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Practicing Advent

I am going to begin this Advent reflection with a quote you may have heard before. "People are about as happy as they make up their mind to be." Sound familiar? Some attribute this saying to Abraham Lincoln, however, that is disputed. Regardless of who said it, I believe there is truth in the statement. Have you ever met a person who seems happy no matter what circumstances they are facing? Perhaps you also know someone who always finds something to complain about, something that makes them unhappy. This causes me to wonder: is happiness, then, an innate quality, or can it be cultivated with practice? And if we can practice happiness, can we also practice hope, peace, joy, and love? Is it possible, with practice, to grow spiritually as we embrace these timeless themes of the Advent? Spoiler alert: I believe we can.

This Advent, I propose we open ourselves to the audacious belief that God **can and will** transform us in mysterious and surprising ways. The first step is to believe this is possible. The next step is to live "as if" it is true. We will do this by *practicing* being hopeful, *practicing* peacemaking, *practicing* joy, and *practicing* loving. Then on Christmas we will be ready to welcome Christ into our lives in the depths of our beings which have been prepared to receive him.

On November 27th we will light the candle of hope, and I will challenge us to dare to dream with the prophet Isaiah that God can lead us to the mountain where a new way of living will be

revealed. We will practice hope as we sing our first carols with longing, "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" and "In the Bleak Midwinter."

On December 4th we will light the candle of peace. We will practice peace as we hear John the Baptist admonish us to repent of our warring ways. We will continue to hope with Isaiah that a shoot will rise from the stump of all which we have destroyed. Hope and peace will fill our carols, "Come O Long Expected Jesus," "Lo How a Rose E'er Blooming," and "It Came upon the Midnight Clear."

On December 11th we will light the candle of joy. Even if we feel grumpy that day, we will try to embrace the joy Mary felt when she received the angel's news that she would bear the Christ child. This audacious hope, peace and joy will echo in our carols, "Jesus, Jesus, O What a Wonderful Child," "It Came upon the Midnight Clear," and "Come, Live in the Light." And we **may** have a musical surprise this week!

On December 18th we will light the candle of love. Our spiritual practices of hope, peace and joy will help prepare us to grow in love. Just as Joseph agreed to welcome Mary's baby as his own, we will wonder together what it might be like to receive (and love) unexpected gifts God has for us. Singing "O Little Town of Bethlehem," "O Come all Ye Faithful," and "Angels from the Realms of Glory" will reflect our celebration.

On December 23rd we will light the Christ candle and remember again the story of Jesus' birth. We will begin with a service of lessons and carols

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(Practicing Advent continued from pg. 1)

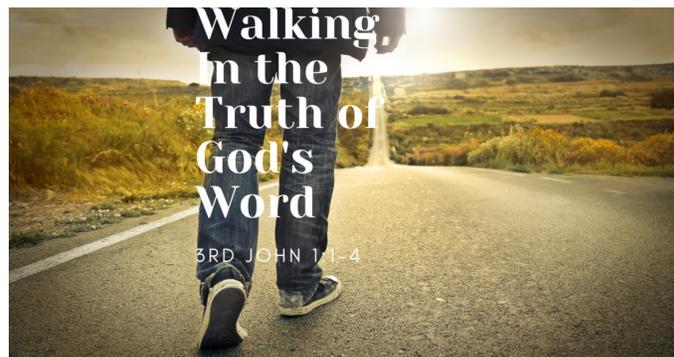
at 2 p.m., followed by a delicious Christmas brunch as we celebrate the new birth God intends for us this year. Council members and staff will be preparing ham, Texas hash browns, green bean casserole, a green salad and rolls. Most importantly, everyone is asked to bring cookies to exchange. After our meal everyone will depart with an assortment of cookies to enjoy over the holidays.

On Christmas Eve, Steve, Larry, and I will record a Christmas message with lessons and carols to post on Facebook. If you are missing a Christmas Eve service, please come and join us as we wish our friends on Facebook a Merry Christmas!

So, what is your hope this Advent? Do you yearn for inner peace and an end to world conflict? Are you open to experiencing the joy of spiritual encounter? Are you longing for more love in your life? If so, practicing Advent together this year will be a gift for the soul.

With Advent blessings of hope, peace, joy and love,

Pastor Mary



Walking with the Word

You can deepen your experience of worship by reading the scriptures in advance of worship on Sunday. Our services are often (but not always) based on one of the lessons for the week.

November 27

Isaiah 2:1-5
Psalm 122
Romans 13:11-14

December 4

Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19
Romans 15:4-13
Matthew 3:1-12

December 11

Isaiah 35:1-10
Psalm 146:5-10
Luke 1:46b-55
James 5:7-10
Matthew 11:2-11

December 18

Isaiah 7:10-16
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
Romans 1:1-7
Matthew 1:18-25

December 25

Isaiah 52:7-10
Psalm 98
Hebrews 1:1-4, 5-12
John 1:1-14

The Weather Outside is Frightful!

The temperatures have dropped early this year. If you have felt cold lately, imagine what it would be like if you were sleeping outside! Our un-housed neighbors risk frostbite and death in freezing weather. Fortunately, we have organizations that care for people who are unable (for whatever reason) to sustain a warm house for themselves.

When temperatures drop below 20 degrees, volunteers with St. Louis Winter Outreach go out in search of people sleeping on the streets. They offer rides to warming stations or hand out emergency supplies if people prefer to stay outside. Every day, Tent City Mission volunteers deliver food and emergency supplies to unhoused individuals.

We can support them during Advent by collecting handwarmers, socks, hats and mittens in men's sizes, and twin-size blankets. If you can bring one or more items, it could be a life-saving gift to someone this winter. Dollar Stores, Walmart and other discount retail outlets often sell inexpensive fleece throws or twin blankets. Low-cost handwarmers (usually two per package) are sold in the camping sections of big box stores.

As we prepare to make room in the inn for Jesus this Christmas, let's also make room in our hearts for those without shelter in St. Louis.

Council News ...

Wow it's hard to believe we are finishing another year. As you receive this message, we'll be in the middle of the Advent season and preparing for Christmas and a New Year.

As I look back on this year, wow we have been through a lot, accomplished a lot, and survived a lot. We started this year with supply pastors and survived a good half of the year that way. We met several new pastors, broadened our acceptance of differences, and pulled together in times of need. We now have called a part time pastor and continue to broaden our outreach, explore new ways of ministry, and grow together.

This church is truly a family that looks out for each other, cares for each other, and celebrates with each other. May we continue to grow as a faith family and share those values both inside and outside our church doors. May we find peace in our own lives, each other, and our community and church family when needed.

May hope fill us each and everyday, helping us to strive to reach whatever goals we have set personally, spiritually, worldly, and help us to spread that hope as well. May we continue to love as we do and spread that love as God would want us to.

May the joy we share in God, faith, family, and friends continue to fill our lives as we share goals and accomplishments together.

I pray these Advent words lead us all into a healthy, safe, and happy new year.

May each and everyone of you be blessed and feel our love throughout this holiday season. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

God's Blessings, Angela



I hope that everyone can join us on Friday December 23rd at 2pm. We will begin with a service of lessons and carols, telling the Christmas Story. Afterwards we will celebrate the season together with brunch. Be sure to read more about it in the separate article and don't forget those cookies!

From my Family to yours, we send much gratitude for all the love and support this year. We have felt this even at our lowest but also though times of great things. You all are special in our hearts.

Thank You

Angela Wagner (Tripp) and Family

Melissa Tripp and Family

Gratitude Makes Way to Generosity Thanksgiving Food Baskets



Trinity members poured out their generosity during November to share food items with the 47 families of the Lemay Child and Family Center. Each week we brought traditional thanksgiving food items: green bean casserole ingredients, mashed potatoes and gravy, stuffing, cranberry sauce and lastly, gift cards to purchase turkeys. Trinity also received a generous donation of \$1,000 toward the purchase of the turkeys. The school received donations from Schnucks and Save a Lot as well. In the end, the school received more than enough, and we were able to share some of our collection with the Affton Christian Food Pantry! Many thanks to Angela Wagner for coordinating this project, to Janet and Kevin Smith for delivering donations to the food pantry, and to all Trinity members for their generosity.

The Quilter's Corner—Janet Smith

The ladies have just finished a beautiful lap quilt for our retired quilter that is in a retirement home now. We plan to take it to her the beginning of December as a surprise.

The new quilt in the frame is a large baby quilt for Terry's niece due in late January. Terry did a wonderful job on the embroidery of it!

I completed a Santa Claus lap quilt this week. I hope to bring it to church to show everyone!

All the ladies of quilting want to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and best wishes for a healthy, Happy New Year!!



4—Morning Worship/Communion - 10:30 am
Second Sunday of Advent
Happy Birthday - Esther Yaeger!

7—Quilters - 9:00 am

11—Morning Worship - 10:30 am
Third Sunday of Advent
Happy Birthday - Lee Grasfeder!

13—Happy Birthday - Laverne Kory!

14—Quilters - 9:00 am

18—Morning Worship - 10:30 am
Fourth Sunday of Advent

21—Quilters - 9:00 am

23—Lessons & Carols Brunch - 2:00 PM

24—Christmas Eve

25—Christmas Day

28—Quilters - 9:00 am

31—New Year's Eve - Morning Worship-10:30 am

Hopeful Art for the Planet

We are in the midst of ongoing climate and environmental justice crises. The future seems uncertain, yet as people of faith, we are called to take action and fight for a livable planet. This year the UCC environmental justice leaders asked the children and youth in our churches to draw or paint a picture about climate hope, environmental justice, or protecting the Earth. In January a couple of designs will be selected, and post-cards will be printed using their artwork. Then churches will be asked to use the postcards ask our elected representatives to introduce or support legislation that will help save our planet.



Thank you, Natalie and Alexis, for sharing your work for this project! Working together to address climate change and environmental justice gives us hope for the planet. As the prophet Jeremiah once said: "Your labor is not in vain. There is hope for your future." (Jeremiah 31:17)

