

Pastor's Page – December 2016

As we enter the season of Advent with its anticipation of the Christmas event, old familiar feelings come over us. No matter what our age, this time of year brings twinges of anticipation. As children our anticipation was likely for the first snowfall, sledding, ice skating, hot chocolate, mom's holiday baking, and of course the Christmas presents that begin to appear under the tree. Come to think of it, some of the anticipation is the same as we grow older—only some of it feels more like dread. When will we have to shovel that first snowfall or fire up the snowblower? Will I do some unexpected "ice skating" as I make my way to the grocery store or the post office? How will I ever get all those cookies baked? And how will we afford to put any gifts under the tree this year?

It can start to feel overwhelming if we let ourselves lose too much of our childlike joy for the season, but it doesn't need to happen. Prioritize the most important of your chores, but don't forget to take time to watch those first flakes float down outside your window and just recall what a simple joy that was as a child. Take time to pray, thanking God that you are warm inside your home and asking that others less fortunate will find shelter against the cold. Open your Bible and read about the anticipation of Zechariah and Elizabeth, Joseph and Mary in the first chapter of Luke as it points to the familiar story of Christ's birth that we'll share during the Christmas Eve service.

Advent is a time of anticipation, a season in the Christian year in which we recall the prophecies, promises, and events leading up to the birth of a baby in a stable in the town of Bethlehem. The prophet Isaiah is one of the most-often cited heralds of what was to come. In Isaiah 7:14 he proclaimed, "Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel (God with us)."

This of course would be no ordinary birth, but then again it was no ordinary baby. As the angel joyfully proclaimed in Luke 2:10-11, soon after the blessed event, "I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord."

Between the prophecy of a long-awaited Messiah and the triumphant announcement of Christ's birth, there is much time for anticipation. In fact, Advent is exactly four full weeks this year. And while some of us may think we've outgrown the excitement of staring wistfully for hours at the brightly-wrapped gifts under the tree, there is something even more exciting in our future than ripping cheap wrapping paper. It is the hope, peace, joy, and love that we recall as we celebrate the greatest gift ever given: God's one and only Son Jesus Christ, who from humble beginnings in a manger would rise to be King of all.

My wish for you this Christmas season is that you never lose that Advent anticipation you knew as a child. Take time during this busy month to keep Christ in your Christmas, and may we all find time to pause and worship God together!

Blessings to you and yours,

Rev. Cory Germain