

A letter from our pastor

We enter a season of Advent like none we have known before! Perhaps this is becoming a bit repetitive by now. We had a season of Lent like none before, a summer like none before, a fall and a Thanksgiving season just the same. Maybe you have already thought about this. Those four words of Advent-hope, joy, peace, and love-don't carry with them the same level of excitement as in previous years. Many of us have been unable to attend church. Some of us might feel like there is an exceedingly difficult absence in our lives where our faith community ought to be. So, what do we do this year?

I think first we might focus on those four words, the words that define each candle of Advent, in short, new ways. Ways that feel more appropriate for this time of waiting for the healing of our spirits through Christ as we wait also for the healing of our bodies.

Hope. In this time of hope we await not only a return to the way things were but a hope in the way things can be. Change is inevitable, but we can hope that in the way our world is shifting and in the way our church is as well, we might find something new that brings us closer to the presence of Jesus that we didn't know before. Maybe we have found hope in those small groups of folks who have helped keep us from loneliness. Maybe we have found hope that while our church is different, our church goes on. Perhaps we can have hope in a central truth to our faith-that God is with us in the hard places too. And God will continue to provide.

Peace. In the tumult of our world and our personal lives we pray for peace as we haven't known before. For some of us peace has been abstract. It's been something desperately needed in that place way over on the other side of the world. Certainly, we've always had some rocky moments in our lives but many of us have had the communities to sustain us through those times. But now we need peace in our city, in our country, and in our spirits. Peace can be elusive but if we now know how necessary it is, maybe collectively we can work even harder to discover it in those important places of our daily lives.

The Evangel

December 2020

Joy. I've needed to find joy in creative ways, and perhaps you have as well. I think of the Zoom Thanksgiving dinners that Elizabeth and I shared with my family and hers as well. It wasn't gathering in the ideal way but it was still gathering. It was joyful because amidst all the mess of life, we found each other and found our need for one another in a new, powerful way. Absence makes the heart grow fonder, as they say. I've also found new joy in books, films, and conversations. I've found joy in things that I long took for granted. I've found joy in knowing that I won't take them for granted again. I've found joy, and I hope you have too, in knowing Christ's presence, even outside the doors of the church.

Love. It might be even more important to point out that for all the things that have changed during these many months of Covid, God's love eternally remains the same. It might be that it is one of a very few things that have remained so firm. The meaning, purpose, and power of Advent haven't changed. We are waiting for the birth of Jesus. We are waiting for the return of Christ as well. This wasn't part of the plan but the end of the promise still remains the same. God's Kingdom will shine even in the darkest of moments.

I continue to pray for all of you and I hope that you continue to pray for our church. As we are in this time of waiting, I also wait for that day when we will all be in our old familiar pews, social distancing will be a thing of the past, and we can sing those hymns with more gusto than ever before. I've never been a patient person but I hope that as we all wait together we might continue to find comfort in searching for that same promise and comfort in the unshakeable love of God that came to us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Be well in this Advent season. Find those places of hope, peace, joy, and love. And keep your eyes fixed on when we can be back together. It will be a glorious Sunday morning!

Peace,

Rev. Jonah Smith-Bartlett



CARITAS has asked for volunteers to prepare a meal for 100 men living at The Healing Place. We have signed up to deliver the meal on Friday, Jan. 22, 2021. CARITAS staff will serve the meal to the men on Sat., Jan. 23, 2021. Barbara and Buddy Lucord have graciously offered to deliver the food to CARITAS on the 22nd. We will be partnering with our friends at Bethany Christian Church and North Run Baptist - each group will prepare food for 35 men. The menu will be baked ziti (Laura has the recipe), salad (any type), bread/rolls, and dessert (any type). If you can help prepare any of the meal, please contact Laura Wagner, 804-334-1664, wagner5@mindspring.com. Laura and Barbara can coordinate picking it up from you.



2020 Christmas Families

This year we are very excited to be providing Christmas gifts for 8 children at Ginter Park Elementary School. Please bring the gifts to church by Sunday, Dec. 13. Monetary donations are always welcome, and can be given to Laura Wagner, either through the church offering, or mailed directly to Laura (2013 Milbank Rd. Richmond, VA 23229). If you would prefer not to shop, please let Laura know soon, so that she can do online shopping for the children. (Laura can be reached at 804-334-1664 or wagner5@mindspring.com). Please bring gifts for at least two children. This has been such a difficult year for these children – let's do our best to make this a special Christmas for these eight children.

If your last name begins with A-E, please bring gifts for Monreal and Jazelle. If your last name begins with F-M, please bring gifts for Robert and Day'Veon. If your last name begins with N-S, please bring gifts for Ciahna and Hugo. If your last name begins with T-Z, please bring gifts for Genesis and Child #8.

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Angel Tree Child 1 (A-E)

Child Name: Montrel

Age: 8

Circle: **Male** or Female

Pant Size: 8/10

Shirt Size: 8

Shoe Size: 12

Wish List:

1. Action figures
2. Monopoly and Uno board games
3. Legos
4. Remote control car
5. Scooter
6. Workbooks (2nd grade)

Angel Tree Child 2 (A-E)

Child Name: Jazelle

Age: 6

Circle: Male or **Female**

Pant Size: 6

Shirt Size: 5

Shoe Size: 10

Wish List:

1. Doll babies
2. Doll houses
3. Educational games
4. Princess board games
5. Barbies
6. Workbooks (Kindergarten)

Angel Tree Child 3 (F-M)

Child Name: Robert

Age: 10

Circle: **Male** or Female

Pant Size: 10

Shirt Size: 10

Shoe Size: 5

Wish List:

1. Headphones
2. Bike
3. Books(4th grade level)
4. Game card for Playstation
5. Uno and Monopoly board games
- 6.

Angel Tree Child 4 (F-M)

Child Name: Day'Veon

Age: 8

Circle: **Male** or Female

Pant Size: 10

Shirt Size: 10

Shoe Size: 4 ½

Wish List:

1. Arts and Crafts
2. Legos set
3. Game cards for Playstation
4. Bike (8 years old)
5. Books (2nd grade level)
6. Board games

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Angel Tree Child 5 (N-S)

Child Name: Ciahna

Age: 8

Circle: Male or **Female**

Pant Size: 9

Shirt Size: 7/8

Shoe Size: 3 (youth)

3 Gift Requests Under \$20:

1. LOL toys
2. LOL dolls
3. Puzzles
4. My life as toys from Walmart
5. Princess toys
6. Board games

Angel Tree Child 6 (N-S)

Child Name: Hugo

Age: 6

Circle: **Male** or Female

Pant Size: 10/12

Shirt Size: 10/12

Shoe Size: 1

Wish List:

1. Legos
2. Remote Control cars
3. Basketball
4. Scooter
5. Workbooks (Kindergarten)
6. Board games

Angel Tree Child 7 (T-Z)

Child Name: Genesis

Age: 8

Circle: Male or **Female**

Pant Size: 10

Shirt Size: 10

Shoe Size: 1

Wish List:

1. Princess toys
2. Barbies
3. Baby dolls
4. Board games
5. Workbooks(1st grade)
- 6.

Angel Tree Child 8 (T-Z)

Child Name:

Age: 4

Circle: Male or **Female**

Pant Size: 5

Shirt Size: 5

Shoe Size: 10

3 Gift Requests Under \$20:

1. Educational toys
2. Barbie dolls
3. Barbie doll car
4. Princess toys
5. Picture books(4-5 years old)
- 6.



The church office is open physically twice per week and virtually anytime!

Church Office: Monday & Thursday 8am – 1pm

-Emails, Voicemails, Paper mail, and in house admin (bills, facility maintenance etc)

Virtually: Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday

- Emails, Website, Tech Support, Prepping bi-weekly mailings and other duties as needed.

Worship and Study Alternative Options

If you are not able to access our worship services online and would like a copy of Rev. Jonah's sermon mailed to your home please request these to Jonah or Lisa.

Also we still have a few copies of "Our Daily Bread" Devotional available for members who would like this mailed out.



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December Birthdays

B. Ronnie Walker Jr	12/12
Shannon Brooks	12/14
Peggy Broaddus	12/23
Jean Garthright	12/24
Buddy Lucord	12/31