

President's Note for December 2021

"Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful" John F. Wade, Hymn 45 Green LBW

Oh, come all ye faithful; Oh, come, oh, come, Emmanuel; Come, thou fount of every blessing. Advent and Christmas are a time of waiting, contemplation, anticipation and coming. We come to await the season and our Lord and He comes to us in all of our brokenness. We come to church and gather to wait together, to light one candle to watch for Messiah. Church is about gathering as a community of faith to give thanks, ask for forgiveness, sing praises and to wait; wait for the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Emmanuel which we know translates as God with us. The culmination of this waiting in the church year is Christmas Eve. The culmination of our collective waiting will be for when our Lord returns to judge the world and gather His own unto Him. In the interim we wait. As I write this column I've just heard of the passing of noted Broadway composer Stephen Sondheim. One of my favorite compositions of his is the song No one is Alone from Into the Woods. While the song was composed for specific characters and situations within the musical, I take comfort in the theme of the song of no one being alone, believing that the community of saints and our Lord Himself are always with us. Christ is with us when we pray and when we receive the Eucharist. Let's never forget the importance of community, of gathering, of reaching out to others and of watchful waiting. As Pastor Vance spoke to this past Sunday, be awake and be prepared.

We are thankful to continue with our rotation of clergy and seminarian leading us in worship each Sunday. As the church season changes to Advent, our sanctuary becomes ever more resplendent and reverent with the blue altar cloths, the tree, the wreaths and the Advent candles where we light a new candle each week in anticipation of the coming of our Lord. I like the candle lighting ceremony in that it links us with our Jewish heritage and the coming of Messiah. As I write this column public radio is playing songs of Hanukah. After a year of not gathering because of precautions surrounding the pandemic, we're planning to gather again this Christmas Eve. Pastor Emeritus Townsend has agreed to lead us in a traditional candlelight worship service on Christmas Eve at 6:30PM. Yes, mark your calendars as we have moved our worship time up a bit.

Everyone is aware and is doing their best to adapt to ongoing health concerns including the new Omicron variant, so I would be remiss not to remind everyone that while yes, it is very important for our faith and for our health as a congregation to gather and invite others to gather with us, if you're not feeling well please do not join us in our sanctuary, but worship with us in spirit and on our website instead. We'll keep you in our prayers.

Remember, as has been intimated before, we will work towards holding a renewal of vows ceremony as part of a January worship service, likely on January 09th. This ceremony will serve both to renew our commitment to our Lord and to update our somewhat blurry membership records. We are then scheduled to hold our annual congregational meeting on Sunday January 30th following worship where proper records on who is eligible to serve and vote will be needed. Plan to attend, bring ideas and consider serving.

We are saddened to hear of the passing of long time member, past church council president, friend and sister in Christ Shirley Dodd. Shirley had returned to be with family in Colorado. Her daughter Linda and family are planning a memorial service here in Sacramento in the new year. Our condolences go out to Linda and the family. I remember Shirley for her hospitality, faithfulness and friendship and for her regularly reminding us that according to our church constitution to be a voting member one must have made a monetary contribution of record and received communion within the past year. She also would remind me from time to time that "you can't un-ring a bell." I miss our friend Shirley.

Continue to keep friends, members and all in need in your prayers and do what you can to reach out to shut-ins. The holiday season with all of its blessings and beauty can be a very difficult time for those who struggle. Life, hope, love, faith and even joy mingle, merge and emerge, in struggle. Let's continue to gather to share in our laughter and in our sorrow as we prepare for the coming of our Lord and prepare to sing...

"Joy to the World, the Lord is Come!" Watts, Handel, Hymn 39 Green LBW

Peace,

Chuck Prewett

Council President