



Waiting in Hope

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Lisa Heckman

♪ It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas ... ♪

... at least in retail spaces. Like children dreaming of Christmas from the time autumn is just begun, signs of Christmas pop up in stores, restaurants and the like earlier and earlier each year. In the church more often than not, we begin the Advent season on the Sunday after Thanksgiving – which can feel like holiday whiplash moving so quickly from one to the other. Yet this year, the timing is other. There is space between the holiday seasons. It's a mere week, true, but it gives us a little bit of breathing room.

What we've lost in our hectic lives is the breathing room that Advent is meant to give us, too. A season to ponder anew the impact of God moving into the neighborhoods of our lives, to paraphrase Eugene Peterson. Among all the other marvelous theological implications of Christ's incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, is the profound assurance of hope – that God is with us now and always and has the future in God's loving and secure hands.

As sessions grapple with budgets with the approaching new year, it is easy to get discouraged by the numbers, both financial and membership. Yet our hope is not in the numbers. The numbers don't tell the whole story – not even close! Our hope is in the God who waited until the time was right to enter into creation to set things right.

The challenge for us is trusting in God and beginning the hard work of adapting to new ways of doing ministry. There is much to hope for, but to step into the future God has in store, we have to let go of some of our old practices and habits. Hope isn't a wish to return to the golden days of the past (whenever that was). It is believing in a bright future we can't even imagine ... tho God can and does. And it is daring to move into that future despite the world trying to convince us it is bleak, not hopeful.

I pray that this breathing week and the Advent season might give you time to ponder on the ways God is calling us into that future, even as you wait in hope.

Grace and Peace.

Lisa

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