

**Invitation to Advent Journey**  
After Bishop's Day Apart  
On my way to *Advent*



Friends, I would like to invite you to Advent Journey here at Savage community. Advent is a season of four weeks including four Sundays. The season proclaims *the coming of the Christ – whose birth we prepare to celebrate, who comes continually in Word and Spirit, and whose return in final victory we anticipate*. Come and join the weekly celebration of our spiritual preparation for a way of the Lord with your beloved! It is a great opportunity to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

I would also love you to share what many of my colleagues in ministry at the recent Bishop's day apart. Bishop Easterling invited one of his colleagues and teacher for our Advent fellowship a couple of weeks ago. Here is what Rev. Robert A. Hill, Dean of the Marsh Chapel at Boston University helped us affirm our roles as the spiritual leaders of the local churches. Hill spent several hours with us three segments of his speech concerning ourselves to become "precursors."

Beginning with his observation on the greeting postures of a Mandarin Chinese, he talked about a spiritual discipline we have to claim during the season of Advent: Humility! He also

shared a great role model from his own co-worker, Kenneth Moore Dean of Student Affairs. In doing so, he intended us to learn from one another as pastors: something better than any well spoken preaching. I figured it that pastor can learn from his or her parishioners. Laity can learn its pastor. People can share their own disciplines such as family prayer.

Hill helped the gathering with John the Baptist the most prominent precursor of our Lord, Jesus Christ. At the down in the river of the Jordan, John the Baptist helped people prepared for the advent of the Savior of the world through the act of repentance. Getting down to the river and encountering the John and hearing his prophetic voice in the wilderness, ones may read C.S. Lewis' "Creation and Conscience" from *Mere Christianity*.

When they opened an elementary school in Kingswood in 1748, Wesley brothers wrote a hymn concerning "living faith of the dead people," whose main lesson gave birth to the school motto: *in via recta celeriter*, meaning "in the right way, quickly." He brought up many spiritual leaders in the school, located in Bath, a city in the ceremonial county of Somerset, England, known for its Roman-built baths. Bath is in the valley of the River Avon.

Real changes occur in real heart for real time! During Advent let people talk about the church among other friends. The church is a gathering of people who builds for next generation. In his prologue chapter 1:1-14, the gospel writer John talks about the precursor. See also John 3:14-16; 6; 8:32; chapters 10; 12; 14; and 15, especially in 12:38! Beware of danger of academics – words without deeds! Lead your own congregation to service during Advent, i.e. Habitat for Humanity, Helping Immigrants, and so forth.

The image of the precursor is derived from Old Testament, as we encounter Elijah (see 2 Kings 2:1-12) who heard small voice of God; instill personal holiness even in the midst of the troubles of Israel. He claimed morality through religion Moses established. Eventually he brought hope. O Elijah of these days, why don't you prepare for the way of Elisha, literally meaning a child of God or the man of God – the follower of Elijah.

Hill continued...

We can meet our contemporary precursors: 1) an Yale alumnus, Jonathan Edward (1703-1758) who carried out an Elijah's work for the residents of North Hampton, New England as a messenger and particularly at the Connecticut river. Check out Abraham Lincoln who finished what was unfinished. What about Ray Bradbury of 1951, Thomas Harding; Thomas Payne! Yearn for leaning with the works of Harper Lee of 1959, "To Kill a Mocking Bird;" Diary of Anne Frank. Check out Elie Wiesel concerning prayers. Experience tears of the precursors!

In 1964 John Lewis in Alabama preached even to chickens. (*Preaching to the Chickens: The Story of Young John Lewis* by Jabari Asim; illus. by E. B. Lewis) The sprit of Elijah must hover over the gathering of the spiritual leaders of the Conference, as many love to sing "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot." Do not miss what Lee described in her work: "Stand up your father is passing."

During Advent begs must be heard! Elijah's chariots indicate promise, hope, deliverance and joy. We can learn gut from our colleague Rev. Gardner C. Taylor – preaching in excellence and his pastoral responsibility and his courageous faith!

We have to acknowledge feminine images that reveal the sense of God. Our God is wonderful. He has great sense of humor. Our sense of humor should match. Speak about God's power demonstrated in freedom, looseness in Universe, which tells ultimately sovereign. Everything is not necessarily predestined. Faith is about God's entrusting in our end. What we might be ultimately with is a divine status of ourselves, so that we can be infinite. Our desire should turn to be what we believe. During the season we should be convinced to close to God.

Work for the wholeness without being divisive. Confront with those who dividing. Construct while offering yourselves.

Encounter the Holy Spirit that empowers those who confuse with agony and tension.

Hill also cried out "One must be for the other," as he learned the lesson from his marriage of 51 years. Many fear of life and death. We don't need to be over confident. Living in a society filled with apprehension, we have to overcome what hinder the gospel of Jesus Christ. Bring hope beyond racism. Our country didn't do much good things during Civil War - 300k killed in the war – one out of 14! Bring hope for those who struggle. Think about God is all present. He was with southerners while in the midst of our own Civil War. Pray for those who hate you.

We always want more! Money represents ourselves. It is the extension of ourselves. Manage well your money as Thomas Graham lived with \$5 per week. We have to wrestle with poverty among the people. While preparing for the coming of Christ the most challenging question is "Why does He want us to grow?" Read *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* by Edward E. Baptist.

### **He wrapped up the day with:**

O What a friend in Paul? (Many know a hymn about "What a Friend in Jesus") Paul's letter to the Philippians help us understand what the believers can avoid: facing death makes us truly human. We are put in a situation to exit or to avoid. Many college-aged and millennial seem handling very well with what to exit as well with what to avoid. Read "Christ Hymn" from Philippians 1:21ff and learn how Jesus faced his own fate.