

DAYSRING DAYBOOK

Monthly Newsletter of Dayspring Presbyterian Church, 11445-40 Ave, Edmonton, AB, CAN, T6J 0R4

December 2019

ADVENT HISTORY AND PRACTICES

A long time ago (as I recall), anticipating Christmas began with the preparations at school and church with rehearsals for the Christmas pageants: Choristers practicing the carols and the Biblical characters memorizing their lines and searching for costumes. There was a special time set apart for a trip to purchase an authentic green tree, followed by placing and decorating this evergreen delight that needed to be watered and securely supported.

It was not until the 1960s that I remember the word “advent” used in reference to a season and the addition of a wreath with five candles. This became an emphasis on a season of preparation with a liturgy of candles and themes. Where and when did the celebration of this season begin?



According to Patrice F. MacArthur, an American writer and historian, it was during the middle ages, when the Germanic people began incorporating a lighted wreath into the season preceding Christmas. Widespread popularity of this tradition

did not begin until the 1800s and later into the 1900s when German migration introduced the tradition to North America.

The shape and base of the Advent Wreath has symbolism: The evergreens of the wreath are a reminder of continuous life. The shaping of the circle reinforces that meaning and a sign of everlasting life as well as the eternity of God.

The four candles placed in the outer circle of the wreath are three purple and one pink, to mark the four Sundays of Advent. The fifth candle in the centre – lit on either Christmas Eve or Christmas Day – is a remembrance of Christ coming as the light of the world.

Four themes are highlighted as the outer candles are lit: First Sunday, Hope, that comes to us when we allow Jesus to find us. Second, Peace, when wholeness or well-being fill our lives. Third, Joy, springing from the redemptive act of the birth of Christ. Fourth, Love, freely given by God for all.

While this may be a more recent custom for the Christian churches in North America, borrowed and continued from the ancient traditions of the Christian Church in Europe, it is similar to other practices that have been transplanted and integrated for Lenten and Easter activities.

- Marilyn A. Carr



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“At this Christmas when Christ comes, will He find a warm heart? Mark the season of Advent by loving and serving the others with God's own love and concern.”

— Mother Teresa

In This Issue

- Advent History and Practices
- John Shea: A Star
- Luci Shaw: Mary's Song
- From Our Minister: Possibilities of New Life
- Prayers of Walter Brueggemann and Thomas Merton
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer on Advent & Christmas

A Star at its Rising



“The more deeply one enters into the experience of the sacred the more one is aware of one’s own personal evil and the destructive forces in society. The fact that one is alive to what is possible for humankind sharpens one’s sense that we are fallen people. The awareness of sin is the inevitable consequence of having met grace... This grace-judgment dynamic reveals that the center of Christian life is repentance. This does not mean that the distinguishing mark of the Christian is breast-beating. Feeling sorry, acknowledging guilt, and prolonging regret may be components of the human condition, but they are not what Jesus means by repentance. Repentance is the response to grace that overcomes the past and opens out to a new future. Repentance distinguishes Christian life as one of struggle and conversion and pervades it, not with remorse, but with hope. The message of Jesus is not “Repent,” but “Repent for the Kingdom of God is near.”

— **John Shea**

A Star at Its Rising: Advent Meditations

“One of the essential paradoxes of Advent: that while we wait for God, we are with God all along, that while we need to be reassured of God’s arrival, or the arrival of our homecoming, we are already at home. While we wait, we have to trust, to have faith, but it is God’s grace that gives us that faith. As with all spiritual knowledge, two things are true, and equally true, at once. The mind can’t grasp paradox; it is the knowledge of the soul.”

— **Michelle Blake**

Mary’s Song

Blue homespun and the bend of my breast
keep warm this small hot naked star
fallen to my arms. (Rest...
you who have had so far
to come.) Now nearness satisfies
the body of God sweetly. Quiet he lies
whose vigor hurled
a universe. He sleeps
whose eyelids have not closed before.
His breath (so slight it seems
no breath at all) once ruffled the dark deeps
to sprout a world.
Charmed by doves’ voices, the whisper of straw,
he dreams,
hearing no music from his other spheres.
Breath, mouth, ears, eyes
he is curtailed
who overflowed all skies,
all years.
Older than eternity, now he
is new. Now native to earth as I am, nailed
to my poor planet, caught that I might be free,
blind in my womb to know my darkness ended,
brought to this birth
for me to be new-born,
and for him to see me mended
I must see him torn.

— **Luci Shaw**

*Accompanied by Angels:
Poems of the Incarnation*



FROM OUR MINISTER: Possibilities of new life



How often do we get hung up on making predictions of what the future might look like? This topic fascinates many people, fortune-tellers, horoscopes and all kinds of scenarios get all the attention, which they truly don't deserve.

This is the one aspect of our life on earth that we have no say about, even though many want to make projections into the future.

When Isaiah speaks about a future amidst their gloomy predicament, it is described in wonderful metaphors. Such a metaphor is "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots," appropriated to Mary when the hymn, "Lo, how a rose e'er blooming" (originally in German: 'Es ist ein Ros entsprungen') is meant to symbolically refer to the virgin Mary, the "Spotless Rose" from whom the Christ-child, Jesus Christ was born.

What follows, might sound like a bit of a digression, but is still relevant. From my background as a horticulturist when I was in my twenties, I experienced how roses can be pruned — and the harsher you prune them, the better they bear new branches and flowers. When there is almost only a stump left, the miracle that happens is that some brand-new life sprouts forth.

I want to imagine that there are times of ebb and flow in a congregation and Christianity in the larger picture, that hearken to this imagery. Day-spring hasn't gone unscathed from the economic bust that happened to our province and the wider world. But this doesn't mean that there is no hope. Let's go as far as even admitting, "Where Christ is, there is hope." There is the possibility of new life. Let's allow the shoot to grow forth from the times when we experience something of a stump-existence.

Let's be on the lookout for new beginnings...

ADVENT PRAYER

In our secret yearnings
we wait for your coming,
and in our grinding despair
we doubt that you will.

And in this privileged place
we are surrounded by witnesses who yearn
more than do we
and by those who despair more deeply than
do we.

Look upon your church and its pastors
in this season of hope
which runs so quickly to fatigue
and in this season of yearning
which becomes so easily quarrelsome.

Give us the grace and the impatience
to wait for your coming to the bottom of our
toes,
to the edges of our fingertips.

We do not want our several worlds to end.
Come in your power
and come in your weakness
in any case
and make all things new.
Amen.

— **Walter Brueggemann**

*Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth: Prayers
of Walter Brueggemann*



Into this world, this demented inn in which
there is absolutely no room for him at all,
Christ comes uninvited.

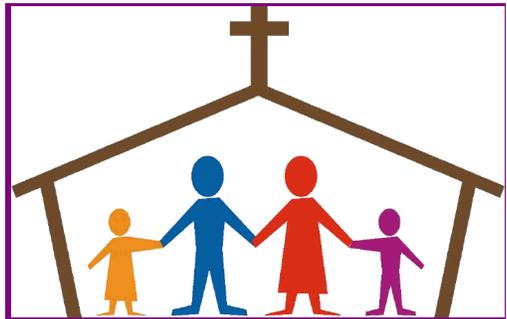
— **Thomas Merton**



“God travels wonderful ways with human beings, but he does not comply with the views and opinions of people. God does not go the way that people want to prescribe for him; rather, his way is beyond all comprehension, free and self-determined beyond all proof. Where reason is indignant, where our nature rebels, where our piety anxiously keeps us away: that is precisely where God loves to be. There he confounds the reason of the reasonable; there he aggravates our nature, our piety—that is where he wants to be, and no one can keep him from it. Only the humble believe him and rejoice that God is so free and so marvelous that he does wonders where people despair, that he takes what is little and lowly and makes it marvelous. And that is the wonder of all wonders, that God loves the lowly.... God is not ashamed of the lowliness of human beings. God marches right in. He chooses people as his instruments and performs his wonders where one would least expect them. God is near to lowliness; he loves the lost, the neglected, the unseemly, the excluded, the weak and broken.”

— **Dietrich Bonhoeffer**

God Is in the Manger: Reflections on Advent and Christmas



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Deputy Clerk: Iris Routledge

Roll Clerk: Jim Jeatt

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Bill Davis	Jan Ray Moncada
Jane de Caen	Nick Nation
Darlene Eerkes	Laura Patterson-
Peter Eerkes	Fortin
Carina Grosskopf	Todd Shipman
Ransford Kusi-	Darleen Springstein
Menkah	Heather Tansem
Sam Malayang	Mary Waugh

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The Rev. Dr. Heinrich Grosskopf

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