



Around the Hill

Round Hill Presbyterian Church, Elizabeth PA



Vol 2, No 3

December, 2015



From the Pastor's Pen...
"Behold, darkness shall cover the Earth, and thick darkness the peoples."

These words begin one of my favorite Advent songs, a paraphrase of the powerful words of Isaiah, chapter 60. They seem, I suppose, to express a strange sentiment for a season we generally associate with joyful expectation, a season in which we look forward to the coming of Christmas, and the celebration of Jesus' birth. But I have to say that they seem pretty accurate as a description of the world we see around us, in a lot of ways. Darkness is creeping in all around. Consider:

- In Syria, the civil war grinds on, with innocent civilians being killed, wounded, or driven to flee by the thousands.
- In London, Paris, California, and elsewhere, terrorist attacks seek to undermine the fabric of our civil society.
- In parts of the world, the Church of Jesus Christ is oppressed and persecuted. In others, she is increasingly seen as irrelevant and outmoded.
- Closer to home, drugs, despair, and hopelessness threaten to engulf a generation that sees no light in their future.

In these and far too many other contexts, darkness looms, seemingly impenetrable. At this time of year, we could even take this notion literally, as daylight seems bent on expiring sooner and sooner each day. And when we think about how we ought to respond to all of these situations, how we ought to react to this pressing darkness, it's hard

to imagine anything that we could do that would really make a difference. All in all, Isaiah's line sounds far too familiar, and the darkness he describes seems far beyond our ability even to endure.

Yet it is not his only line, nor his most important. The words of the song, while acknowledging the darkness that "covers the peoples," demand of us a surprising response: "Arise! Shine! For your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen!"

This is the true beauty and value of Advent, I think. It is the season where we recognize that, despite the darkness—indeed, because of the darkness—it is both possible and necessary to celebrate the coming of the light of Christ into the world. There is darkness. There are bad decisions, and bad situations. Violence, pain, worry, and grief are still very much around. But Jesus is coming. There is darkness, but, as John says, "The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." Friends, Jesus came among us, the light of the world, to defeat sin and death, to beat back the darkness, and to bring us all into the light. In this Advent season, we are called to remind the world, laboring under this present darkness, of the light that will not be overcome. By our joy and service, by our faith and perseverance, and by our unquenchable proclamation, we not only remind the world that Jesus came, but also that he is coming again.

Arise! Shine! For your Light has come, and the glory of the Lord is risen!

Advent and Christmas Season Events

December 13	RHPC Christmas Dinner—after the 10:30 worship service
December 16	RECHARGE Christmas sing-along—Final Recharge service and meal of 2015
December 20	Annual Meeting of the Congregation and Corporation—after the 10:30 worship service
December 24	Christmas Eve Services with Communion—7:00 PM and 11:00 PM
December 25	Christmas Day Service—10:00 AM



The *Around the Hill* team is looking for new members to help ramp up our operation for the new year! It's been fun getting *ATH* back up and running this year, but we hope this was just the beginning. If you're interested in helping out with writing, story collection, layout and design, or putting mailings together, we'd love to have you! Please let either Linda Leggett or Matt Stith know if you'd like to find out more.

For information about activities and events at Round Hill call (412) 384-5889 weekday mornings or check online at

www.roundhillchurch.org

and

[Facebook.com/RoundHillChurch](https://www.facebook.com/RoundHillChurch)

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Please submit material for future issues to:

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