empty worship and be transformed by the presence of God and renewed by the hope of his promise to send the Messiah. Though that hope has already been fulfilled for us with the birth of Jesus, Advent stops just short of celebrating the birth and focuses on the promise---the hope of the Messiah's coming to earth in the flesh.

As seen the list of RCL readings (above), Advent begins by looking forward to the promise of Jesus' return and his setting up of the fulness of the kingdom of God with a new heaven and new earth. It then continues with our rejoicing in the reality that Jesus, by the Spirit, is with us now, then concludes with the announcements of the Messiah's coming via the birth of the Christ child. Combined, these messages are about both anticipation (longing and hope) as well as the joy of fulfillment. We are reminded once again that Jesus will come, is coming and has come.



By starting the new worship year with the promise of Jesus' second coming, we begin with a time of great longing, hope and expectation concerning the final consummation of all that God has promised. We anticipate the time when all evil will be banished, and the earth will be restored to what is promised (e.g., Isa. 65 and Rev. 20-22). We begin with the realization that evil is doomed---that it has no future, as Webber notes: *The ultimate word in history is the triumph of God, the reign of God's kingdom, the eternal and lasting rule of the good.... We are promised that evil will be judged and done away with and all will be made whole. This is the vision we want to carry with us as we view the news and visit hospitals, psychiatric wards, and prisons of our world. Christian hope is an optimism about life that is grounded in Christ and celebrated again and again in the liturgy of the church.* (p. 50)

As noted above, Advent Season celebrations stop short of celebrating Jesus' birth. Instead there is a

remembering of the promise of his birth---a sharing in Israel's longing for the Messiah's coming---in our case his coming at an even deeper level, by the Spirit, in our own lives, as Webber notes:

*"Because Advent is a time of longing for redemption, we should use the Advent season as a period to identify the matters from which we need to be redeemed. Identify whatever it is that seems to be holding you in its power... [then] commit it to the one who comes to set the prisoners free, turn it over to Christ in prayer, and ask the one who is to come into your life to take this problem up into himself.* (p. 51)." This is no idle exercise, for it reminds us precisely of what the incarnate Son of God accomplished by taking upon himself our diseased, sin-sick humanity and redeeming (healing) it. Advent is a time for us to be reminded of why the coming of Jesus is so important, to

meditate on that in such a way that Christ is birthed anew in our hearts by the power of his indwelling Spirit. Advent is the season during which longing for and trust in Jesus is renewed, as Webber notes:

*“What is at stake during Advent is an assessment of our current state of faith and living and our commitment to keep on living in the hope to which we have been called. (p.52)”*

Next time we'll look at Christmas season, which begins with Christmas Day and extends for 12 days.

**GCI principle** website and Moncton Websites—[www.gci.org](http://www.gci.org), [www.worshipim.ca](http://www.worshipim.ca), [www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton](https://www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton); For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website. *Contact Information: Pastor's contact information: email—[evautour47@outlook.com](mailto:evautour47@outlook.com)*