



# THE CLARION

**ADVENT to CHRISTMAS** - Pastor Ron de Groot

December 2023



Karl Barth wrote, “What other time or season can or will the Church ever have but that of Advent?” Our Christian life is a long practice in waiting—waiting for God to meet us, to grow us, to save us. And, ultimately, waiting for Jesus to set all things right.

Doris and I have been immersed in the Netflix series “Call the Midwife”. It has been a truly emotionally educational drama for me as a male. With its twelve seasons and multiple episodes I have been invited into the emotional and physical process of pregnancy and child birth. I have witnessed the deep mystery of birth and the struggles of those giving birth into families and communities with so much hope and disappointment.

It may have prepared me for Advent and Christmas as a profoundly human experience of the presence of God in our world, As Tish Harrison notes;

“Pregnancy is another apt metaphor for Advent. The growth of a child in the womb always involves waiting. When a woman is pregnant, she dwells in a daily mystery. She embodies both anticipation and surrender.

Her body is an active part of gestation, of course. Yet ask any woman who’s been pregnant and she’ll tell you that, in many ways, she was just along for the ride. There is something larger than us that we simply participate in—something that calls all the shots. There’s wonder beyond what we can name, measure, predict, or control.

Carrying this beloved child was a process of waiting, not knowing what would come. And we as a church were waiting together for the one to whom we prayed, the one who came as an infant, whose work continues in the world even now. We were waiting with the whole church,

In all that time of waiting for labor, a child was being formed, quietly growing within me. And in our times of waiting, as individuals and as a church, what might God be growing?”

Advent is not merely a collection of themes, scriptures, practices, and prayers but a daily immersion in mystery, a lesson in grace

learned through how we rub against time. It asks us to accept the ache of being in suspense and incomplete.

Yet Advent—and the waiting it represents—is not an end in itself. The whole point of this season is to prepare for the feasts ahead—the celebration of Christmas, the joy of God surprising us in the present, and the hushed awe when every knee finally bows before the coming king.

Someday all of our Advents will end. The wait will be over. The Lord will come. Yet all of our waiting—our struggles and sorrows, our doubts and fears, our days and weeks—will be a vital part of the story. It will be part of the “hallelujah” that echoes from a creation that once groaned.

It will be part of the restoration of all things. It will be part of what is being born. Until then we live each minute of our lives between Jesus’ first advent in the nativity and his final advent. Until then we dwell in liminality, in the meantime. As we both enjoy and endure this meantime, with all its beauty and suffering, with its bright sadness,

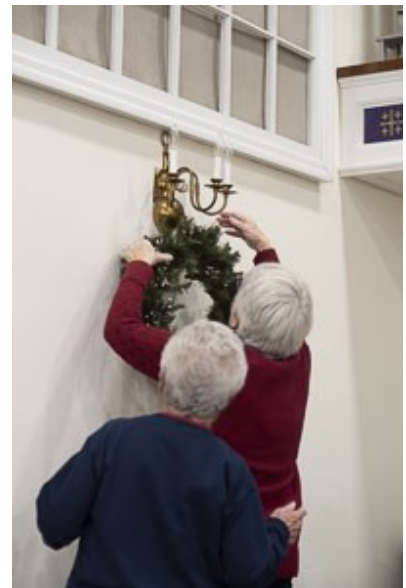
Advent, like so many other spiritual practices, is merely a tool. It is meant to teach us how to live in hope and to trust and love the object of our hope. It is merely a tool, but it is one that has proven useful across many generations and many lives. May it prove useful in ours as well. Blessed Advent to you. And remember: our king is coming.

Soon and very soon!

Get ready.







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.

Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,  
One more seed is planted there:  
Give up your strength the seed to nourish,  
That in course the flower may flourish.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love, the rose, is on the way.

**Making our house fair as we  
are able!**

**Calvary's decorating crew at  
work in the house of the Lord.  
Creating a sanctuary environ-  
ment that will carry us through  
Advent to Christmas. It takes a  
village.**

## LECTIONARY *for* DECEMBER 2023

### December 3 1st Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 64:1-9 *and*  
*Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19*  
1 Corinthians 1:3-9  
Mark 13:24-37

### December 10 2nd Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 40:1-11 *and*  
*Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13*  
2 Peter 3:8-15a  
James 5:7-10  
Mark 1:1-8

### December 17 3rd Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 *and*  
*Psalm 126 or*  
Luke 1:46b-55  
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24  
John 1:6-8, 19-28

### December 24 4th Sunday of Advent

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 *and*  
Luke 1:46b-55 *or*  
*Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26*  
Romans 16:25-27  
Luke 1:26-38

### December 24 Christmas Eve

Isaiah 9:2-7  
*Psalm 96*  
Titus 2:11-14  
Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)

### December 25 Christmas Day

*Dawn:*  
Isaiah 62:6-12 *and*  
*Psalm 97*  
Titus 3:4-7  
Luke 2:(1-7) 8-20

*Day:*

Isaiah 52:7-10  
*Psalm 98*  
Hebrews 1:1-4 (5-12)  
John 1:1-14

### December 31 1st Sunday of Christmas

Isaiah 61:10-62:3 *and*  
*Psalm 148*  
Galatians 4:4-7  
Luke 2:22-40

## Briefly Noted

### INTERFAITH FOOD PANTRY

Deacon Cheryl Jewell reported that 234 pounds of donated items were delivered to the food bank during the month of November. The Montessori Children's Academy participated with Calvary in the Interfaith Food Pantry's Annual Thanksgiving Drive.

**BOOK CLUB:** The Just Us Book Club will meet on Friday, December 15 at 1:00 pm at the home of Janet Johannessen. The book for December will be "The Love Stories of the Bible Speak". The discussion will be led by Carol Allen. Any questions, please call Carol Allen at 973-379-7655.

### DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Sanna Brown	2
Nancy Mantone	3
Carole Anderson	5
Michelle Fehrenbacher	7
Heidi Jensen	10
Dean Marelli	15
Susan Apgar	16
Brenda Brown	21
Shirley Stoll	21
Ellen Gude	22
Bonnie McDonald	27
Emilia Russo	27
Lorenzo Russo	27
Charles Abam	30

### DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Chris & Amanda Plummer	3
Janet Johannessen & Chet Lloyd	26



**Sunday December the 10th**  
**11:30 AM**

We will be gathering on the 2nd Sunday of the Advent season for lunch after the morning worship service. Everyone is invited to join us for delicious homemade soups and bread. Our Advent journey will have reached the halfway point and we will encourage one another for what lies ahead with food and fellowship.

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**\* 9:00 pm**

**Traditional Worship**

**Choir**

**Strings**

**Communion**

**Candlelight Service**

**Service Live Streamed**



**\* There is pre service concert  
at 8:45 pm**

To order a poinsettia for our Christmas sanctuary display, fill out this form with your dedication, and attach a check made payable to "Calvary Presbyterian Church" (with "poinsettia" noted on the memo line), for \$15 each. Send to the church office or drop it in the collection plate on Sunday. *Payment must accompany request.*

Please have your order in by Sunday, December 10 so that we can process your request. (Two large white poinsettias will be displayed during Epiphany in January. If you would be interested in donating one of these, please contact the church office.)

*Please print:*



\_\_\_\_\_ Pink/Red Poinsettia(s)      \_\_\_\_\_ White Poinsettia(s)

\_\_\_\_\_ In memory of \_\_\_\_\_

**Print full name above**

\_\_\_\_\_ In Gratitude for \_\_\_\_\_

**Print full name above**

\_\_\_\_\_ To the Glory of God.

My Name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I will take my plant after the 9:00 p.m. Christmas Eve service.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ total payment enclosed (@ \$15 each)