



Be like Andrew. Bring a Friend!

St. Andrew's Day and Advent 1A || November 30, 2025, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Hanover, MA 02339 ||
Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122; Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:36-44 ||The Rev. Amy Whitcomb Slemmer, Esq

Please let me be the first to wish you – HAPPY NEW YEAR! Happy St. Andrew's Day! Happy first Sunday of Advent. What does the joyful convergence of these three marvelous milestones share? You and I – all of us, whether in person or on-line – are here together to celebrate our patron saint's feast day and the beginning of Advent which is a rare and wonderful occurrence.

We are here together for the start of yet another liturgical year. And—this may surprise you—this is the one hundredth start of Year A for this worshipping community. It is the one hundredth time a priest has stood before this community and offered reflections on the first Sunday of Advent. And wouldn't I love to have had a peek at the sermon notes of the Reverend Timothy Cutler—my very first predecessor! Might he have stood in whatever home or barn or meeting place the early Anglicans of St. Andrew's used in 1725 and preached with joy and expectation? Would he have spoken about the dawning of a new liturgical year or the population growth of the South Shore? Would he have mentioned the deepening Anglican identity in a largely Puritan region? *Unclear.*

One thing I am absolutely certain Reverend Cutler would have said is that *belonging*—the real sense of belonging—is the heart of any flowering house church. He might have reminded the early church 300 years ago that the

Gospel – the good news – expands one invitation at a time, one welcome at a time. Our patron Saint Andrew is renowned for several important contributions to our faith, most notably he is known as the First Called. He was the first to drop everything he was doing and follow Jesus.

Imagine that leap of faith! To be the first to recognize the truth and magnitude of what Jesus was preaching and to say – YES, that is for me! Think of other history and world changing firsts – the first to step foot on the moon, the first to climb Mount Everest, the first humans to take flight – intentionally – these were radical departures and advancements that changed, forever, how we saw the world.

Andrew is among those pioneers who changed global history forever, not just by saying “Yes”, he would follow Jesus, but because he wanted to share his experience with others. He was so amazed and inspired by Jesus that he went home and grabbed his brother Simon and said – “you gotta see this!”

Andrew’s faith and experience were enhanced by companionship. Through invitation. Through relationship. Through a quiet, steady confidence that God is doing something new—and he wants you to be part of it, and your life will be better if you too spend time in Jesus’ and each others’ presence.

This is among the traditions we have inherited, the spark of belonging by continuing to invite people to this sacred space for a sense of joy, wonder and belonging, faithfully following the path first forged by the apostle Andrew.

Our first Sunday of Advent provides a scriptural backdrop that prompts us to be alert. In Matthew’s gospel, Jesus is urging us to **stay awake**. With Paul telling the Romans—and us—“Wake up from sleep... put on the armor of light... let us live honorably as in the day.” We are offered a clear call to wakefulness and attention with this familiar refrain calling for our putting on an item of clothing found on absolutely no one’s Christmas list – “I’ll have a suit of the armor of light, please”.

Yet, Paul's reference to "the armor of light" is one of the most beautiful Advent invitations and gifts we have inherited. In Greek, Paul is literally telling the Christians in Rome to, "lay aside the works of darkness... put on the weapons of light." He is not advocating violence. He is talking about *protection*. Paul is reminding us to clothe our hearts in what helps them to stay aligned with God's purposes. He is telling us to do what we need to do to protect our loving, fragile and generous hearts when the world around us is confusing, noisy, anxious, or numbing.

To put on the armor of light is to choose practices that keep us awake and hopeful. It is to ask: *What strengthens my spirit? What keeps my heart open? What helps me stay ready for God's presence or arrival?*

In 1725, the armor of light probably looked like candlelit prayer in a dim, drafty or cold house, Scripture read by firelight, and neighbors checking on neighbors through long, punishing winter nights.

In 2025, the armor of light may begin with something far simpler and harder. Leave your phone behind. Eliminate doom-scrolling. Turn off the anxious, barking, invasive noise of the world and find quiet connectedness. Advent is a season of quiet waiting. Holy quiet, not a quiet that is passive or withdrawn, but a quiet that is composed, intentional, awake, uncluttered, expectant. A quiet that leaves room for God.

Whatever your armor of light may be, it isn't a shield from the whole world, it will be a posture you can comfortably assume within it. Your armor will signal that you will not be shaped by fear or frenzy. You will be shaped by the coming of Christ, and you will don this protection, this armor of light in expectation and optimism. In hope and anticipation for the beautiful in-breaking of God.

This morning on this rare convergence of St. Andrew's Day and our first Sunday of Advent, we stand as the inheritors of a parish whose life began in that same spirit of expectation.

It is extraordinary to ground ourselves in the truth that three hundred years ago, a rag-tag little community of Anglicans in what would become Hanover gathered for their first Advent as a new congregation. They did not know what lay ahead—Revolution, industrialization, changes in churchmanship, cultural shifts, wars, revivals, fires, pandemics. They did not know what the next century or even the next ten years would bring.

But they knew that Christ was coming, and they wanted to be ready. They wanted to begin again. They wanted to “put on the armor of light” and build something that lasted. They wanted to be disciples like Andrew—willing to leave their nets, willing to say yes, willing to bring a friend. And that is exactly what this parish has done for the last three-hundred years.

Every generation has brought someone along. Every generation has invited neighbors into this sacred story, to share this sacred space. Every generation that precedes ours has chosen light over fear.

May we follow their example. During this season of Advent, may we each reach to friends and neighbors and offer to bring them along. Invite someone to church. Invite someone to hope. Invite someone to a different pace, a quieter season. Invite someone to experience belonging or beauty or service or prayer. Andrew's gift to the Gospel was extending the circle of loving presence. May we each follow his example and do the same.

May we stay curious and wonder. In his day, Andrew asked a LOT of questions. He wondered aloud. He stayed near Jesus. Advent is a season of wonder—not certainty, but vulnerable availability.

May we make room for holy waiting. Advent is not something to rush through. It is something to sink into. It asks us not to fill every moment, but to let some moments remain open and available.

May each of us put on our armor of light by choosing practices that protect our peace and deepen our joy. Perhaps in your practice, you can carve out new quiet time or you can light a special candle. If you are not accustomed to praying in the morning, you might give that a try, or perhaps bookend your day with intentional prayers of review or gratitude would connect you to God and this season in a new way.

The armor of light is whatever draws you toward God and toward one another, and this is the season to try it on. May we be awake. May we be expectant. May we be radiant with the light we long for. And may we, like St. Andrew, bring a friend along for this seasonal sacred journey. Amen+