



## “December Lily Pad Article”



*“To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11)*

*This holy time of the year — filled with family togetherness, gift giving, and heartfelt sharing — is, in the deepest sense, a time of prayer and reflection.*

The season of Advent marks the beginning of a new church year in which we reflect anew on the meaning of the incarnation, ministry, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus for us. In the season of Advent we focus on the threefold coming of Jesus Christ to the world in the flesh, in the Word and the Sacraments, and in glory. At this time each year we in the church should ask ourselves, “Why would the Lord of all the universe care enough about us humans to take our flesh and share our woes”?

By asking ourselves this question during the season of Advent, two important purposes are being served.

First, the connection between the manger and cross are brought into closer companionship. The manger and the cross are made of the same wood. That is to say that they are both made by wood stained with the blood of the sin and disobedience of God’s creation. God’s grace is shown in God’s action to send God’s Son, Jesus and close the gap of distance and separation between God and Creation that has forgotten to hear, listen, and obey the good and holy Word of their Heavenly Father.

The second purpose that is served is that it leads us to consider all the ways in which our God comes to us. Since the season of Advent occurs during the four weeks prior to Christmas Day, it can be easy for us to focus our eyes only on the baby Jesus cradled in the manger. But if we pull back the curtains a little farther, we can bring into view all the ways that God comes to us.

Our God splits the heavens and comes down not just during the event that we celebrate on Christmas morning. The purpose of the season of Advent is not so that the church can transport itself back two thousand-plus years ago and pretend to be first century Jews who are waiting for their Messiah to be born. We live in the twenty-first century. So let us believe more firmly the truth that God has already come to us, is continuing to come to us, and will come back to us.

We certainly take time within our congregation, community and within our families to celebrate God’s coming to us on Christmas morning. However, at the same time we embrace the fact that our God who is beyond time and space comes down to us in time and space every Sunday morning to deliver the fruit of God’s Son’s crucifixion and resurrection over two thousand years ago through God’s Word and Sacraments.

God comes to us through God’s instruments: the Water and the Word of God, the Bread and the Wine, the mouth of the Pastor who preaches the forgiveness our sins, love of God and neighbor, and the Bible which contains all of God’s Promises in Christ. In these ways we receive, Immanuel, “God with us,” now! As we live in a world where the evidence of the sin, suffering, and brokenness of creation is all too evident, we receive God’s peace on earth as God comes to us “hidden” in the Word and Sacraments. We also embrace God’s promise of Christ to restore God’s broken Creation and to completely “reveal” God’s victory over suffering and death in Jesus’ coming again to us in glory, just as Jesus said.

God is truly “with us”. No longer is God distant. God has entered the world. God is close to us. The Savior is born through the Gospel and those who proclaim it! God once again reminds us of the message that the Angel announced to the shepherds. It is a message that should not leave us indifferent; it should and will change everything. It will affect and transforms each and every one of us.

As we remember and celebrate God’s greatest “I love you” to Creation, we realized that only Christ could bring us the peace, joy, and gladness which we all seek. We recall the words of Isaiah quoted by Luke that Christ came to preach the Good News to the poor and brokenhearted and to free those who are oppressed.

# The Lily Pad

**“I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.” Solomon 2:1**

The truth that God cares enough for humanity to take on our flesh and share our woes is shown to us in the wonderful Christmas story which we eagerly wait to celebrate. But take comfort now in this Truth as it is made known to you now through God’s Word and Sacraments. As members of Jesus’ Church, we should equip ourselves to share this Good News with others who live among us and are confused in their questioning, suffering, and despair. And as you, disciples of Christ, equip yourselves this Advent season and share the reason for the hope that you have in Christ, rest assured that Jesus is coming again soon.

Christmas is for sinners. Christ came for you and me. Jesus is the reason for the season. It must soak in our hearts that Christ loves us to death; yes, even death on a rugged cross. Enjoy the season: visit with family and friends, as you reach out to persons who find themselves lonely and isolated but desire to know the unconditional love of Jesus Christ. We need each other. May Christmas remove the tyranny of our selfishness that never satisfies the human heart. Every Christmas calls us to become more and more like Jesus—a process that will take a lifetime. May we go tell it on the mountains and the valleys, yes, Jesus Christ is born through and in us.

May you know the true happiness of the real meaning of the Christmas holiday. May you feel the love that God offers through this magnanimous gift of the Messiah.

A Christmas birth leads us to Bethlehem, it leads to a cross, and an empty grave. It leads us to one another and new ways of living in grace, peace, and love.

On this joyful occasion, Bro. Martin, “Marissa”, Biancha, Sophia, Nicolas, Amme, the “Puppies” and I extend to each of you our Fifth Avenue United Methodist Family, our love and appreciation; gratitude for your support, leadership, and good wishes throughout 2023. May our Lord Jesus Christ, born in Bethlehem, bless you, your families and loved ones at this blessed time of hope and grace.

Have a wonderful Advent season! Have a merry Christmas, do not forget what Jesus came to do, remember that Jesus came for you!

May the gift of God’s love come alive in your heart this Christmas and may the New Year bring you many occasions for rejoicing.

**Blessings this Advent and Christmas!**

**Pastor Clarissa & Martin**

*JOY TO THE WORLD  
THE LORD HAS COME*

