



First Church Tucson Weekly Digest



“It’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas”

By South District Superintendent Matt Ashley on December 1st, 2020

It’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas. We saw the signs back in October, when the stores started displaying their holiday wares and a few cable channels started airing endless Christmas movies. And now, in this strange season of Covid19, it’s suddenly also Advent Season.

There’s an old preaching illustration about Allied soldiers and German soldiers laying down their weapons to sing carols together on Christmas Eve, a reminder that God’s Story always breaks through, that Christ is always coming into the world, even at the world’s bleakest hour. And so I’m grateful during this season of pandemic and division that Advent comes, and that Christmas is on the way.

The Season of Advent has been a part of the church’s liturgical practices since at least the 5th Century, although there’s scant information on its early formation. Back then the Nativity Fast was an important part of Advent observance, but over time that spiritual practice was dropped in favor Christmas cookies.

Sometimes our celebrations obscure the penitential nature of Advent; we trade fasting in for cookies. But just as Lent is a time of spiritual repentance, so is Advent; this season of preparation is a time to address our wrongs and to get right with God so we'll be ready to receive Christ anew into our hearts and lives at Christmas. For though the wrong seems off' so strong, God is our ruler yet.

The English word 'Advent' was developed in the 1100's as a translation of the Latin word *adventus*, which means an arrival or an approach. Advent is a season of getting ready because someone important is coming – the Messiah, the Lord.

God is doing something new. Hope is on the way. Vaccines are on the way. New beginnings are on the way.

What new things are possible in our world? In our country? In the United Methodist Church? In the South District? In our churches? In our communities? In our hearts? In our lives?

It's beginning to look a look (*sic*) like Christmas, and soon the Christ will arrive anew. What do we need to do get ready?

Thanks for listening – and enjoy those Christmas cookies.

Matt

“For it is in giving that we receive...”
~ St. Francis of Assisi

“Comfort, O Comfort my people.”
~ God (Is40:1)



“What to do with leftover olives?”

Photo by Raven Gaston

THIS WEEK'S
ANNOUNCEMENTS & GATHERINGS

Prayers for our Community

With the rise in COVID19 cases, let us pray for those in our community who are suffering under its grip, both those who are ill and their loved ones caring for them. Particularly, we lift up John Proch and the people at Holy Trinity Assisted Living.

The 5 Love Languages for Advent Study

Join us on Zoom for our Advent Study on the 5 Love Languages; Words of Affirmation, Acts of Service, Quality Time, Gifts, and Physical Touch. Sessions start at 10:30am (12:00pm in Korean) following the Sunday Morning Live! stream. Follow the link

<https://dscumc.zoom.us/j/97274927766?pwd=bVlqNmZjTk84bHFHd0JRS0U5R0c4Zz09>

ZID: 972 7492 7766

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Christmas Virtual Choir

Visit bit.ly/fumcvirtualchoir and watch the video or click the Orientation PDF for information about how you can join in song and spirit in the comfort and safety of your home. Contact pastor@firstchurchtucson.org for questions.

Recruiting Weekly Digest Contributors

Email office@firstchurchtucson.org, text (520)850-4547, or submit your holiday pictures at <https://bit.ly/fumcsubmit> and share your joy with our family of faith.

Women on a Spiritual Quest

*WSQ is joining in the Advent Study on Sundays this season.
Monday gatherings are cancelled.*

Exploring Biblical Wisdom

Gather for group Lectio Divina as we seek spiritual formation through scripture reading, reflecting, and sharing the Spirit that lives in each of us. **Tues @ 11AM.**

<https://dscumc.zoom.us/j/98179862680?pwd=ck15OU5KbWUyY0NwOUNxbzJkOUVBUT09>

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Progressive Christianity Book Study

Explore the richness of progressive Christian thought through literature. **Thurs @ 2PM.**

<https://dscumc.zoom.us/j/98015738087?pwd=eGFpVWRRCUnZraWxUU1d0anRiU2pFQT09>

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Sunday Morning Live!

Join us live on Sunday mornings on Youtube. **Sun @ 10AM**

Visit <https://bit.ly/fumcYouTube> and subscribe to the channel.

(Address is case-sensitive.)

Korean Language Ministry

금 주일 오전 10시에 Zoom에서 연합 예배로 드립니다.

<https://dscumc.zoom.us/j/97274927766?pwd=bVlqNmZjTk84bHFHd0JRS0U5R0c4Zz09>

ZID: 972 7492 7766

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금 오후 7시에는 기존 Zoom 방에서 성경말씀 묵상 나눔이 있습니다.

The Longest Night Virtual Worship Service

Save the date! On December 21st, Reconciling Ministries Network will hold a worship service livestream on Facebook and Youtube focusing on grief and loss as well as mystery, possibility, and the beauty of darkness. **Mon @ 6 PM**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/344665103018106/permalink/573089380175676/>

Support the Ministries at First Church Tucson

Now is the time to give courageously to ministries that matter to you.

Visit this [link](#) or go to www.bit.ly/givetofumc to set up online donation.

You may also send gifts via Paypal to recipient address: finance@firstchurchtucson.org

And as always, you can mail in checks to the church office. Alternatively, have your IRA advisor automatically make payments from your IRA to the FUMC checking account.

THIS WEEK'S BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

Adam Lange (Dec 9)
Kate Park-Havins (Dec 11)

(If we have missed your birthday or anniversary, please let us know so we can update our records!)

SONG FOR THOUGHT "Holy, Holy" J. Owens

by **Lorena Suarez**

Director of Music Ministries on December 5, 2020

Jimmy Owens (1930) is one of the pioneers of Contemporary Christian Music. In his youth he was a church minister of music and an arranger for TV series. With his wife, Carol Owens, they have specialized in teaching and songwriting, becoming a very successful worship team. They have published and recorded over 250 songs and also 12 musicals.

The song *Holy, Holy*, was written by Jimmy as part of a musical called "Come Together: A Musical Experience in Love". It was written in 1972 and published by Bud John Songs in the same year.

The main idea of the song was, as Owens said, "to create something that could be easily learned and sung by a church immediately", so the tune is intentionally made simple. For this he chose: the key of C major, the meter of 4/4, and a slow tempo, obtaining a wonderful result. Enjoy!

Lyrics:

Holy, holy, holy, holy,

Holy, holy, Lord God Almighty;
And we lift our hearts before You
As a token of our love,
Holy, holy, holy, holy.

Gracious Father, gracious Father,
We're so blessed to be Your children,
Gracious Father;
And we lift our heads before You
As a token of our love,
Gracious Father, gracious Father.

Suggested recording:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5dX4rN4WYAg>

LECTIO DIVINA PRAYER GUIDE
for Individuals and Families

CENTERING - *Practice Square Breathing*

- Inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds,
- Exhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds.
- Repeat as necessary.

SONG OF PRAISE

Select a song of your choice, or
Refer to this week's Song for Thought

OPENING PRAYER - *Psalms 19:14*

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable to you,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Amen.

READING

Mark 1:1-8

REFLECTING

Take a minute or two in silence.
Allow your thoughts to rest on a word, a phrase, a memory from this passage.
Journal or share your thoughts from this moment of meditation on the passage.

RESPONDING

Respond to the reflection through the guidance from the Holy Spirit.

MINUTE MEMOIR - by Paul Cho

The words from John the Baptist should be read and understood in the context of the Israelites who had yearned to hear from God for nearly 5 centuries. In the midst of the a growing Roman Empire in their midst, they must have wondered when God was going to restore them to peace and goodness. In God's silence, they must have wondered if God had forgotten. No doubt, they had a deep yearning to return to God's presence. So, as John proclaimed "prepare the way" and for repentance, the people would have been overwhelmed with emotion.

In the same sense, we can hear these words of affirmation. Affirmation found in the fact that the message of Jesus Christ, the gospel, was given first to those in the wilderness. We are no strangers of the wilderness both literal and symbolic. We know what desolation, vulnerability, exposure, endurance, and living at the ends of our rope looks like. The fact that God meets us in the very place of our darkness is indeed the good news of Christ. May you experience the grace and mercy of God in the reading and the fulfillment of these words.

RESTING

Dwell in your reflection and response.
Take time to offer God praise and glory.
Repent and seek forgiveness.
Offer joys and the concerns, adding in your personal prayers.
Lastly, offer a thanksgiving for God's grace and mercy.

CLOSING PRAYER *Wesley Covenant Service Prayer*

I am no longer my own, but yours.
Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will;
put me to doing, put me to suffering;
let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you,
exalted for you, or brought low for you;
let me be full,
let me be empty,
let me have all things,
let me have nothing:
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things
to your pleasure and disposal.
And now, glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
you are mine and I am yours. So be it.
And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.
Amen.



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