

ADVENT 2021

CHURCH @ HOME

staying connected with God,
each other, and ourselves



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Another pandemic Advent.

Another season of worrying whether it's safe enough to be out, of cancelled events, of traditions being changed and adapted, and of a special time of year not feeling all that special. Even though this time around there are vaccinations and safety protocols, it still makes me go, "Ugggh!" So much so, I gotta tell you, I've avoided planning Advent all together.

Anyone else feeling that? I'm sure most of us are. This is not at all where we thought we'd be a year ago. We're exhausted and given the past two years, we *need* this, don't we? Ugggh is the last thing we want to be feeling right now.

But here's the thing about that . . . and this may come as a bit of a surprise (and not the good kind):

That feeling? It's what we *need* to be feeling as we head towards Christmas. Yup, you didn't read that wrong. Ugggh is exactly how we need to feel as we head towards Christmas. . . . *continued*

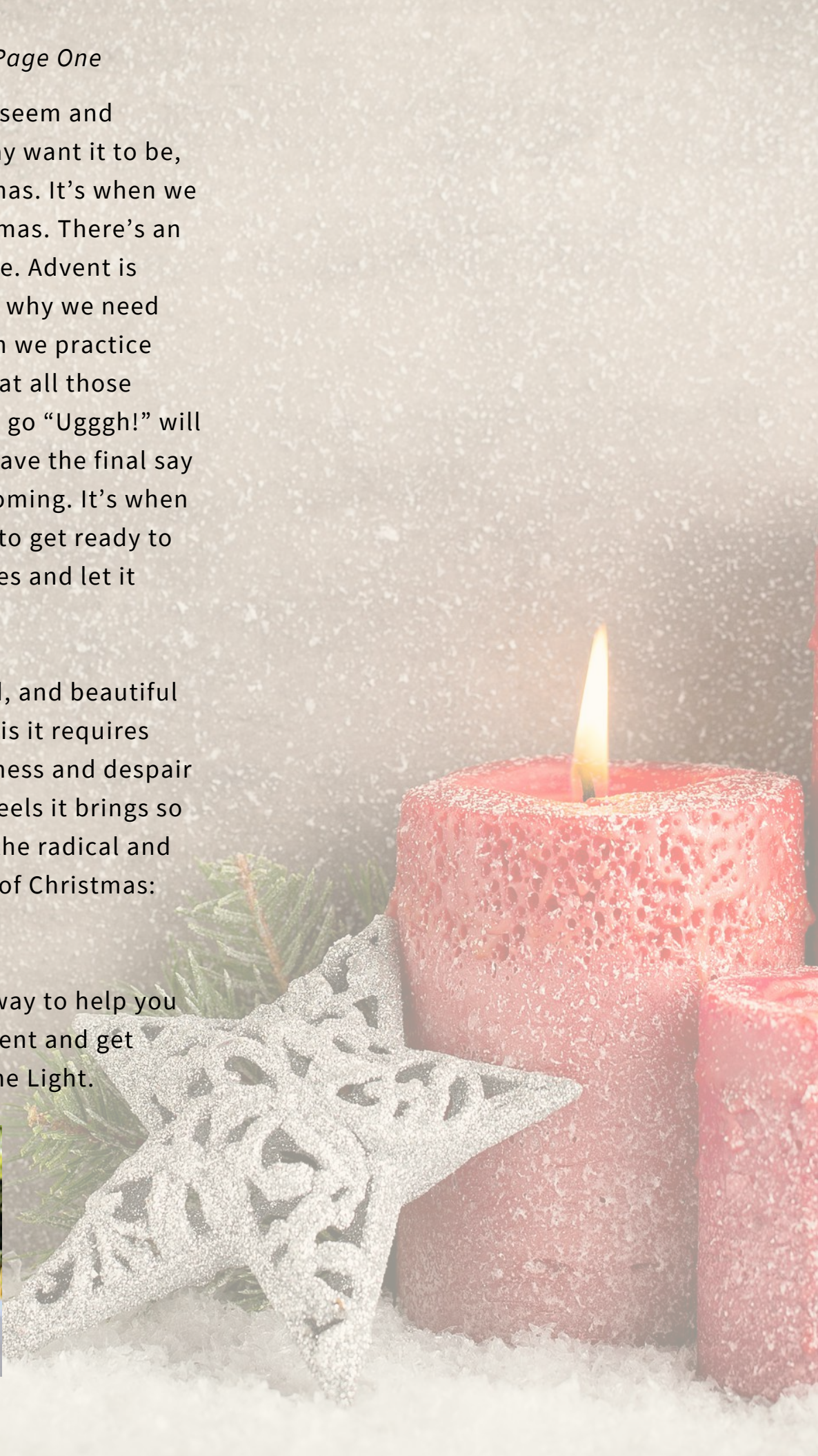
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Despite how it may seem and despite what we may want it to be, Advent isn't Christmas. It's when we get ready *for* Christmas. There's an important difference. Advent is when we remember why we need Christmas. It's when we practice daring to believe that all those things that make us go "Ugggh!" will not last and don't have the final say because a light is coming. It's when we do what we can to get ready to follow it when it does and let it change everything.

The wondrous, hard, and beautiful thing about Advent is it requires looking at the darkness and despair and feeling all the feels it brings so we can experience the radical and liberating message of Christmas: God is with us.

This magazine is a way to help you do that work of Advent and get ready to embrace the Light.

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Advent Greetings Dear Friends!

Yes, it **is** true, this month of November heralds in the start of Advent!

I hope you are doing well.

This is a time of expectancy, but also of patience and resilience as we move towards the longest nights of the year. This can bring up feelings of sadness or despair for some of us; others look forward to being able to cosy up with a blanket by the fire. Winter tells us to “take your time,” slow down and “be patient” . . . some of us are better at this than others. ☺

Something within you may want to escape, but winter is also an opportunity to sit, be quiet and reflect, be aware, connect with others and “take our time.” The pandemic has also afforded this opportunity, but for everyone I know, these times have led to a churning of emotions for sure. Therefore, I have included information in this magazine on grieving through Advent and the Christmas season.

As we lead up to Christmas, please do let me know if you or someone you know could benefit from some extra support and caring during this season. We love and think of each one of you.

Thank you for the many offers to deliver our gifts of Christmas cookies. If you would like to be involved in any of the Christmas preparations for the cookies or care packages, let me know that too.

We would love to read about your special Christmas stories, poetry, memories or updates for our December magazine and we invite you to submit them by November 26.

As usual, we express our deepest gratitude to the many dedicated volunteers who lovingly contribute to the care packages.

This month, Dave Churchill has ingeniously created trivets for your use, thank you so much, Dave!

As you start your Advent journey, I wish you peace, healing, comfort, love and joy.

Vi



COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS

One of our big traditions during Advent is counting down to Christmas by reflecting on hope, peace, joy, and love, and by lighting candles as we prepare for the Light of Christ to shine into our lives and world.

This is something we can do together at home. We invite you to make an Advent wreath at home (all you really need is five candles, but put as much creativity into it as you'd like. Send us photos!!) and make a point of following the liturgies each week.

HOPE:

Christmas is about hope.

It's about the resilient and defiant trust that the worst thing is never the last thing.

We light this candle with and for hope.

We light it with the hope that a light will shine in our darkness and that the impossible can happen.

As we prepare for Christmas, may we practice resilient and defiant hope.

May we choose courage over despair and may we be a light to others.



PEACE:

Christmas is about peace.

It's about the deep and soulful harmony existing in and between EVERYTHING and EVERYONE.

We light this candle with and for peace.

We light it in the name wholeness, unity, justice, reconciliation, forgiveness, and healing.

As we prepare for Christmas, may we be makers of peace.

May we create peace with God, peace with ourselves, peace with one another, and peace with creation.



JOY:

Christmas is about joy.

It's about that feeling of being truly, fully, and soulfully alive.

We light this candle with and for joy.

We light it for those moments of laughter in the midst of tears, reconciliation after division, recovery after tragedy, and for tables surrounded by friends.

As we prepare for Christmas, may we be bringers of joy.

May we be reminders that life can still be good and there is still a reason to dance and sing.



LOVE:

Christmas is about love.

It's about the thing that holds the universe together, that gives it all meaning, and that drives it all forward.

We light this candle with and for courageous, just, extravagant and indiscriminate love.

We light it remembering we are loved just as we are and that love is the way of the universe.

As we prepare for Christmas, may our love be strong.

May we love God, may we love others, and may we love ourselves.



A night sky with a crescent moon in the upper left, glowing with a yellowish light. The sky is filled with numerous stars of various colors, including red, purple, and blue. The background transitions from a dark red on the left to a deep blue on the right.

CHRISTMAS EVE:

My friends!

To everyone who has ever longed for hope, joy, peace, and love,
to everyone who dreamed of a new kind of life and a new kind of world,
may you hear the good, beautiful, and liberating news:

Christmas is here!

Christmas is when we celebrate how God is here,
with us and for us,
inviting us into new lives and a new world,

**lives of beauty, wonder, and love,
and a world of peace and justice, where everyone belongs
and everyone has enough.**

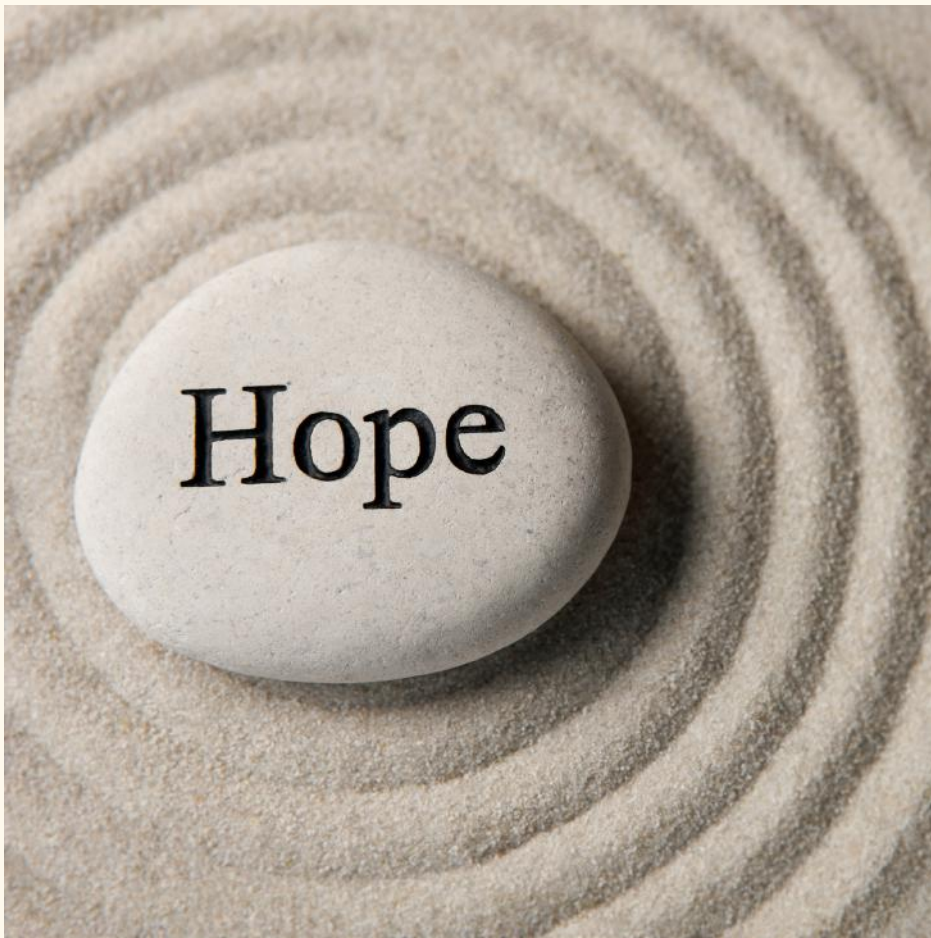
So we light this candle,
not just as a sign of Christ's Light that is shining,
but of the people we're to become:

**people who shine like stars,
burning down a world of fear and oppression,
and guiding the way to extravagant and indiscriminate love.**



DAILY READINGS FOR ADVENT

Unless otherwise indicated, the readings
were written by Rev. Nick Coates.



November 28

“Advent is about anticipating the birth of Christ. It’s about longing, desire, that which is yet to come. That which isn’t here yet. And so we wait, expectantly. Together. With an ache. Because all is not right. Something is missing. And we are looking to fill that void.

Advent confronts this corrosion of the heart with the insistence that God has not abandoned the world, hope is real and something is coming. We ask God to enter into the deepest places of cynicism, bitterness and hardness where we have stopped believing that tomorrow can be better than today. We ask for the impossible to happen.

In Advent we open up. We soften up. We turn our hearts in the direction of that day. That day when the baby cries His first cry and we, surrounded by shepherds and angels and everybody in between, celebrate that sound in time that brings our Spirits what we’ve been longing for.”

- *Rob Bell*



November 29

When we talk about hope we're talking about resilient and defiant trust. It's a trust that looks at the despair and hurt happening in us and around us and says, "It's too early to give up because God is a God who turns towards us." That's what hope is. It's the resilient and defiant trust that it's always too early to give up.

And because it's that, it isn't just wishful thinking or arrogant optimism, but something that shapes how we live and move and that compels us to try to make happen the very things we're longing for.

If you've ever been in a relationship that's struggling and you don't know if you're gonna make it but you work on it anyway? That's hope.

If you've ever had a friend who's sick and you don't know if they're gonna make it but you show up and cheer them on anyway? That's hope.

If you've ever had a dream where you gave up everything to chase it even though you knew it may not happen? That's hope.

If you've ever witnessed oppression and violence and you've worked and fought even though you didn't know justice would happen? That's hope.

This is why hope changes everything.



November 30

Advent is when we remember why we need Christmas in the first place. It's when we slow down, pull over, reflect on the revolutionary, liberating, and radical meaning of Christmas and get ready to let that message change everything.

One of the ways Advent helps us do that is by inviting us to practice something that most of us probably find really difficult: being present and aware of what's going on in and around us. Take some time today to practice being present. Feel what's going on. Name it out loud. Express it somehow. We cannot have hope for something new if we never name what it is we want to leave behind.



December 1

“Come, Holy Spirit. Come, Spirit of God. Come, Divine Energy. Come with your peace, your power, your light. Come with forgiveness, courage, and love.

Come now to our suffering world, this world suffering from a virus, from hatred, violence, fear, and greed.

Come to those exhausted and done. Come to those angry and bitter. Come to those launching missiles and to those who those missiles are landing on. Come to those experiencing loss and grief.

Come to those without homes and fleeing from homes. Come to those who hunger and those who are cold. Come to our broken and shattered earth. Come to everyone and everything crying out for life.

Help us to be people of hope, people who breathe your Spirit in and who join in that work of renewing the earth.”

Amen

- Fr. Leo Donovan



December 2

Mary was a poor teenage girl living in an occupied state. Given how things were going at that time, her future wasn't looking any better than her present. She'd still be poor, still be a second class citizen because of her gender, and still be oppressed. That's how it had always been and that's how it would always be. It makes us have to wonder, with all of that in mind, when the angel showed up and asked her if she wanted to help change the universe, what made her say yes?

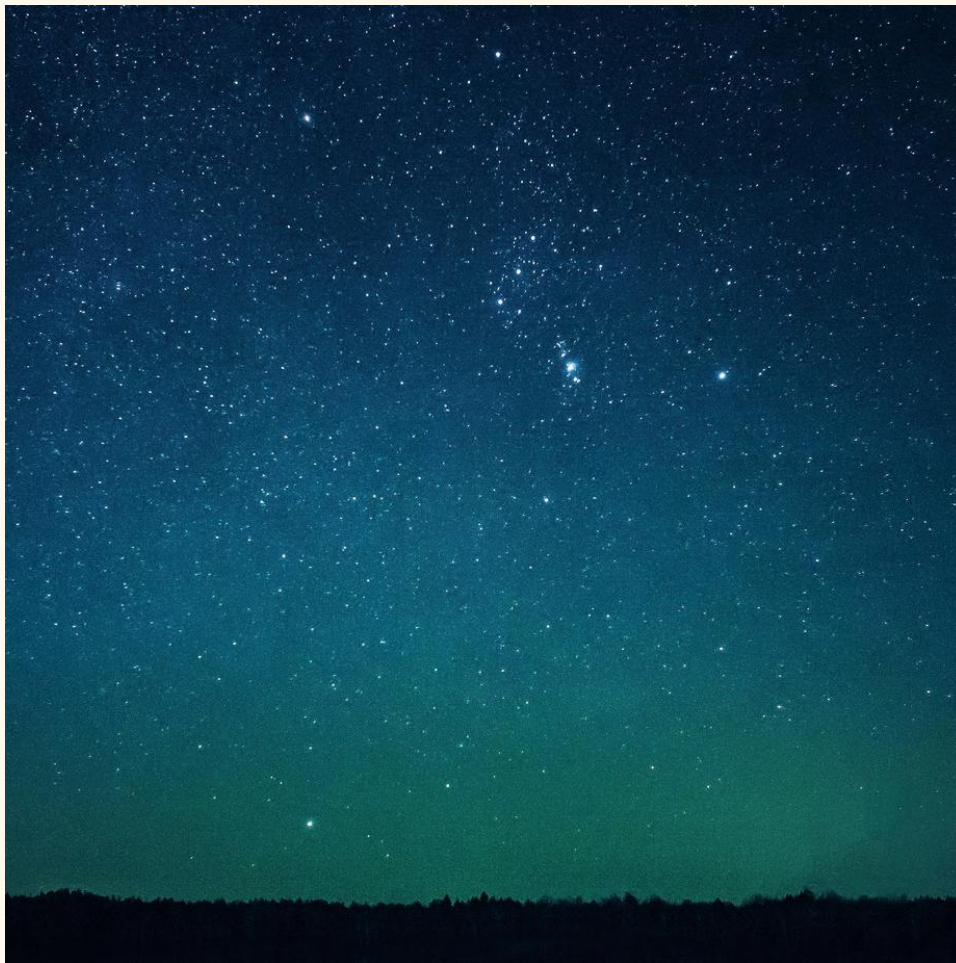


December 3

Hope is more than wishful thinking, it's courageous and defiant action against despair. How can you be a source of hope today?

December 4

Lament is the sacred art of naming what it is that should not be. It is the companion to hope. It's only by naming, however we need to name it, that this is what's wrong, this is what's broken, and this is what needs to change, that we can make room for imagination and what could be possible. What laments do you have? Take some time to name them today in order to make room for what could be.



December 5

During the second week of Advent, our tradition invites us to think about the peace Jesus embodies and teaches. But when we talk about peace, we're not just talking about any peace— we're talking about a robust, deep, soulful HARMONY, this peace that exists in and between everything and everyone. We're talking about WHOLENESS, this sense of being at peace with ourselves and all our parts and all our stories. We're talking about TRUST, this peace that grounds and reassures even in the MIDST of conflict. That's the peace we talk about at Christmas. We're talking about a peace that, all at once, both allows and sustains that kind of life and world.



December 6

As Banksy shows us, we cannot have peace without love and we cannot have love without peace.



December 7

A spiritual practice for the second week of Advent: Find a quiet place to be and try this for 5-10 breaths. With every breath you take in, think “I am breathing in peace,” and with every breath out, think “I am breathing out . . .” and name something that is robbing you of peace. Maybe it’s resentment. Maybe it’s the urge to always be doing. Maybe it’s sadness. The idea isn't for it to go away, but for a sense of peace to take up more room than it does.

December 8

Jesus taught that we become fully and truly alive by becoming makers of peace: peace with God, peace with ourselves, peace with others, and peace with creation. How can you create peace today?

December 9

“If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.”

- *Mother Teresa*



December 10

In the Christmas story, we're told that the shepherds and the magi found Jesus by following a star that was shining in the dark sky. It reminds me of sitting by a fire while camping and feeling that all is okay with the world even when all is not alright. It reminds me of sitting in a dark room with just a reading light on and feeling this deep sense of comfort. There's something deeply sacred about it. Maybe you've experienced it too. What is it about a light shining in the dark that brings us a sense of calm and peace?



December 11

The Peace of the Wild Things

- *Wendell Berry*

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

December 12

Every Advent we take time to reflect on joy. Joy is far more than momentary happiness, it's something deeply sacred: it's the feeling, sometimes fleeting and sometimes permanent, of being truly, fully, and wholly alive. So why joy at Christmas? Because it's at Christmas that we celebrate how even though there is pain, suffering, evil, and injustice, we can still experience life as it was meant to be.

December 13

What brings you joy? Make a list of three things and go and do each one.





December 14

Shepherds were seen as some of the worst of the worst people in first century Palestine. They were seen as thieves, sinners, and people you'd want to avoid at all costs. Nobody would want to be a shepherd because it was a life of despair, shame, and loneliness. And yet it's to these guys that the angels show up with their message of Jesus' birth. Sometimes when life goes sideways we can feel like Christmas isn't for us but the truth is it's precisely for everyone who experiences despair, shame, and loneliness. It's for them because Christmas is about joy.



December 15

"Joy is an act of resistance against despair and its forces."

- *Willie Jennings.*

What act of joy can you commit today?

December 16

Ever do this? Ever experience something joyful—something that lifts your spirits and makes you feel alive—and then go, “This is great but what about . . .” and then think of a gazillion reasons why it won’t last? Some people call this “dress rehearsing tragedy.” It’s when we get in the way of joy. We all do it but the trick is to learn in those moments when we want to second guess it all to stay in the moment and relish the joy.



December 17

Joy can be tough to experience sometimes. One of the practices that will always lead to joy—yup, that’s as much of a guarantee we can give you—is gratitude. Gratitude always leads to joy (and spoiler alert: joy always leads to gratitude). As Brene Brown says, “There is no joy without gratitude.” Give it a shot: what are you grateful for today?

December 18

Put on your favourite music and have a dance party in the kitchen. Bring on that joy!!



December 19

As we get closer to Christmas, we end up thinking about the thing at the very heart of Christmas and the thing that hope, peace, and joy flow out of: love. It's out of love that God came into our lives and world as Jesus. It's out of love that God came to show us how to be human. It's out of love that God came to be with us. If we're ever wondering what love looks like, all we need to do is look at Christmas.

December 20

Chew on this one today:

“Love does not exist, love calls everything into existence.”

- *Peter Rollins*



December 21

Nobody likes to talk about King Herod. He is the bad guy of the Christmas story, after all. But we need to talk about him because Christmas isn't just about getting, it's also about losing. The truth is in order to say "yes" to all that Christmas is, it takes saying "no." It takes saying "no" to power, control, evil, injustice, selfishness, and greed. And so often, saying "no" means losing things that make us wealthy, comfortable, and secure. King Herod didn't want to lose and said "no" to Christmas. We should talk about that because the same question gets asked of us: "What will we say when Christmas comes?"



December 22

We all love to get gifts (what's not to love?!) but the real joy? That comes through the giving. Joy and generosity always go hand-in-hand. That's why one writer of the Bible talks about being a cheerful giver.

This year we've partnered with our friends at World Renew to help bring the joy to the places that need it the most. Head to worldrenew.ca/gift-catalogue/shop and make a difference through the gift of ducks, education, food, and tools.

December 23

Here's an idea: go buy some Christmas cards (or make your own!) and drop them off at a local nursing home to give to those who don't get any kind of mail during the holidays. Reflect on how it felt to be a source of love and joy to complete strangers.



December 24

Christmas Eve. Wherever you find yourself, take a moment, even a small one, to feel the holiness of this night and hear what it says to you:

“Behold,
You who have walked in darkness,
whose worlds and lives have become coloured by pain and sorrow,
you who are longing for something new, look up!
A great light is shining upon you!
For all of you who live in a land of deep shadows -
light! Sunbursts of light!
Love is here.”

WALKING WITH GRIEF: GRIEVING THROUGH THE CHRISTMAS SEASON

BY VI SHARPE

When someone you love has died, times of special celebration and remembrance such as Christmas can be painful and increase your sense of loss.

The heart of the season can feel as if it has been torn apart. Without those whom we love, what does it mean? We can feel distanced from the celebrations going on around us and that can lead to increased sadness and feelings of guilt or loneliness.

This is also true when we or a loved one are facing ill health, life transitions, the loss of a pet or other life experiences for which we grieve in both small and large ways. We have spent the past two years in upheaval, isolation, loss of loved ones, and uncertainty during the COVID-19 pandemic. This has taken its toll in various ways and has led to feelings of trauma and grief.

These life losses can leave us feeling tender and vulnerable, particularly at special times of year such as Christmas.

It is important to take the time to honour your thoughts and feelings during Advent and Christmas. Remember, there is no one way to grieve or to celebrate. Family members can each feel differently in their grief too and may not always understand your feelings.

As it's a tender time, pace yourself and do whatever feels comfortable and meaningful for you. Remember too that grief can be exhausting, so be compassionate towards yourself and reduce expectations and stress on yourself. Do what feels right for you during the season and don't feel guilty for doing so. Reach out to supportive friends and family to express your feelings and talk about your loss.

Perhaps this is a time for you or your family to start new Christmas traditions, at the same time honouring your loved ones for the unique relationship you have had together. Remember that death does not end this beloved relationship.

It is a time of creating meaning in your life in whatever ways are significant to you. Plan ahead if you can, so that you can alleviate expectations and the stress of getting caught off guard, at the same time creating the space to change your mind if you wish to.

Due to the current pandemic, you may be feeling increased isolation. Ensure that you have a plan made beforehand to connect with friends and family in whatever way you can do so safely under current public health restrictions. Pick up the phone if you need to hear a supportive voice and know your church family is here for you too.

Try to get walks outside and give yourself permission to take some special time alone if that is also what you need.

Have some rituals built into your days so you can honour the loved ones in your life. That will give your deepest thoughts and feelings a voice and can be very meaningful and healing. Share memories whenever you can.

For example, light a candle in your home to both honour your loved one and acknowledge the love, your grief and the memories you have shared, all intertwined together. It is okay to feel sad, mad, etc. Know that you are not alone in your grief. As you light your Advent candles know that God is with you and there is this amazing promise filled with peace, hope and, yes, joy is possible once again! Know that your church family is also walking alongside you, shining God's light and promise for you when sadness fills your heart. Attend the Blue Christmas service where you can both lament and celebrate your loved one and do reach out if you feel you need to talk about your loss.

*“Blessed are they (YOU) that mourn,
for they (YOU) shall be comforted.”*
(Matthew 5:4)

Wishing you comfort, peace, hope, joy
and love during Advent and the Christmas
Season,

Vi



WALKING WITH GRIEF: BECAUSE I AM HELD IN LOVE

Because I am held in love, this is the blessing I wish for myself:

for the grace to look what has happened in the eye and accept the way it was, the way it is, the way we were, and the way we are; the grace to live with the way things are now; the courage to get up in the morning . . . and to know that there is both goodness and pain in the world, and that I am part of both.

Because I am held in love, this is my blessing for myself:

to be in this space of light, however small it is, however filled with pain, each day, and to hold at bay the ravaging maelstrom of chaos and darkness and disintegration of self that lurks and grabs outside this space of love. Little by little, to integrate the pain and rage and loss with love, and to overcome the darkness with light. Soft slanting sunlight, not the harsh glare of electricity, but gentle light that reveals, and also beautifies, both the whole and the broken.

Because I am held in love - in your love, (name of Loved One) and in God's love - this is my blessing for myself:

to accept myself as I am, to love myself, forgive myself and allow myself to grow. To find a way of being in this world without you, sustained by love.



From *It's OK That You're Not OK. Meeting Grief and Loss in a Culture That Doesn't Understand* by Megan Devine. Thanks to Al Pollock for this submission.

REFLECTION ON HOPE

BY JOYCE RUPP

Hope is usually at the center of my heart. But that was not the case a few weeks ago. I felt disheartened and wondered if anything would ever change regarding the damaging issues burdening humanity and our planet. My discouragement began one morning with a woman sitting on a park bench fully engaged with her phone while her unleashed dog chased young herons and ducks in the lake. I explained to her how this distressed the waterfowl and that they had few places to be safe. She just smiled and said, “Oh, I see,” and went right back to her phone. The next day as I neared the apartment building, I met a man carrying cardboard boxes to the dumpster. I suggested a recycling dumpster on the other side of the building. He replied, “Okay,” but went right over and popped the boxes in the garbage dumpster. The next day I was out for a walk when a man ahead of me stopped, looked down intently, and stomped on a grasshopper. I held back from reminding him that he was in the insect’s home and needed to respect its life. The final blow to my hope involved the news a day later when I listened to the volatile rhetoric and scary threats made by parents who yelled at a school board that was struggling to make a good decision regarding mask mandates.

Today I am fortunately in a different emotional space. How did hope return? First, I went to the recycling dumpster with some items and noticed it was half full. “Yes, there are others who care about our planet,” I thought, and immediately recognized the strength of kinship. Then I read the chapter “Why We Don’t Quit” in Kathleen Dean Moore’s latest book, *Earth’s Wild Music*. This revived my desire to stay the course with determination. Finally, I came across a familiar verse in scripture and allowed it to touch my heart:

**Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens,
and I will give you rest.**

Matthew 11:28

What “perfect timing.” Of course, this gift is waiting for all of us, whatever our need and burdens might be. I can imagine this compassionate being saying the following to any of us:

“Come to me all of you . . .who live with uncertainty and insecurity about what the future will bring; who bear sorrow that shreds your heart into ribbons of sadness; who carry memories of trauma that nag at you and still cause pain; who worry about a loved one’s serious illness; who find it hard to believe you are worthy and valuable as you are; who are caught in addictions that eat away at your life and taunt your efforts to cease; who know the diminishment accompanying your later years of life; who doubt that our world will ever be a place of peacefulness for all people; who feel like giving up hope and want to quit trying to have a planet filled with compassionate care and harmony.

Come, come to me and find your rest, your peace. I have never left you, even when you have tried to go on without me, even when you forgot my promise to never put you out of my heart. Come, come to me. I am here for you. Rest your burdens, your weariness and woe on the strengthening love I have for you. Come, come to me.”

May you each find rest for whatever burdens or wearies you.

Abundant peace,

Joyce Rupp

Joyce Rupp is well known for her work as a writer, retreat leader and author of numerous books. She is a member of the Servite Order and is also a Spiritual Director. Thanks to Jackie Walters for this submission.



HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR SENIOR YEARS

BY RALPH MILTON

Way back in “the olden days” (1975), a newly ordained minister was sent to the tiny, sleepy church at Red Deer Lake. “Just close it down gently” were the instructions.

Her name was Beverley Milton. “Rev Bev” she became known as. Not one to blindly follow instructions, she began visiting the families moving out of Calgary. When she left to follow a call to the Okanagan several years later, Red Deer Lake United was still small, but bustling, energetic, and growing.

Now, more than 40 years later, Rev Bev is a retired senior, finding deep joy and satisfaction in reports of the lively ministry happening at Red Deer Lake United Church.

Among many activities in her retirement, Bev helps husband (of 63 years) Ralph with manuscripts on their way to becoming books. And the latest one centers around what it’s like being an older senior.

Well Aged – Making the Most of Your Senior Years is the title. And it is now available in all the better bookstores.

“Being old is a new experience,” say the Miltons. Bev has just turned 84 and Ralph is 86. Very different from being a young healthy senior between 65 and 80. In the late 70s or early 80s, health issues or other events herald a whole new way of life that younger people mostly know nothing about. These old-old seniors are now the fastest growing demographic in Canada.

So the book is for younger seniors who are taking care of mom or dad and running into a whole new set of problems and issues. And they will find themselves among the old-old in a few years. It’s for younger people working in healthcare, encountering seniors in their work, or wondering how to have a good conversation with grandma in the nursing home.

It’s also for organizations like the church. “When I sit in the choir and look out at our congregation here in Kelowna,” says Ralph, “from a third to a half of the congregation is in the old, old category described in this book. They do a huge portion of the work and are among the highest givers. Without them, many churches would fold.”

The same is true of service clubs and many other community organizations.

To help people understand what the book is about, author Ralph Milton has prepared a video available on YouTube. To find it, simply go to YouTube and search “well aged ralph milton.”

“I hope the people at Red Deer Lake United will look at that video and forward it to their friends,” says Rev Bev. “Enough of looking at the past, pleasant as that is. This is about the future.”

Ralph Milton is one of Canada's best-known religious communicators, and a recipient of an Honorary Doctorate of Sacred Letters from St. Stephen's College, Edmonton. He also has an Honorary Doctorate of Divinity from the Vancouver School of Theology. A former news broadcaster, open line host and church administrator, Milton is the author of seventeen books including the bestselling Family Story Bible; Angels in Red Suspenders; and Julian's Cell, a novel based on the life of Julian of Norwich.



(Above) Red Deer Lake Church as it was in 1976. The baby being baptized would be middle aged now.

(Top right) Ralph and his new book.

(Right) The Miltons in their retirement home.



BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT

ZOEY DENISE WALTERS

A year that started off with great sadness for our family now has great delight as new mom and dad, Ranu and Barry Walters, brought Zoey Denise into this world on October 4, 2021.

First-time Grandma Jackie Walters and Great Grandma Edna Dunn are over the moon, as are Uncle Steve and the rest of the Sharma-Walters family. As Ranu says, "We love her and this new journey we are on. She brings much light and joy into our lives."



FOOTHILLS EXCURSIONS: PLUMMERS ROAD PASTORAL

BY KATHERINE MATIKO

It is a peaceful late-September evening. As I drive west along Plummers Road, I decide for some reason to turn south on Priddis Valley Road. And look who I spot enjoying a bedtime snack! This black bear will soon be hibernating—he barely looked my way when I stopped to snap this picture from my car, so intent was he on bulking up for the winter.



The foothills around Millarville have been cultivated, fenced, and populated with cattle, horses, and people for almost 150 years, yet wild animals—the original inhabitants of this land—still roam freely among us.

Encountering this beautiful bear with my camera at hand is one of the highlights of my summer.

This relic on Priddis Valley Road might be the remnant of a homestead long faded from memory. The evening sun and warm fall colours help make this place feel a little less lonely.



Fences define a rural landscape. They parcel out, protect, proclaim ownership. On a night such as this, they are nothing if not photogenic.





Red barns abound on Plummers Road. The ranches and farms in this community reflect pride of ownership passed down from generation to generation. I catch this scene as the wind sprinkles thistle fluff into the barnyard. The dozing horse is immune to the spectacle.





I meet a family of friendly horses along the way. This guy, obviously leader of the pack, is first to saunter over for a little love. Sorry fella, no carrot today.



When the mare trots over to say hello, she is admonished in no uncertain terms. Stay back!



Isn't she pretty when she pouts? Soon, a youngster appears from over the hill. What's happening?



Adults! Can't they get along? The teenager nudges for a carrot, shrugs, and goes on with her evening.



My journey has taken me all the way to Square Butte. The Square Butte Community Hall is a well-kept building with an imposing view of the valley and mountains to the west. I can just imagine the cowboy welcome to all who enter here.



As I head back to Millarville, I stop for a final gaze at the mountains, framed by autumnal glory.



And as the light leaves the land, the animals—many horses, perhaps a bear or two—
find a safe place to dream away the long dark night.

Until next time,
Katherine



YOUR SMILE FOR THE DAY

SUBMITTED BY ANNE WELSH BASKETT

I enjoy a glass of wine each night for its health benefits. The other glasses are for my witty comebacks and flawless dance moves.

So many people these days are judgmental. I can tell just by looking at them.

I'm so old that I've dialed a rotary phone that didn't have an answering machine, recorded a song I love from a transistor radio onto a tape recorder, watched a black and white television that had foil on the rabbit ears antennae, taken a long walk without counting the steps, and eaten food that I didn't take pictures of.

Do you ever get up in the morning, look at yourself in the mirror and think, "That can't be accurate?"

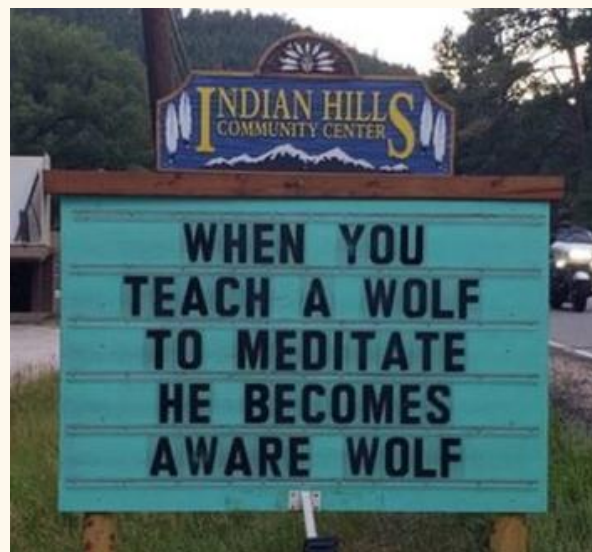
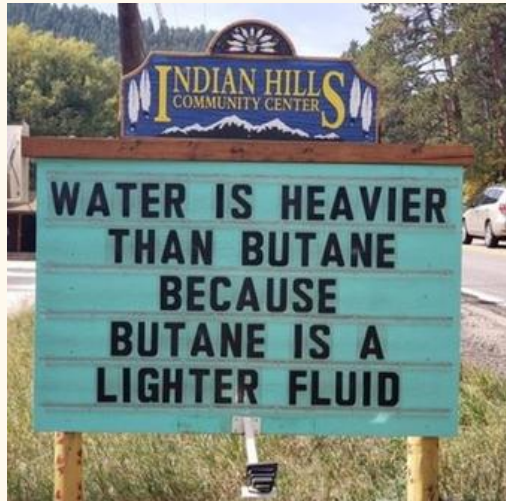
A shout out to people who remember their childhood telephone number but can't remember the password they created yesterday. You are my people.

One minute you're young and fun. The next minute you're turning down the car stereo to see better.

There's nothing scarier than that split second when you lose your balance in the shower and think, "They are going to find me naked!"



A GOOD PUN IS ITS OWN REWORD



We used to hate puns too . . .
but now they've groan on us.

SAD NEWS FROM MINNESOTA

A SMILE FROM THE CONGREGATIONAL CARE MEAL PREP TEAM



The Pillsbury Doughboy died yesterday of a yeast infection and trauma complications from repeated pokes to the belly.

Doughboy was buried in a lightly greased coffin. Dozens of celebrities turned out to pay their respects, including Mrs. Butterworth, Hungry Jack, Betty Crocker, the California Raisins, the Hostess Twinkies, and Captain Crunch. The gravesite was piled high with many flours.

Aunt Jemima delivered the eulogy and lovingly described Doughboy as a man who never knew how much he was kneaded.

Born and bread in Minnesota, Doughboy rose quickly in show business, but his later life was filled with turnovers. He was never considered a very smart cookie, wasting much of his dough on half-baked schemes.

Despite being a little flaky at times, he was known as a crusty old man and considered a positive roll model to millions. Doughboy is survived by his wife Play Dough and three children – John Dough, Jane Dough, and Dosey Dough . . . plus, they had a bun in the oven. He is also survived by his elderly father Pop-Tart.

The funeral was held at 3:50 for about 20 minutes.

If you enjoyed reading this, rise to the occasion and share it with a friend who's having a crumby day and kneading a lift.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Our thanks to Dave Churchill who creatively made trivets for our November care packages. The natural coloured trivets are from leftover pieces of cork plank flooring from a project in his home. The white ones are from a donation from a flooring company. Thanks so much to you, Dave!



Do you have a story to share?

A memory? A poem? A photograph?

We would love to publish it in the next issue of this magazine.

Please send your submission to info@reddeerlakeuc.com or call us at

(403) 256-3181.

The next submission deadline is November 26, 2021.

This will be our Christmas issue.

WE ARE RED DEER LAKE UNITED CHURCH




We are an inclusive and affirming community of faith – people of all ages, perspectives, and stories, who gather to connect with God, each other, and ourselves, and find in Jesus a new way of being human and alive in the world.


**you're welcome, wanted,
and accepted. join us on
the journey.**

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