

## ***First and Center***

Pastor's Blog

December 3, 2019



How do you mark the days leading up to Christmas, the season the church calls “Advent?” At our house, we have several traditions around these days. Each evening, whoever is home gathers around a small Advent candle wreath. We read a scripture, sing a verse of a hymn or carol, and pray together. Then, we open a door on our thirty-plus year-old Metropolitan Museum Advent Calendar (each door has a little ornament and the last six are figures for a nativity scene). Then, we take turns and get a candy hanging from a needlework piece I made from a Swedish pattern many years ago! This year, just for fun, we added a Lego Harry Potter Advent Calendar with a little Lego figure from the stories to put together each day. We really like to find ways to count down the days at our house, even though we are all adults and not little children, impatient for Christmas to come.

I have always had the deep feeling that the counting I do has to do not with the calendar so much, as with the counting Mary and Joseph must have been doing as they awaited the birth of this child, wondering exactly what a Holy Spirit-conceived baby would be like! I imagine their anticipation must have held equal parts excitement and fear and worry. They had to wait on God’s time to discover what God had in mind by this bizarre birth. They had to wait on God’s time.

Waiting on God’s time can be frustrating. It can also be holy, as it teaches us the wonder of trust and hope. It challenges our faith, and therefore makes it stronger. Perhaps you are waiting this season, not just for Christmas, but for something in your life for which you have hoped and prayed. Not a “thing” probably, but a job, a relationship, clarity about your purpose, help for a child or parent, healing from ills of body, mind, or spirit. I pray for you in your waiting time, that you may come closer to God as you wait. I pray that in this season, you may be able to listen over all the noise of commerce and politics to hear the whispers and hope of “good news of great joy.”

~ The Rev. Shelly Stackhouse,  
Transitional Minister