

Dear Holy People of God,

As the days grow shorter and colder, the bleakness of winter approaches and we feel like hibernating. Nature tells us it is time to slow down but we like the hustle and bustle of preparing for Christmas. Despite the conflicts in our bodies and minds, we plow forward adding lights to mask the darkness, singing songs of joy to mask our longings and sadness.

Why don't we sing Christmas carols during Advent? Because the church season of Advent comes before the season of Christmas. Advent is the season to sing "O Come, O Come Emmanuel." We desire for God to be with us, but often get caught up in things that don't matter and don't take time to see how God is with us. Advent, the four Sundays before December 25 affords us the opportunity to reflect on our need for God to be with us. We hear readings of prophecy and promise. We look for signs for the sun and the Son of God to return. We long for God to be with us, to heal our brokenness, to offer a glimpse of the Light that darkness cannot overcome.

We wait and pray and prepare for the return of Jesus and to celebrate the birth of the Christ child. A child is hope and we are people of hope who long to have God with us. Hope brings anticipation, anticipation brings expectations and along comes a baby born in a barn to a homeless couple. What is God telling us? Yes Jesus is a baby needing care and love, requiring patience for the parents, sometimes sleeplessness, constantly needing our attention. Our faith also needs constant attention and patience. We are a world of instant gratification, yet faith requires us to feed our souls with the Word of God, the Bread of Life, and the fellowship of believers. We anticipate seeing you at worship during the Sundays of Advent and Christmas.

Christina Rossetti wrote a Christmas carol that reflects both our longing and our awe at the birth of Jesus.

*In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow.
Heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain
Heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign:
...In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ...
What can I give him—give my heart.*

Blue is the color of Advent season and the color of hope. Advent is the season of hope and longing and waiting for the return of Jesus Christ. Advent is the season that we prepare for the Lord to enter our hearts again, bringing us hope and peace, comfort and joy.

May Christ the Son of Righteousness, shine upon you
And scatter the darkness from before your path
And prepare your heart to receive the Christ child. Amen

Shalom, Pastor Bev