

ADVENT

2023

It Is Time



Trinity United Methodist Church

Introduction

Sometimes on Christmas Eve, I'm the last person to leave the building. The building is quiet and still. This is a sharp contrast to the Christmas spirit that filled the Sanctuary and Welcome Center earlier in the evening.

It is usually well past midnight before I set the security alarm and head home. Our neighborhood, like the building, is also quiet and still.

In this little part of the world, the world for a few hours seems to be happily at peace with itself. Oh, how I wish the world could be at peace with itself for a long, long, long time.

No matter how hard people work to help us to become more kind, loving, and peaceful, we never fully commit to the required diligence to make peace.

I guess our differences and division make us more stubborn, but I also believe that fear drives our irrational thinking at times.

Our Advent theme this year is "It is time."

I wonder how Joseph felt when Mary said, "It is time, this baby isn't waiting."

And, I also wonder as God and Jesus look down upon us this Christmas what they might be thinking.

Are they asking themselves, "When are these people going to wake up and realize "it is time" for kindness, love, and peace to guide their daily living.

Perhaps, the devotionals in this book will give us some stillness and quietness and help us to realize "It is time" for us to act.

Bill Pike



First Week of Advent, Sunday, December 3, 2023

Restore us, O LORD God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved. Psalm 80:19

Light is important for our lives. In ancient times, lamps were hard to maintain and gave off little light. Darkness was absolute and dangerous, and even in the best of circumstances, light was only available a few feet away. Today, light is as easy as flicking a switch, or pressing a button. Outside, we have streetlights and other lighting that makes the dark not so dark. Most of us carry powerful lights in our pockets attached to our phones.

Even with this abundance of light, we still live in darkness in many ways. While Biblical darkness was literally about the ability to see, darkness for us is today more about our ability for sight. We don't always see, even what is right in front of us. Sometimes we need others to walk with us, to sit with us, and help us see what we haven't seen or simply don't see. We need other's lights in our lives.

This Advent, IT IS TIME for us to see, together. Let us be intentional about sharing the Light of Christ in a dark world. Let Christ's light illumine our lives and bring us together in a world seemingly determined to split people apart.

IT IS TIME. The world needs it. We need it.

Pastor Brian Siegle

Monday, December 4, 2023

I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. ¹⁴ Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!
Psalm 27:13-14

When we put up our tree and begin to get into the holiday spirit is a widely contested debate. Some find it so hard to wait to put up their tree that they decided to enjoy their tree all year round. Others find this blasphemy and only put up their tree for the month of December. With the commercialization of Christmas, some stores are even playing Christmas tunes in September! As we see the beginnings of Christmas earlier each year it can be hard to wait for Advent to come (especially those of us who are kids (at heart) that have had their Christmas toys and games picked out since last Christmas).

It seems as though every year the season of Advent gets busier and busier. We rarely get a moment to pause and appreciate the special decorations and preparations we take each year for the Christmas season. Maybe that's why we start preparing earlier each year, to give ourselves moments to pause and revel in the hope and joy of Christmas amongst the parties, gatherings, school concerts, and plays. Now we may only celebrate Advent the four weeks/Sundays before Christmas, but Advent itself is "the arrival of a notable person, thing, or event". Using that definition, every day is Advent as our lives are waiting and preparing for the coming of the Lord. With that in mind, maybe keeping our trees up all year round...or more than just December to remind us of Advent isn't such a bad thing. I challenge you to find moments to pause, wait, and enjoy the decorations and festivities of Christmas this week. And maybe keep your tree up past Christmas to be reminded that every day is waiting for Christ and not just December.

Jenn Shephard





Tuesday, December 5, 2023

*For everything there is a season and a time
for every matter under heaven
Ecclesiastes 3:1*

The sundial in this picture is a symbol of the passing of time. Seasons signify different points in time, and God is the author of our time and the seasons we go through.

This scripture reading serves as a reminder that we can find comfort and hope knowing that God is in control of all things. He guides our steps from one season to the next. He sees what is coming ahead for us and will provide what we need to get through. God is always present and always leading us through each season.

Advent is a season of joy, anticipation, and excitement that we look forward to each year as we wait and prepare for the coming of Christ. During the Advent season we prepare our hearts and homes for Christ's birth. The Advent season invites us to step away from what can be a frenzied time to consider how we commemorate the birth of Jesus.

The first verse from the Christmas hymn "People, Look East" are joyful lyrics about preparing our homes to welcome the Christ child.

People, look east. The time is near
Of the crowning of the year.
Make your house fair as you are able,
Trim the hearth and set the table.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the Guest, is on the way!

May we find time to slow down during this Advent season to reflect on the true meaning of the season.

Lauren Kastelberg

Wednesday, December 6, 2023

Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. Luke 2:19

When my cousin, who was like a sister to me, was diagnosed with a life-threatening illness I began reading everything I could find about this scary illness. I pondered the why, how, treatment modalities, and recovery rates. My contemplations were causing me to lose sleep and feel helpless. I soon realized that I hadn't asked God to share the weight of this burden.

I started praying and asked God for guidance. God never said my cousin would be cured, but He did calm my mind and heart by reminding me of the treasure trove of memories I had of my cousin. God also showed me that I was not alone as he guided me to a network of my cousin's friends. We provided comfort and support for each other as we shared our treasures (memories of my cousin).

By sharing our pain and memories we went from being acquaintances to friends. Just as the shepherds visit gave Mary more treasured memories to ponder regarding Jesus, God saw my need and sent me individuals who have and continue to provide me with love and support and help keep the treasured memories of my cousin alive.

Terri Royster





Thursday, December 7, 2023

***Why, O LORD, do you stand far off?
Why do you hide yourself in times
of trouble? Psalm 10:1***

Only recently have I had a true understanding of the meaning of devotionals. Many of our friends have stated that they did a devotional. In my naivety of the subject, I assumed that it was a pleasant time to relax, have a cup of coffee and pray. Since beginning this assignment, I have discovered there is even a difference between prayer and devotionals.

In my defense, I was born and raised a Catholic, and as I alluded to our Sunday School class, after I was selected to lead a class on the Bible that I never studied that great manuscript. It's not to say that we did not have religious classes and sermons on the lessons in the subjects contained, but no Bible study classes. So, I beg your indulgence.

So on to the subject at hand in Psalm 10:1. The question presented is "Why, O Lord do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?" The Psalm seems to ask why God ignores the character and deeds of wicked people? They are arrogant, greedy insulters of God. They do not believe he exists, so they find it easy to take advantage of the poor or helpless victims. The question becomes will God look the other way forever or one day release the victims of their sufferings. Are we the true believers caught up in the old problem of not understanding that our all-forgiving God takes the side of the wicked to the disadvantage of the believers who are themselves experiencing tragedies? We must believe that in time a light will shine that explains these disparities.

It is well known that God is aware that no two humans are the same. We all make different judgments and create situations that affect humankind good or bad. It's also known that the only being that was perfect was Jesus Christ. We must therefore trust in Faith that there are personal conflicts which will be reconciled in the end.

Mike Eunice

We honor the memory of Mike Eunice (8/22/44-10/30/23)

Friday, December 8, 2023

*I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵ for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— ⁶ just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— ⁷ so that you are not lacking in any gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.
1 Corinthians 1:4-7*

Today's photo shows three members of Trinity's United Women in Faith preparing birthday cards to be given to students at Oak Grove-Bellmeade Elementary School. We knew that for some of these children our cards might be a big part of a very small celebration. It was a sobering thought that turned our creative efforts into a spiritual opportunity to share God's love. We signed each card "From your friends at Trinity United Methodist Church."

Hopefully each recipient would see the word church and think of Jesus on his/her birthday- a spiritual gift. In Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth he writes that God has given us all that we need; the words and understanding necessary to share His word in our communities and beyond. Verse 7 says that we do not lack any spiritual gift as we wait for the second coming. Those gifts require action on our part. God's spiritual gifts are to be shared with others that cross our daily path. A smile, an inquiry about a person's wellbeing, or an offer to help. We are called by God to use our spiritual gifts every day. Whether it's by word or deed, it doesn't matter as long as God is in your heart.

Advent: a season to prepare for a gift from God.

Advent: a season to prepare for God's ultimate gift; eternal life.

God is calling us to share his most precious gift with the world; His Son and our savior, Jesus Christ.

Meg Chisholm





Saturday, December 9, 2023

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. James 1:17

This picture makes me think of helpfulness.

During any Advent season a church needs help from a lot of people and many people helped to make this Christmas play really fun.

When Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph needed help, and the farmer helped them when he let them stay in the barn.

Hilton Booker

Second Week of Advent, Sunday, December 10, 2023

LORD, you were favorable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.

² You forgave the iniquity of your people; you pardoned all their sin. Psalm 85:1-2

The book of Psalms is an ancient collection of poems and spiritual songs that have inspired everyday people in prayer for some 3,000 years. The Psalms resonate so deeply because they give voice to the full range of human emotion and experience—*joy, sorrow, passion, repentance, gratitude, hope...*

The emotional range of the Psalms has connected with seekers, sinners, saints, and skeptics alike for generations. How many have felt that sense of abandonment and despair expressed in Psalm 22? How many have found comfort and abiding hope in Psalm 23? How many in moments of confession and repentance have prayed Psalm 51? How many times has that beloved call and response in Psalm 118 inspired gratitude? *“This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!”* (Ps 118:24).

When we read, sing, and pray the Psalms, we join our voices with an immense host of witnesses who have traveled life’s journey before us, drawing comfort and hope from sacred words that have endured the test of time. In this same way, the tradition of singing Christmas carols this holy season connects us with untold generations of people who have found joy, peace, and hope in the Christmas story.

The Christmas carols we sing year after year, with their timeless melodies and memorable turns of phrase, quicken and warm the heart—awakening the memory of holy moments shared with loved ones and recounting the greatest of stories, the best reason for hope.

Singing Christmas carols, much like praying the Psalms, awakens something eternal in us: the beauty of holy love. So, let us lift our voices with courage and good cheer this season: *Gloria in excelsis Deo!*

Aaron Miller



Monday, December 11, 2023

Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts. Psalm 85:8

Every year from 2009 to 2014, I participated in the children's Christmas pageant. This tradition was consistent- the same plastic baby doll Jesus, the same costumes, and, most importantly, the same music. The most awaited song was the hymn my friends and I are singing karaoke-style in this picture. Every year, the youngest kids, dressed as angels, sing "Away in a Manger". The lyrics of this hymn speak of a unique peace Jesus possessed from his birth in the manger and that which he granted to us through his life, death, and resurrection.

The Christmas season is undeniably stressful. Late December can be described by virtually any antonym for peace. As a college student, my Christmas season will include final exams and papers, traveling home, cramming in seeing as many family members and home friends as possible, and packing up, unpacking, and repacking what feels like hundreds of times in the span of one month. Similarly, the Christmas story is one of chaos and obstacles at every turn. However, this verse serves as an important reminder of the deeper peace that can be found from the message behind Christmas. Sure, there are presents to be wrapped, meals to be made, Christmas parties to attend, and a million other tasks to complete. However, amidst the chaos, we should remember the peace Jesus brings to the Christmas story, and to our lives every day. In mere months, the peaceful baby in the manger will transfer his peace to us on the cross.

Annabelle Glassman





Tuesday, December 12, 2023

The human mind plans the way, but the LORD directs the steps. Proverbs 16:9

I have always been a planner, an organizer (probably why the Advent book committee gave me this page). I remember telling my dad that “I was cleaning my closet” frequently. Pretty sure I was probably re-organizing it again. As a Church we have Work Areas (Committees) and Church Council to plan and organize events, worship and small groups for our congregation. The primary purpose of this planning is to make disciples of Jesus Christ – to bring people into our Church family and help grow their faith and to serve others through mission projects.

As a Christian individual and as a church body, I know we always hope what we plan either for ourselves or for our church, is what God would want us to do. But as everyone who has lost a loved one knows, or who has made detailed plans only to have something unexpected happen, or just had things go not according to your plan, sometimes God has other plans. As a Christian community, I believe we have the resources to help us get through those times with prayer, patience, and lots of support from friends, family and our Church family.

Advent is a time to plan for Christmas – to celebrate the birth of Jesus, to celebrate our faith. Let’s plan for Advent, and let God direct our steps.

Sheila Norfleet



Wednesday, December 13, 2023

*Better is a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king who will no longer take advice.
Ecclesiastes 4:13*

In our complicated world, it is easy to look to the experienced and tried for advice or counsel. On occasion this can be beneficial, however, sometimes those past notions can lead us astray. When Jesus came to this world, he was seen the same as the youth mentioned in the scripture above. He was poor and ragged, preaching what he knew while being persecuted by the old and foolish kings of the world, who would no longer take advice. His contemporary ideas shook the ground of normality that the Pharisees stood on.

These days, it has become the norm to follow the person with the most appealing outfit or flashy presentation, while the wise are often ignored. This clear comfort in structure and repetition can be the downfall of faith. Without openness to new ideas, we can easily miss the messages we are being sent daily. Just like the story of the strong tree and the pliable one. The strong tree breaks easily once enough wind pulls it over, but the pliable tree can bend to different positions, surviving the storm.

Matthew Estes



Thursday, December 14, 2023

Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Isaiah 40:4

For many years, during one of our Advent services, Tracey Welborn would sing the “Ev’ry Valley Shall Be Exalted” movement from Handel’s *Messiah*, which contains the text of today’s scripture. On numerous occasions, I have had the privilege of performing Handel’s *Messiah*, -whether playing the notes on my bassoon or singing the words with a choir. For me, it’s always an uplifting experience!

Music has the ability to lift the spirits of people who need encouragement as they face rough roads in life. I recently lived in northwest Pennsylvania and cared for my parents as they each faced health issues. When Trinity’s worship services were only held virtually, each week I recorded and submitted a video of myself singing the alto part of the anthem chosen for Sunday morning. Dr. Charles Staples would combine all the videos submitted by choir members and create a video that would become the choir’s virtual anthem for that week’s service. My parents and I would watch the worship services on my computer, and when the choir appeared on the screen, I would ask my mom (who suffered from Alzheimer’s) if she saw anyone familiar. She would intently look at the screen, and then her face would light up. She would point to my picture and say “That is you!”, and she would give me a big smile. Caring for my parents as their health declined was very tough, but it was moments like this that lifted my spirits and gave me strength!

Shari Adams

Friday, December 15, 2023

You then, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus,² and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well. 2 Timothy 2:1-2

The Advent season is a time for expectant waiting.



When we are young we wait for many things. We wait for...

- school to be out for vacation.
- it to stop raining.
- permission to ride our bike around the neighborhood.
- the consequence after we have been caught doing wrong.

We wait to grow up.

We wait...

- to be tall enough to ride the roller coaster.
- for our favorite song to finally be played on the radio.
- for someone to ask us out on a date.
- to get our driver's license.
- to move into our own place.

As adults we find ourselves waiting too. In this Advent season:

Maybe you find yourself waiting in line to receive Holy Communion remembering that even though you have recently made some mistakes, God covers you with abundant grace.

Maybe you are expectantly waiting for an answer, a guiding direction, or clarity. Just like waiting to hear your favorite song on the radio, maybe you are waiting to hear the melody that God has yet to sing within your heart.

Maybe you are waiting to shine the light of Christ onto someone else this season. As God reveals who He would have you shine the light upon, those who are waiting themselves for answers, may you faithfully and boldly shine Christ's light of hope, peace, joy, and love with those to whom you are led.

Abbie Duenckel

Saturday, December 16, 2023

Come, children, listen to me. Let me teach you how to honor the LORD Psalm 34:11 (CEB)

This photo brings me back to when my two daughters, Kaleigh and Meghan, attended Trinity's preschool. Seeing them go from being in the annual Christmas Pageants to now being active youth members of the church has helped me and my wife, Joey, embrace our faith as well. Seeing families of all ages become enriched in our vibrant community here at Trinity over the years has been very inspiring. And at the forefront of those experiences are the children.

Children bring a joy and curiosity that is difficult to find elsewhere. I have seen it time and time again. As a father with daughters who have grown up in the church, I have seen firsthand how they learn and grow and support each other.

This verse is a testament to how all ages can honor the Lord. Young or old, there is no limit to the age someone can learn about God. The Advent season here at Trinity is a reminder of the joys of adolescence and new life, and it is a blessing to share that with you!

Steve McPhail





Third Week of Advent, Sunday, December 17, 2023

The LORD has done great things for us, and we rejoiced. Psalm 126:3

It is the third Sunday in Advent. Christmas is getting very close, and the children are getting more and more excited as are many adults. There is joy in the air, and it is increasing day by day. We have good reason to feel great joy for indeed the Lord has done great things for us. But today's verse from the Bible is about a different joy from a different time.

The psalmist is writing about God's delivery of the Jews from exile in Babylon. God gave us the gift of memory, and in memories we see the hand of God. As in ancient times, our faith provides us with great memories of joy. What better way to remember the joy of Advent and the birth of Christ than to think of our little children dressed up for the Christmas pageant!

I have a personal history with many of the children of Trinity since I helped teach our 4-year-old Sunday School class for many years. Through that experience, the Lord brought me great joy and memories. Looking at this photo gives me a reason to look back and say, "The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy."

Bill Burch

Monday, December 18, 2023

Rejoice always,¹⁷ pray without ceasing,¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances...” That sounds like a pretty tall order! What might it really mean? We may often think of rejoicing as elation or even loud shouts of praise. As for praying, we may have silent prayers or quick prayers such as “help me, Lord” or communal prayers ~ all lifting our hearts to God. However, maybe rejoicing and praying also come in other forms.

In December 2022, the Young at Heart meeting was blessed to have the Douglas Freeman chorus present a beautiful Christmas message through song. The blending of their melodious voices filled our sanctuary with Christmas rejoicing and “praying” (or connecting with God), as they shared their vocal gifts about the coming of Christ. It was certainly easy to give thanks for that Advent experience.

There are also many occurrences in life for which it’s difficult to give thanks to God. Instead of feeling discouraged by not living up to that expectation, perhaps a more manageable response would be to thank God for being with us in all circumstances. He is with us in every situation, good or bad ~ and in this case, in a wonderful Advent concert.

Pam Bullis



Tuesday, December 19, 2023

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners Isaiah 61:1



Standing in the checkout aisle of the Barnes & Noble, a week before Halloween, I bought my first Christmas present of the season. A package of sponges in the shape of the 3 wise men with the title “We Three Clean.” I giggled at the pun and decided someone had to have this. It will likely go to my mother whose humor tells a third grader she is going on a field trip to the “Museum” to see cows who “moo” and you say “see um?”

But now, I realize the irony on the sponges. The three kings didn’t do anything to clean things up. In fact, they made a mess!

The wise men travelled for months to Bethlehem. They had to have stunk by the time they got there. The kings gave the worst baby gifts. What baby needs myrrh? They had to sneak away to go home in the opposite direction. And they spooked King Herrod so badly he ordered mass killings. The “Kings” didn’t clean things up. They made a mess.

But isn’t that what the birth of Jesus does? It makes a mess too.

A tiny baby born in a stable turned the world upside down. Everything was now out of place. Our neat and tidy world was disrupted. He changed everything and made a mess. And it’s beautiful.

The story turns our perspective to see the mess Jesus wanted to create but also the community he strived to build. Jesus wanted a world built on the cornerstone of the Love of God. He led by example of his human life and sent the breath of the Holy Spirit to help guide us. These are the real gifts of the season given so long ago. This of course makes things messy. But leaves us with the beautiful work of cleaning our hearts and minds, loving the world and our fellow humans as Jesus does and offer the gift of Grace every day, not just at Christmas.

So, the next time you grab a sponge to wash your dishes or clean – remember those three Kings and Jesus and the mess they made. Give thanks and start making things beautiful.

Meredith Robinson Starling
(Daughter of Jay and Linda Robinson)

Wednesday, December 20, 2023

When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was. Matthew 2:9



This photo reminds me of the nativity scene in my family’s home, which has a prominent location in the living room during the Advent season. The placement of all the figurines was of great interest to my girls when they were young – and often a source of contention between them. One year my younger daughter was particularly perturbed at how her older sister had arranged the set, and this led to baby Jesus mysteriously disappearing from the manger one evening.

In the photo, we see the wise men from the east on their quest to find the Messiah, the king of the Jews. On their journey, first to Jerusalem and then on to Bethlehem, they placed their trust in God’s guiding star.

There was relief and joy in my home when, after a few days of searching, Jesus was found tucked behind a pillow on the sofa. But imagine the profound excitement and joy of the wise men when they finally came upon the child in Bethlehem, the long-awaited Messiah! Their long travel, filled with anticipation, faith, and purpose, was now complete. “They were overwhelmed with great joy.” (Matthew 2:10 NRSV)

At Christmas we reflect on the greatest gift God gave to mankind when He sent His son into the world. This Christmas, may we each find our joy, peace, and purpose in rediscovering Jesus Christ. Like the Magi in reaching Bethlehem on their quest for truth and meaning, we have found the one, and we rejoice exceedingly with great joy!

Meade Browder

Thursday, December 21, 2023

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us."

Luke 2:15

This picture is from the Come as You Are Christmas Pageant. In this picture, I see a bunch of kids I am growing up with at Trinity. I love how we all came together to tell one of the most important moments in the Holy Bible which is also one of my favorites.

We each got to choose which part we wanted to be to represent the story. I chose to be a shepherd because they were just like us. They were not rich, not kings, not a pharaoh, just normal. They were chosen by God out of millions of people to see Jesus first. As I grow up, I want to keep participating in events like this to help others learn more about Christ and the Bible.

Eliza Marshall





Friday, December 22, 2023

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders, and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

Lately I've been reminded of the gift - and power - of music. I am so grateful for music - for those who create it, for those who share their creations, for those who use their gift of music to point us to God. I've been fortunate to have attended several live concerts this year. There is nothing better.

Advent is the premier season for music. Music points us to the true meaning of the season.

“Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus” (pictured in the image above) is one of my favorite Advent hymns. It sets the whole tone for the meaning of Advent, especially the significance of Jesus' coming.

“From our fears and sins release us.” I don't think there has been another time where fears are at a premium in our consciousness. Natural disasters seem to be a commonplace - earthquakes that bring destruction and death, along with fires, hurricanes and tropical storms. The cost of living continues to increase as the price of goods and services increase. And then there are fears concerning our health; cancer continues to take lives way too soon, as do other illnesses.

But there is hope. This hymn continues, “born thy people to deliver”. Jesus comes to deliver us from all of our fears and sins - from all that makes our lives a struggle.

This hymn concludes:

“By Thine own eternal Spirit, rule in all our hearts alone,
By Thine all sufficient merit, raise us to Thy glorious throne.”

Yes, Jesus - Baby Jesus, Miracle Making Jesus, Teacher Jesus, Shepherd Jesus, Redeemer Jesus, Sustainer Jesus, Savior of the World Jesus - rule in all of our hearts alone and raise us to Thy glorious throne. Welcome again to our world.

Judy Oguich

Saturday, December 23, 2023

As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. John 9:5

Last December, our oldest daughter started experiencing a medical condition that would take months to diagnose. She was unable to attend school regularly and had to miss many of the things she loves including tennis, work, serving as an acolyte and youth group. It was a time of darkness — full of sadness, fear and loss.

She was particularly upset one Sunday when she had to miss the youth group Christmas party. Later that evening, our doorbell rang. I opened the door to around 20 youth group members bearing gifts, food and, most importantly, their light in a very dark time.

This is how I see Trinity — a light in the darkness, one which reflects the love, grace and mercy Jesus gives us. As we prepare for Jesus' birth, let us all consider how we can be this light in the world every day.

Angela Verdery





Fourth Week of Advent, Sunday, December 24, 2023

But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people.” Luke 2:10

The Good News is supposed to be a good thing for us now. Not just in the hereafter. Today. Here. Now.

We forget this sometimes. We turn our faith into the pursuit of a prize. Heaven awaits us, and if we want to get there, there are things we have to do. Christianity becomes focused on the moral imperative: invite others, care for the poor, feed the hungry, be kind. All good things, to be sure. Yet not quite everything we need to make sense of this season, this month, these holy days we are experiencing.

And then, an angel appears to us, and starts speaking.

The Good News of Christmas is that God is with us. That our creator, redeemer, and sustainer has come to be a part of our lives. And this is not just a truth for the future, it is a truth for today. It is this truth, more than any other, which makes the Christmas season what it is.

As we gather today and tomorrow, as we spend time with family, as we worship, may we remember that there are angels in our midst, proclaiming the good news of a baby boy born in Bethlehem and sleeping in a manger. May we listen, and may we rejoice that we are not alone. Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel!

Rev. Daniel Guenther

Monday, December 25, 2023

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it. John 1:5

When you walk into the sanctuary of Trinity United Methodist Church, your eyes are immediately drawn to the beautiful stained-glass window located above the altar. The brilliantly colored glass portrays Jesus as the Good Shepherd who takes care of ALL his sheep, not just special ones.

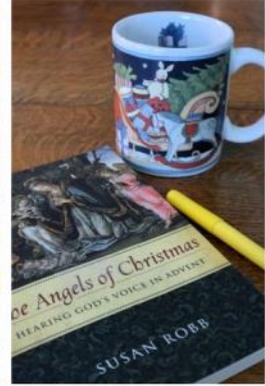
When we look at Jesus in the window on this day of the celebration of his birth, we are looking into the eyes of a man. However, when Mary and Joseph gazed into the manger, they saw a baby. They had both been told by an angel that their son would be not just any baby, but the SON OF GOD! Can you imagine hearing that? How did they prepare to become parents to the Son of God? We don't have any answers to those questions. We just know that "he came to his own, and his own received him not".

John 1:11

Lots of questions come to my mind about Jesus as he was growing up but we know little about him as a child. What we do know is that Jesus assumed a ministry of love and caring for all people no matter their station in life or any other criteria that people deemed important. He obeyed the law and upheld it unless someone needed to be healed or an ox needed to be rescued on the Sabbath. He responded to the needs around him out of love and faced the consequences as they came.

During my Christian journey, I have studied and developed my faith and beliefs. Jesus became the model for my life and how I relate to others. Often contrary to the way of the world, I believe we must follow the path that Jesus modeled. That is the path that leads to God!

Janet Hill



Mark Your Calendars

Advent Event #1 (Create and Celebrate)

Sunday, December 3 from 4 PM, Crafts followed by covered-dish dinner.

Advent Event # 2 (Lessons & Carols Service)

Sunday, December 10 at 4:00 PM in-person and livestreamed
Reception with live Jazz to follow in Trinity Hall.

United Women in Faith Service Day

Thursday, December 14 from 10 AM until 12 noon in Trinity Hall. Join us as we create gifts for our homebound members and others.

Advent Event #3 (Christmas Play)

Sunday, December 17 from 4 PM, play followed by covered-dish dinner.

Longest Night Service

Thursday, December 21 at 6:00 PM in the Chapel

Christmas Eve Sunday, December 24

10:00 AM One Blended Worship Service.

4:00 PM: Family Worship
(Including Instant Kids Pageant)

6:00 PM: Modern Christmas Eve worship with candlelight and communion (also online)

8:00 PM: Traditional Christmas Eve Worship with candlelight and communion, with choir and organ (also online)

11:00 PM: Traditional Christmas Eve Worship with candlelight and communion, with traditional hymns (also online)

Find the Christmas Eve worship services at Trinityumc.net/Christmas or Trinityumc.net/watchlive or on our Vimeo and YouTube channels.

