



Year after year my appreciation for advent continues to grow. Remember that Advent is to Christmas what Lent is to Easter. It is a time of spiritual preparation. It is that time when I consider this incredible gift that I am about to receive and how I would like to use. Think of it as an unlimited gift card that we can use to shape and guide our lives. But like all gift cards, they only give us benefit if we use them.

I think my Christmas' have become richer and richer as year after year my Advent practices become richer and richer. I use Advent as a time of spiritual centering, reflection and preparation for the year to come so when Christmas gets here I am really ready. Not necessarily on the outside but on the inside. I think part of what use to (and still can) make me crazy about Christmas is that I thought everything needed to be just right on the outside in order to be right on the inside, including gifts, decorating the house, the tree, the lights, the dishes, the...the..., the.... You see, I can get there just thinking about it. And in the course of potentially becoming overwhelmed about the outside, it becomes easier to forget to prepare and make ready the inside. The heart and the spirit of Christmas.

So for the past few years it is first things first. Heart and spirit first and then allow some time to put up a little tree, a few decorations and a little bit of shopping. Just as a note, I don't buy things people won't use just because I don't know what they need. Ah.... Christmas

So once again I have been gathered my meditation materials and making my short list of any specific things I am seeking God's direction in my life about. I have also printed my sunrise/sunset calendar and stuck it to the refrigerator in preparation for fasting. I continue to be excited about the journey ahead,

This year I invite you to join me in re-arranging our priorities and share with me in why and how to more fully enjoy Advent and therefore Christmas. First, slow down and take time to remember what this season is truly about. It is time for thinking about our individual relationships with God and listening for what it is God would have us to do and who it is that God would have us to be. It is a time of prayer, meditation and discerning.

I also need to be reminded to expect the unexpected. It is a time for considering and acting on how it is you want God to impact your life.

Second, Advent is the beginning of the new church year. It is a season for appreciating what is, together with the hope of what is to come. I look with anticipation toward this new year both in my personal life as well as in the life of St James. Like every year, this has been an exciting year of growth and transition for me and our St James family. There continues to be an exciting sense of energy and anticipation that is new and alive. I also invite you to pray and prepare for what God is calling you individually and we as a community at St James to be and to do in 2015.

Third, Advent is the gateway to Christmas and all the joy and anticipation that comes with it. As I stated earlier, I am aware that during the holidays we are sometimes consumed with trying to do life perfectly. It seems that no matter how much we do or how hard we work there will always be a couple things more we could have done. Is not that the way life is. I think the key to happiness during the holidays as well as throughout life is to slow down, plan for what you can plan, do what you can do, and then relax and take time to enjoy the ride, knowing that things are always going to turn out a little differently than the plan.

During this time of Advent, I invite you to follow that simple formula, plan a little, do a little, and enjoy, remembering that the biggest gift that you will receive is not under the tree. It is the gift of God's unending love for you, the gift of boundless, unconditional, unearned, mercy, grace and forgiveness. So sit a moment, wait a while, take a deep breath, expect the unexpected and then prepare to open the Gift that will transform your life forever. Expect a miracle. Remember that whoever you are and wherever you are on life's journey, you are held in God's unconditional love, boundless mercy, and unending grace. And there is a place for you here in at St James.

May you know the love and grace of God in your life. May your heart and life be filled with the Spirit. Merry Christmas!!

Take care and be well, Peace  
Ken





## **Operation Christmas Child**

Jerry Brown and the Outreach committee would like to thank all who participated in the Shoe Box Campaign. We were able to send 96 boxes this year. They have been delivered and are on their way to making Christmas bright for so many kids around the world.

## **Adventures in Faith**

Adventures in Faith are in full swing again. The class is held right after the Children's time during worship. The teacher will take the kids downstairs, have a lesson, craft and snack. If you are interested in helping with this program please see Sue Tews.

Also, Please do not forget Adventures In Faith is still collecting cans and bottles for our adopted children. Please leave them in the garage, by the back door or contact Don or Betty Robertson and they will pick them up



## **K.I.D.S. in Distress**

We will collecting pants/jeans for Kids in Distress for the month of December. Please bring in size 3 - 10. We will be doing a specific item each month for a while. You can still donate clothing, new or gently used, anytime and the old shoe drive is ongoing. Thanks for your support. See Bev Kulman for more details.



## **Scouts invade Cemetery**

On June 14<sup>th</sup> Mark Pittman brought the Scout troupe, which he is a member of, along with Leaders and families to work in our Church Cemetery. The planned project would help Mark achieve Eagle Scout status.

The Scoutss trimmed grass and bushes, removed dirt from buried stones, filled in low areas with dirt, cut brush, planted rose bushes at the entry drive, and even donated and assembled a bench which they placed on a stone slab near the water supply.

A tasty lunch was prepared by the Leaders and enjoyed by all. After lunch the Scouts participated in a ceremony at which an American flag was placed at each Veterans grave followed by a group salute, a very moving ceremony.

Thanks to Mark and the other Scouts for their many hours of hard work and contributions toward making the cemetery look great.



## **Meadow Brook Hall Holiday Walk December 6**

Come and join us as we visit Meadow Brook Hall's annual Holiday Walk. We are hoping to have at least 20 people sign up so we can get a group rate of \$12 a person. Meet at church at 11:00am and car pool. See Becky Pittman to sign up.

## **The Unexpected**

On October 26<sup>th</sup> the furnace on the Parsonage had a major malfunction and it was determined that it could not be fixed. After 25 plus years of trouble free service, it needed to be replaced. Quotes were obtained and a new furnace was installed on October 31<sup>st</sup> just prior to the recent cold weather. This hit our budget with an unexpected cost of \$2740.00. If anyone has any ideas how to minimize this impact, please contact one of our council members. Thank you.

## **New Members Class**

If you would like to become a member of St James, there will be an informational class on Sunday, December 14. For more information please see Pastor Ken.

## **Recycling at St. James**

In an effort to be more intentional about our stewardship role in God's creation, please use our new recycling bins downstairs for both plastic and paper. The bin for plastics is in the kitchen (water bottles, plastic silverware, containers, communion cups, etc.) There is a bin for paper in the basement office near the copier, and a small blue bin in the foyer for bulletins and miscellaneous paper.

## **Communion Elders for December**

Carol Bryant- Preparing  
Sue Tews - Serving  
Becky Pittman - Serving

## **Ushers & Greeters and Liturgists for December**

Please consider signing up.

## **Scripture Readings for December**

### **Sunday, Dec. 7**

\*Isa 40:1-11  
\*Ps 85:1-2, 8-13  
\*2 Pet 3:8-15a  
\*Mark 1:1-8

### **Sunday, Dec. 14**

\*Isa 61:1-4, 8-11  
\*Ps 126 or Luke 1:47-55  
\*1Thess 5:16-24  
\*John 1:6-8, 19-28

### **Sunday, Dec. 21**

\*2 Sam 7:1-11, 16  
\*Luke 1:46b-55 or  
Ps 89:1-4, 19-26  
\*Rom 16:25-27  
\*Luke 1:26-38

### **Sunday, Dec. 28**

\*Isa 61:10-62:3  
\*Ps 148  
\*Gal 4:4-7  
\*Luke 2:22-40

