

**From the Pastor:**

We stand at the beginning of December, awaiting Christmas and all the joy that holy day can bring. But first, we begin a new church year with the season of Advent, a season of watching and waiting and hoping. We start with a season of darkness, looking for God's light. We start with a season that knows a little sadness because as a community we are seeking God's comfort even as we may be walking in darkness. That darkness may be within our psyches or it may be within the world.

One of the beautiful, and truly counter-cultural, aspects of Advent, part of the wisdom of the season, is that it allows us, invites us, urges us to experience both the celebration and the sadness as we seek God's comfort and God's presence in the waiting for the coming of Jesus.

I am not great about waiting. I don't know about you but sometimes (often?) I need to remind myself that waiting can be a time of creativity as ideas percolate in our minds and imaginations, that waiting is what most of the world does, that waiting increases patience, which increases tolerance, which leads to acceptance, which opens us to love, which, well, you get the idea.

I need this time of waiting and reflection. It's just like waiting for a baby to be born or adopted. This time of "incubation" and waiting yields a beautiful creation, more healthy because of the wait. While pregnancy is not a perfect analogy that holds for all situations, it does show us this time of waiting for God transforms us, opens us, deepens us, and matures us. (And it is a better metaphor than the other one I thought of – how the flavors of marinara sauce deepen and blend as it simmers.

And so Advent invites us to learn to wait. That waiting is one way that God is present with us and comforts us in the darkness. I have noticed with my own life that when I slow down, when I wait, I lose some of the distractions that have kept me from seeing the comfort and the presence of God that God has already brought, or is bringing, into my life. In our multi-tasking

society, I doubt I am alone in this manner.

As we move into the next weeks, let's be intentional about taking some time to walk, instead of running, to listen and to look for the signs of God's presence, for the signs of Christ's coming, that are there in our lives. Enjoy your friends and families. Enjoy the holiday parties and gatherings. But remember to wait and watch and hope, to slow down and celebrate God's presence and comfort even in the sadness and the craziness that can mark these days.

Hoping God's peace for all of you,

Pastor Lynn