

Dear People-in-waiting,

We are indeed waiting. In this time of Advent waiting... some of us are waiting for a vaccine. Some of us are waiting to be reunited with family after way too long of being separated. Some of us might be waiting for life to become somewhat normal again, though we're not exactly sure what that will look like. And some of us are just waiting for it to be OVER.

Imagine... if we took all that waiting energy and put it towards our Advent waiting for the Coming. Imagine! What might that look like?

This is an Advent like no other any of us have known. This year we might be far closer to the experience of Mary and Joseph as we wait in our own time for the unfolding pandemic to reveal itself. Like them, we're not sure what the coming weeks will bring – will we be able to see family over Christmas or will that be impossible? Will we have to face personal loss to the Pandemic, or will we and our loved ones safely weather this unpredictable and wild storm? Where will we find comfort and joy this year? How do we prepare ourselves for the weeks ahead? What do we need in order to confidently sink deeply into the Advent time of waiting? What do we want from these four weeks that await us? What are *your* answers to these questions?

Perhaps you'd be willing to join with me in promising yourself and those you love – this Advent will lead into a true Christmas of the heart if you/I/we have anything to do with it. What would that look like? This could be the year that we embrace the paradox of Advent.

In the liturgical directions for Advent, the colour is Violet or Blue. Why? Violet is the colour of penitence and atonement. In times past, Advent was sometimes referred to as the Little Lent. And doesn't that make sense! Think of people preparing for the arrival of a new baby... perhaps a room once used as an office or a sewing room will now be converted into a nursery – things have to go to make room. This can be our spiritual metaphor for emptying ourselves out or releasing burdens that preoccupy our minds and weigh on our lives. So this aspect of Advent is a sombre time, a time for inward focus and prayer, for pondering what holds us back and then releasing that to God. Clearly this experience of Advent is not in sync with the world where the celebration has already begun. In contrast, we are not yet putting up our Christmas decorations or setting out the full crèche scene at the church. We are still waiting!

And blue? Blue is the colour of Mary. It's even called Mary Blue by authorities on the ancient stained-glass windows in the cathedrals of Europe. Traditionally it's known as the colour of Mary's cloak. A lovely aspect of that is found in the relic housed at Our Lady of Chartres in France. All of the other cathedrals have relics of a saint's death – a finger, a lock of hair, a splinter of the cross... But Chartres

has a piece of the blue cloak Mary was said to be using at the time she gave birth. Sounds like a fantastic story BUT a tiny corner was removed and carbon-dated – it indeed dates from the beginning of the 1st century CE. A relic devoted to birth and life! And so the blue part of Advent invites us into a spirit of anticipation and delight as we look forward to the long-awaited birth. In this aspect of Advent, we prepare by readying ourselves to greet our Emmanuel. We open our hearts and minds to this radical truth – the Light of the World, the Prince of Peace, the God of Love, returns to us as a wee baby every year, born to the poorest of the poor, the marginalized, the soon to be refugees...

In these two contrasting aspects, we teach ourselves to embrace paradox, transformation, a new way of being in the world. As Isaiah proclaims, "How beautiful are the feet of him who bringeth good tidings of peace!" (Isa 52:7) We are now called, in preparation for the birth of Jesus, to bring good tidings of peace, of joy, of holiness to the world. How blessed are we to be such messengers!

May this Advent and Christmas be a rich and holy time for you, deepened by the restrictions we live within. And may you find rich ways to embrace the paradox of penitence and celebration, of releasing the old and embracing the new and yet to come.

If you would like to make a special love contribution to our ministry and mission in this community of the faithful, an envelope has been included for your convenience.

I wish you every blessing of the Advent journey and of the Christmas celebration to follow. May you live in that peace brought to us by the Prince of Peace. May it shine within you to brighten your days and pour out from you to bless the world around you. May the love of Christ bring you great joy!

Gyllian Davies †

Rev. Gyllian Davies, Incumbent

Please join us online at
<https://www.saltspringanglican.ca>
and click on
"e-Church"
to go to our online Advent Services each week.

On December 24th, 5pm,
we will offer an online service of
Lessons and Carols
for sing-along!

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Cheques may be mailed to the above address or dropped off in the mail chute at All Saints by-the-Sea (lower level, left of the door)