



## Waiting

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Advent began this past Sunday. It is a festive season with all the lights, scents, and expectations. We mark this season of waiting for the Christ child, God incarnate, God with us. It is a holy time of anticipation. Of course, we also await the more secular side of Christmas: the hinted-at present under the tree, the reconnection with family, the favorite holiday dish. And, don't forget, the Presbytery Advent calendar! Each day, on the home page of the [Presbytery website](#), you will be treated electronically to a special image as we count down the days to Christmas. As Christians, we try to blend the sacred and the secular, so the wonder of God's incarnation in a lowly Bethlehem manger doesn't get swallowed up by Santa-shaped sugar cookies and credit card debt.

This season, for me, something is different. Perhaps more questionable. For what am I waiting? I don't mean just the birth of Christ ("just"), but what that really will mean for me, for us, for our world. If you're like me, you've lived through a fair number of Christmases. Each Sunday of Advent for decades, we've focused on hope, love, joy, and peace, and then Christmas arrives. We have it well-orchestrated – meaningful, of course – but planned and known. We wait; Christ arrives; we celebrate. It's like that joyous moment when family walks through the front door, and everyone gets hugs. We know what it will be like and what to expect. I'm not trying to knock Christmas, but just to reflect on its predictability.

What if this year were different? What if the birth of Jesus for which we're waiting brings something wholly unknown and unexpected? What if God decides that our rehearsed approach to Jesus' arrival no longer fits God's intentions?

We've know for some time that the world is responding differently to the Church. Many describe this time as post-Christendom in which the central role of the Church in society has diminished, has lost its relevance. The Good News will never lose its relevance, but the ways in which it washes over and through society is always evolving. Maybe this will be the year that Christ's birth takes a form we're not anticipating, a form that will shake the foundations of the world. Perhaps this Christmas, the Church will be moved to some action our indifferent nations have never witnessed. We might be led by the Holy Spirit to respond in ways that reveal the Good News more plainly or urgently.

I wonder if this Christmas is less about us waiting for Jesus, and more about Jesus waiting for us.