

December 25, 2021

Dear GCS staff, board members, students, faculty and alumni,

The season of Advent is a time of waiting. We wait for the time to celebrate the incarnation of the eternal Son of God in time and space, in flesh and blood, in Jesus Christ. All creation has been waiting for that time almost from the beginning of time, from the time of the fall. God's covenant people also waited for that "fulness of time" to come, the appearance of God's promised Savior, King, Messiah. In this brief season that culminates at our Christmas celebration we share in their long-awaited anticipation.

That First Advent of Immanuel was indeed glorious and is worthy of our wonder, adoration, and praise. The earthly birth of our Savior was such an inauspicious, tender, and humble beginning. But the first coming of our Lord and Savior did not end our waiting—it beckons us to our waiting for a Second Advent, which will be the culmination of the first. That Second Advent, of the arrival and return of the Lord Jesus, will be of even greater magnitude and glory when all evil will be undone and brought to a final end, when every tear will be wiped away, when all the cosmos will be regenerated and all things made new under the headship of Jesus Christ.

It's not easy to live between the times of our Lord Jesus' First and Second Advents. But we celebrate here and now because we have hope in the faithfulness of our Triune God—that what was begun at the first arrival will be completed at the second. And that is worth waiting for.

Many Christmas hymns and carols give at least a hint of our also waiting for our Savior's Second Advent. But none that I know of more simply and profoundly displays the fullness of our hope that reaches back to Christ's birth as a babe and forward to his return as Lord and King of all creation than Charles Wesley's *Come, Thou Long-expected Jesus*. So let me conclude my Christmas greetings to you all with the words from that wonderful hymn. May it be a beacon of hope to you.

In the peace and hope of Jesus Christ,

Gary Deddo
President, Grace Communion Seminary



Come, Thou Long-expected Jesus

Come, Thou long-expected Jesus,
Born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us,
Let us find our rest in Thee.
Israel's Strength and Consolation,
Hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear Desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver,
Born a child and yet a King,
Born to reign in us forever,
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.
By Thine own eternal Spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone;
By Thine all-sufficient merit,
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

~ Charles Wesley
(first published in 1774)