

# The Fellowship Post

Mira Vista  
United Church of Christ

December 2014

## Melinda's Musings

Advent is a time of spiritual preparation for the birth (again) of the Christ into our lives and into the world. This type of "waiting" journey is often hard to carve out in a culture that is already singing Christmas carols the day after Halloween, but it is a valuable internal practice – even if you're already wearing your Santa hat.

It is also the beginning of the church liturgical year and in our lectionary, we will move from Year A to Year B. Year A has been focussed on the Gospel of Matthew. As I have said in my sermons this Fall, I admit that much of Matthew makes me uneasy. With its apocalyptic focus and the gospel writer's long lists of "curses" on pharisees and other Jews who have rejected the Jesus movement, it is hard to get past the judgementalism that was specific to the situation of the Matthean community. It is also the most dangerous gospel to preach in our time because of the way it has been used against the Jewish people and the way it has been used to focus the faith on end times instead of present-day concerns.

When **Advent begins on Sunday, November 30<sup>th</sup>**, we will move into the Gospel of Mark. Mark is the shortest gospel containing only 662 verses, no birth narrative, no information about Jesus before his baptism by John and in its original form, no story of the resurrection.

In some ways, Mark is the gospel I know and love best. While studying Koine Greek (the culture and time-specific form of Greek used in



the New Testament) in seminary, we translated much of this gospel because the Greek is "rustic" and includes only 1330 distinct words with 60 proper names. Most scholars believe that it is the earliest of the gospels and was composed in 38-40 C.E., long before the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. It was likely written in Rome and may directly reflect the preaching of St. Peter.

So how is the Gospel of Mark used in Advent given that it does contain a birth narrative? The readings focus our attention on the ways that God comes among us. On the **First Sunday of Advent**, we become aware of our waiting and yearning for God's presence and learn that even Jesus and the angels are waiting with us for the in-breaking of God's spirit in the world. We enter the Season of Advent in the presence of divine mystery. (Mark 13: 24-27) On the **Second Sunday of Advent**, we are invited to engage in preparation as we contemplate the story of John the Baptist. John's message of repentance often seems harsh to us today, but most of us, I believe, would love to have a change of heart that would make us more attuned to the voice of the holy at work in the world. I know I would like to hear that voice more clearly so that my heart and hands might be better prepared to serve. (Mark 1: 1-8) By the **Third Sunday of Advent**, we are invited to consider our ability to trust and hope when we are tired of waiting or when what we hoped for doesn't happen. The lectionary moves away from the Gospel of Mark and we will consider the amazing prophetic words found in Isaiah 61: 1-11 which describe a world of justice and peace and we





*"It is now, at Advent, that I am given the chance to suspend all expectation...and instead to revel in the mystery."* -- Jerusalem Jackson Greer

Believe it or not, that is a quote from a crafts/cookbook which includes the Advent season. I find that refreshing, as for my family – the observance of holidays begin with Thanksgiving and include Advent, Christmas, Kwanzaa and Epiphany [(my birthday, in fact, happens on the Kwanzaa day of Nia, which means purpose, so it is a day for me to reflect the joy and appreciation of being alive and to look at why I am here. I like it better than the day of Kujichagulia, which is self-determination day. That day is a day when among other things, you challenge yourself to do something that is not easy: well..... I am afraid of water and heights, so I decided that I am either going to a swimming pool or trying indoor rock climbing (pray for me!)]

The choir has been working on Advent and Christmas music, and we are sincerely appreciating Wendy's musicianship, especially because it is her last month with us. We are practicing the typical Silent Night, with a lovely descant. There have been so many renditions of Silent Night, dating back to the early 1800's (the first of which was actually composed for guitar), but I haven't been able to find out who wrote this descant! The descant, a part of which reads: "[be]neath the silent stars a town is sleeping".... juxtaposes the scene surrounding the birth, with Mary, Joseph and the shepherds. If you close your eyes and really listen to the words, you can almost place yourself there.

We are being so bold as to sing, "Halleluiah" from "Messiah: A Soulful Celebration". It's a

reinterpretation of Handel's *Messiah* - Halleluiah Chorus –a jazz/gospel version, written 250 years later. We are also singing a jazz version of *If We Ever Needed* (in our version, we sing, "if we ever needed some peace before, we sure do need it now". How in the world, Wendy wrapped her hands around those pieces of music so quickly and played it so well during practice was just awesome! The choir is being stretched in both of these pieces, and they are awesome. Look out for "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" as well – with some beautiful tenor solos!

Finally, a highlight of the season will be a musical play that I adapted, called "The Voices of Mary." It is a reading, which I interspersed with music. The choir will be singing parts of the song, Breath of Heaven and a few others, and in the end, upon the birth of the Christ child, the congregation will be invited to join us in song!

Many Blessings!  
Cindy

## Collection for San Francisco Night Ministry



As we have done in the past we will be collecting white cotton socks and blankets for the SF Night Ministry to hand out to those they meet on the street and are in need. Thom Longino says the socks are always in need & fleece blankets are good.

Starting on Nov. 30th we will have a container in the narthex that you can put your gifts in.

-Sylvia Sugg

*Merry*   
*Christmas* 



**Happy  
BirthDay**

**4<sup>th</sup> Sylvia Sugg**

**9<sup>th</sup> Nancy Lemon**

**21<sup>st</sup> Matt Kavanaugh-Lynch**

**30<sup>th</sup> Andrew Noble**

**30<sup>th</sup> Benjamin Noble**

***...with love from Mira Vista!***



Mira Vista United Church of Christ

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2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2 Mira Vista prepares lunch, GRIP Souper Center, 10 am 	3 Leaders' meeting @Namaste, 12:30 pm	4 Amazing Graces choir rehearsal, 7 pm	5	6 All Church retreat, Skyline UCC, 10 am – 3 pm
7 Holy Communion 12 Noon Worship   Second Sunday of Advent	8	9 Council meeting, El Cerrito Royale, 6:45 pm	10	11 Amazing Graces choir rehearsal, 7 pm	12	13
14 12 Noon Worship  Third Sunday of Advent	15	16 Mindfulness Circle @ Patsy Stubbs, 7 pm First night Of Hanukkah 	17	18 Amazing Graces choir rehearsal, 7 pm	19	20
21 12 Noon Worship  4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent	22	23	24	25 	26 	27
28 Joint worship with Christ Lutheran, 10 am (No Noon service)	29	30	31 			

# ***Our worship life together . . .***

***Join us on Sundays at 12 noon for our celebration with music and preaching and then stay for lunch because our worship continues as we share food and fellowship together***

Our theme for Advent is "Living in Expectation". During this holiday season we expect many things and many things will happen in our community and throughout the world. But what do we expect from our relationship with God? How is God still speaking to us? Are we listening?

Sunday, November 30, Mark 13: 24-37, "Even the Angels", 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent

Sunday, December 7, Mark 1: 1-8, "Be prepared", 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent

Sunday, December 14, Isaiah 61: 1-11, "Imagine Hope", 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent

Sunday, December 21, Luke 1: 26-38, "Voices of Mary", 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent

Wednesday, December 24<sup>th</sup>, Christmas Eve, 8:00 pm

Sunday, December 28<sup>th</sup> – Joint worship with Christ Lutheran at 10:00 am. (please note: we will not have a worship service at 12noon)

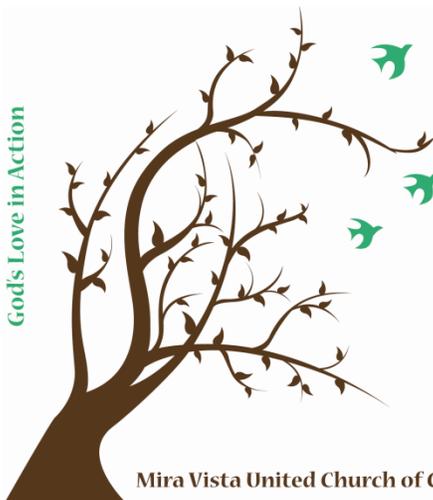
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**Dated Material**  
December 2014

God's Love in Action



Mira Vista United Church of Christ

*The Fellowship Post*

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