

FIRST AND CENTER
Pastor's Blog
November 30, 2017



I love the season of Advent! It's all about being expectant, yearning, anticipating. I am reminded throughout the season of the crazy human propensity to remain hopeful, even in the midst of the wrong and the sad and the awful. Advent reminds me of the best party I have ever attended. It was in El Salvador, at the offices of an agency run by the incredible Wonder Woman, Dr. Guzman, who, with a small but dedicated staff, was trying to bring medical help and preschools to the rural and urban poor of the country. The poverty is extreme; the agency is run on a shoestring and a prayer and the hard work of many hours by passionate people. I was there with a church group who regularly visited to host eye clinics and to be in relationship with the Salvadoran people in a variety of ways. On our last night there, and to celebrate ten years of collaboration with our church, they threw a party for us. Everyone dressed up, music played, food appeared, and the kind of joy that filled the room blew me away. How could people who worked so hard and had so little find such joy? And how can we?

That's what Advent explores. And it is so different from the concurrent holiday season, the "Christmas Shopping Season." That's not about joy. It's about greed and stress and stuff. You can't manufacture joy. It grows out of a deep-seated hope, fed by love, and brought to flower by the Holy Spirit, our very own Christian Wonder Woman! It is, as C. S. Lewis said, the "deep magic." My Salvadoran companions had figured that out.

The Christmas Shopping Season has been in full swing for several weeks. Advent begins on Sunday. May you find the joy, the deep magic, that awaits in the waiting.

~ Rev. Shelly Stackhouse,
Transitional Pastor