

Advent 2018

November 29, 2018

Dear Friends,

I can hardly believe it! Yesterday was autumn and today I am thinking about Christmas cards. (Thinking, not actually writing.)

As our daily calendar urges us to rush ahead, and even to begin a state of panicked preparation for Christmas, our liturgical calendar urges us instead to be alert, to wait, and above all, to hope. Our scripture readings during Advent guide us. They proclaim Jeremiah's words of hope, and Luke's story of Jesus exhorting his disciples to "be alert". We begin our waiting in the shadows in our world today: despair, war, sorrow, and hate, because it is there that the God of grace will arrive. Once we have entered the shadows from there we can proclaim the good news, the hope in the midst of catastrophe. We light candles of hope, peace, joy, and love. We wait, we sing, and we pray for God's Light to overwhelm the darkness in our world. We stay alert for opportunities to recognize Jesus in the World's most vulnerable people. So be alert - lamps lit and waiting with hope, always ready for action.

Very soon, Christmas will dawn, revealing how God is turning everything upside down, lifting up the lowly and bringing the mighty down from their thrones. This will be a revolution of love and justice, a revolution of "good news of great joy for all people" ([Luke 2:10](#)). So many expectations. Our spiritual celebration of the birth of the Baby Jesus can get lost. In whatever ways we mark Christmas, we remember that Jesus was born in a time of great danger and little comfort. For some of us, Christmas can be a wonderfully happy time, while for others of us, this can be a season of sadness and loss - loss of what used to be. So while our worship is filled with awe and wonder, it is tempered by the knowledge that we are a loving community of people experiencing a variety of emotions, and we pray that each of us will be blessed with the deep peace of the knowledge that God is with us in ways we cannot fully understand, but we can trust to be true.

The Twelve Days of Christmas are like wild sparks from a great bon fire. It is an exciting time, and we do not know exactly what will happen to those sparks. How will we be changed by the birth of Jesus? How will we be changed by our deepening faith? We celebrate the birth of the Baby Jesus with joy and great hope. Very quickly, we leap into the celebration of Epiphany beginning with the celebration of the visit of the Magi to Jesus and His family. The weeks following are marked with many celebrations as well as the remembrance of many events of

Jesus's life. All those various events are revelations of Christ to all of humanity. With each event, we learn more about the nature of Jesus, His love for all people, and his mission to teach us about God. Epiphany is a season for us to learn more about our faith, and to act on that faith. Our prayer throughout Epiphany is that we may be guided to recognize the glory of God through the presence and ministry of Jesus. *"Eternal God, who by a star led wise ones to the worship of your Son. Guide by your light the nations of the earth, that the whole world may know your glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen."*

There are many exciting plans afoot in our community as we gather to worship and celebrate together, so please check the calendar of special events to see what would interest you, what would delight you. Everybody is always welcome. Our tradition is to focus on the love that informs our Christmas traditions. May God bless us all with peace.

With my love,

Joan.

Reverend Joan Riding

Christmas Services and Events:

Sunday, December 16th 10:30 a.m. Eucharist service **followed by** the Bridlewood Christmas Service at 1:30 p.m.

Friday, December 21st 6:00 p.m. **Christmas Caroling**, schedule and locations to be announced

Sunday, December 23rd 10:30 a.m. **Carols and Lessons, Children's Pageant, Lunch and Decorating**

Monday, December 24th 7:30 p.m. **Family Christmas Service**

Tuesday, December 25th 10:30 a.m. **Christmas Eucharist**