



The Episcopal Church of the Atonement

36 Court Street • Westfield, MA • 01085 • (413) 562-5461 • www.atonementwestfield.org

Drawn in by Grace • Reaching out in Love

November 23, 2025

Dear Atonement Family,

*"Slowly, slowly, they return:
the traveler, the exile, the weary and broken...
Slowly the wanderer comes home."*

These lines from a Wendell Berry poem, *"Slowly, slowly they return"*, have been resting on my heart as we enter Advent. They speak to that tender movement back toward center, back toward hope, back toward God. It's a movement that rarely happens quickly, and rarely all at once. In a bruised and aching world, this poem names a truth many of us feel. We are returning, yes... but slowly.

Advent gives us permission to move at that slower pace. To return gently to ourselves. To breathe again. To loosen our grip on the days and make a little room for wonder.

This season is often described as waiting for Christ to come. But Berry reminds us—and the Gospel reminds us—that the Holy does not wait until Christmas morning to be present:

*"The Incarnate Word is with us, is still speaking,
is present always, yet leaves no sign but everything that is."*

Christ is not far off. Christ is already here—in the ache and in the hope, in the quiet morning light, in the prayers we whisper when the world feels overwhelming. The Nativity is the story we are walking toward, but Emmanuel, God with us, is the reality we walk with.

Berry goes on to write:

*"Slowly, slowly, they return
to the small fields they had forgotten,
to the morning prayers they meant to pray,
to the love that calls them back."*

Isn't that Advent? A slow returning to what matters. A remembering of who we are. A deep breath in the midst of all that is broken...and all that is beautiful.

So this year, I invite you to let Advent be a gentle homecoming for your spirit. Not a frantic preparation, not a perfecting of anything, but a slow return to the love that has been calling you all along.

Let the candles we light remind you that the Light is already present.
Let the scriptures steady you with promises larger than the nightly news.
Let our worship give you a place to rest and be held.
Let this community be the ground where hope grows again.

We wait, yes, and we wait with confidence, because Christ is already in our midst. As we join together in the slow walk toward Bethlehem, one candle, one song, one breath at a time, may we discover again that the One we await has already found us. That the Incarnate Word is present in every corner of our lives, guiding us, healing us, calling us back to joy.

With love and holy expectation,

Sandi+

The Rev. Sandi Albom, Priest-In-Charge
The Episcopal Church of the Atonement Westfield, MA



I invite you to take advantage of several opportunities to be in community this Advent at ECOTA. Each offers a time to both gather and to sink into this time of waiting and preparation. Please invite a friend to join with us. Sign up in the Narthex (lobby).

- Sunday, December 7, One service at 9:30 a.m. Stewardship Ingathering celebration breakfast. Bring something to share.
- Take an angel from the Angel Tree to benefit a young person in our community or a senior citizen at Westfield Gardens.
- Tuesday, December 9, Women's Luncheon, 12:00 p.m. Carols with Jerry Noble.

Christmas Services at ECOTA

12/24	4:00pm	Pageant and Holy Eucharist
12/24	8:30pm	Carols and Music
12/24	9:00pm	Christmas Eve Celebration of the Nativity of Our Lord
12/25	9:30am	Christmas Day – The Nativity of Our Lord