

Advent Prayerscapes



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CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)
IN WEST VIRGINIA

So on this day may we be comforted by the coming of Christ. In the midst of all that consumes us, may our fear be turned to song, may our uncertainty be transformed into assurance, may our tears be life-giving signs of love, and may we join the host of all times and places in worship. On this day may we ponder this holy event in our hearts, and may we be reoriented to the One who is with us even yet.

*We give our whole selves to you, dear God, on this day.
Let us claim your presence with us
in all of life's varied circumstances.
We love you, and we trust you, and in you we rejoice!*

Sunday: Christmas Day
from Rev. Dr. William B. Allen
Regional Minister Emeritus

Read John 1:1-14

The Gospel according to St. John, as we have come to expect, regularly casts a surprising light on familiar events. This is true of the nativity as with so many things. Here we have no angels, shepherds, magi, stable nor any of the familiar elements of the Christmas story. But, we do have a powerful statement of God's entry into history and our own lives. This, after all, is what the birth of Jesus is all about.

John informs us that baby Jesus is not just a baby, but is also the pre-existent Word of God – “God from God, Light from Light...” as the ancient creeds have it. He comes with power, bringing life to the world and life to us! The darkness recedes before the presence of the Word of God.

This advent of life and light is good news because it comes to us, to you and me, in the presence of the Word whom we know is Jesus Christ – Bethlehem's babe **and** the creative *Logos* of God. This Christ comes to us in whatever circumstance we find ourselves and brings life and light, even when we thought we were mired in decay and darkness.

*We celebrate the coming of your Word
who brings light to our darkness and life to our world.
Praise to you, O God! Alleluia!*

*Gift Giver, fill my soul with acknowledgement of your blessings
so that others may see.*

Friday: Dec. 23

Read Heb. 1:1-4

from Rev. Kevin Bowers

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Weirton

I always believed in God. I was born in a family where my father was a minister, and my mother was preparing for the mission field, and later on worked for the Pennsylvania Disciple's Region. In most of my memories, I have heard God's voice speaking to me through the scriptures, especially the Words of Jesus in the New Testament.

There have been a few times when I felt the Spirit of God tugging at my heart, giving me advice, or telling me what to do, but I always check this to see if it's consistent with the scriptures.

We come to this Advent season knowing that Christ is coming again. Let Christ come fresh and new into your heart again this year. Sure, Christ has never left; but clean up your act, prepare a special place, and be prepared for wonderful blessings.

*Prepare your place within me, O God,
that I may be a home for you in this world.*

Saturday: Christmas Eve

Read Luke 2:1-20

from Rev. Thaddaeus B. Allen

Regional Minister

Our lesson finds us in the midst of a great deal. In this text we find government decreeing, young couples traveling, angels appearing and the heavenly host praising. In this text we encounter inconvenience, fear, awe, and sacrifice. And yet, in the midst of all of this, life is present as never before. God comes into the center of all that is happening, and in the midst of a great deal, we are reoriented to God.

There seems to be a great deal going on in our midst these days too. In our lives we struggle to comply, we are often fearful, at times lonely, and are shaken by an insecure future. But in this holy time, we are reminded, yet again, that Jesus and life stand at our center.

First Sunday of Advent: Nov. 27

Read Isa. 40:1-8

from Rev. Dr. Sharon E. Watkins

General Minister and President

On a recent bicycle trip, I wished for the valleys to be lifted up and mountains made low! When you're travelling under your own steam, the lay of the land becomes important.

In this passage, travelling under their own steam has gotten God's people lost in the wilderness of life. They've travelled far away from God. But God has not forgotten them.

Here the Holy One speaks a word of comfort and of hope. A straight, smooth highway will be opened up and the people will find their way back home to the glory of life in God.

Circumstances of life – and sometimes our own stubborn fault – can get us into difficult terrain. But God does not forget us. God offers us comfort and hope and a way back home.

*Dear God, in this Advent season, remind us that you are near,
and that the way back to you is always open.*

Monday: Nov. 28

Read Mark 13:24-37

from Rev. William Flewelling

Proctor, WV

In eager watchfulness
we turn to seek the hour,
the long unknown prodigious time
that fills your promise, Lord.

The readiness of time
to welcome you, O Lord,
is as the moment of delight
that blossoms at your joy.

Inclement in the throes
of unknowns wrought of strife,
we turn in faithfulness to hope
to satisfy your will

We watch in wonder, stir
to gather in your way
as faithful till the dawning day
when you, O Lord, appear.

(SM, suggested tune: St. Thomas; CANTICA SACRA CCLXXII)

Tuesday: Nov. 29

Read Isa. 40:9-11

from Rev. Jayne L. Chafin

Parkersburg, WV

Ask anyone who knows me and they will tell you how much I love Christmas. I love the sights and words and sounds, the hustle and bustle, the shopping and singing, the decorating and baking, you name it. Not so much the snow, except on Christmas Eve, after we're safely home from church services, when I like to bask in the wonder of the silence of the evening, with gently falling snow that blankets the earth, maybe even listening to this text as it's sung in Handel's *Messiah*.

It's a great time, a great season to lift up our voices, not fearing (whether it's too early, or too loud, or not politically correct) and shouting to the whole world "Here is your God!" Christ, the Light of the World, the Great Shepherd, the Messiah is coming not only in might, but with love and care. How can we not praise! How can we not shout! How can we not blanket the world in Christ's love! How can we not feel the love of Christ gathering us in his arms!

*Teach me to shout from the mountaintops
and even from the valleys that You are here with us, O God,
so that all the world may proclaim your love in our lives!*

Wednesday: Nov. 30

Read Ps. 85:1-7

from Rev. Richard Howard

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Morgantown

Psalms 85 has long been associated with Advent, especially verses 8-13, which look toward a future salvation. We miss a rich lode of meaning, however, when we pass by verses 1-7, which in

We've, finally, been adopted!

Usually they come for the sweet ones,
Innocent infants, swaddled and cuddly,
Or the precocious ones: French at three,
piano at four, calculus at six.
Or the sturdy and strong. Or the very good and kind.

But he received the whole kit and caboodle of us
The rag-tag messy mass of us,
all of us as we are.
Right then. Right there.
Broke the chains that keep us here.
He declared us, each and every one,
his child. And if his child, his heir.

Brothers and sisters the time has come,
this Christ-mass season of the year,
To shout it out, to dance it about,
To claim it, to name it, to cry it aloud:

"Abba! Father!" "Abba! Father!" Amen!

Thursday: Dec. 22

Read Isa. 61:10—62:3

from Rev. Rosetta Smith

United Disciples of Christ Church, Charleston

Isaiah shares with great excitement about the depth of love God has for us and the grand Hope we have through God's graces and blessings. Wow! We are adorned with life-transforming gifts. God arrays us in salvation and righteousness! God gives His very best to us because of His deep love. With this deep love, how can we be silent? How can we not shout out? How can we not blaze like a torch? People will see the transformation and a new name will be given.

In acknowledging these gifts, may you recognize the hope you have this Advent season and throughout the year. Let us anticipate with great hope as we allow our souls to be renewed and transformed. What new name does God give you? "I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God."

We forget in circumstances turned bad to seek direction from the Wonderful Counselor. We forget when it appears that things will not get any better that we believe in a Mighty God. We forget when something we have known like a job, a relationship or a family tradition comes to a conclusion that we believe in an Everlasting (never concluding) Father. When situations in life get us all tensed and knotted up it is then that we often forget, that our Lord is the Prince of Peace.

We forget...that is why God does not. Remember?

*God of many names, as you are born anew to us this season,
we remember.*

Tuesday: Dec. 20

Read Ps. 96

from Rev. Aaron Watkins

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Bluefield

I am continually amazed as I watch my boys grow up how fast they pick up certain things. Even at twenty-one-months-old, Xanthus is learning how to sing, and Nicholas is known to sing certain things repetitively (enough to drive his Dad crazy).

Singing is one one that we worship God. We sing the Sunday hymns. We sing along to the contemporary Christian music played on the radio. No matter how we do it, we sing!!!! "Sing praises to the Lord," the hymnist writes. Don't just say it, sing it!

Is there a day that ever goes by that the majority of us don't sing something whether it's out loud or under our breath. We don't have to be professional singers to sing, especially when we sing praises to God! We simply have to possess a heart for the Lord and that's all. Church, let us sing praises to the Lord for He is worthy of praise!

*Heavenly Father let us sing praises to you for the gift of your son,
and may we honor Him in our fellowship, our actions,
our words and our song.*

Wednesday: Dec. 21

Read Gal. 4:4-7

from Rev. Dr. Larry Grimes

Dir. of Church Relations, Bethany College

their "already here/not yet" nature are in one respect more directly relatable to the Christian experience of salvation.

The phrase "restored the fortunes" in verse one signifies that salvation has already once come to the people of God, which for Christians is echoed in the life, ministry, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. The words of verse 1 articulate the remembrance of a past deliverance that evokes laughter and joy among God's people. Yet verses 4-7 reveal the reality that we have yet to experience the full fruits of that salvation.

These seven verses reveal the message that the people of God are called to live by both memory as well as hope – to remember the gift of salvation that God gave to us in Jesus, and to place our hope in the fullness of the kingdom that will surely break into human history, when all things on earth and in heaven will be renewed. Such is the hope of Advent – we celebrate the gift of salvation while we also pray for salvation. We remember that which has come before, and we look forward with hope for all that is yet to come.

May your promise be fulfilled in us, O God, in our waiting for you.

Thursday: Dec. 1

Read Ps. 85:8-13

from Rev. X. Rae Browning

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Cumberland, MD

I really wasn't looking forward to planting a large garden this year. But since my husband wanted to try out the new tractor he purchased, and had already tilled more ground than planned, I conceded. And, in doing so, God was so good that the harvest was bountiful. Our garden yielded so much that we were able to share with neighbors and friends.

God is so good to us all the time. But, in sharing our bountiful harvest with others we, ourselves, were found to be blessed over and over again. This is how God wants us to live our lives, serving Him and our neighbor. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your mind and all you soul...and love your neighbor as yourself. I thank God that following Christ prepares the way to a promised future filled with peace. God's glory will dwell in our land, and this year's harvest is proving to be very good.

*May we rejoice in the fullness of your grace, O God,
even as we rejoice in your creation's bounty.*

Friday: Dec. 2

Read 2 Pet. 3:8-15a

from Rev. Dr. Victor L. Hunter

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), New Martinsville

“Advent” means “coming” or “arrival.” Advent is the season of expectation and anticipation, promise and preparation. The biblical narrative can be summed up in three sentences: “Someone is coming. Someone came. Someone is coming again!” Jesus the Christ is the “someone” whose comings we celebrate in this sacred season.

We celebrate Christ’s first coming in the four Sunday’s leading up to Christmas. We prepare the church with decorations, light the advent wreath, light the candles, decorate the tree.

But we also celebrate the second coming of Christ in Advent—also with expectation and anticipation, promise and preparation. “May we receive Christ in his first coming as savior so we might welcome him in his final coming as judge.” (Book of Common Prayer)

Our text is a reminder that Advent is a sign to us of the nature of Christian living. We are in a time of “holy waiting.” The old creation will reach its conclusion in the coming of the new creation—the new heavens and the new earth. We are not in the play “Waiting for Godot”—in which no one shows up. Peter reminds us that the one who came will come again. God’s eternal love holds all of time, whether a day or a thousand years, within the eternal now of his love made manifest in Christ. Therefore, wait...yearn...repent...anticipate...prepare. Even so, come Lord Jesus!

Holy God, teach us to wait with both patience and yearning.

Saturday: Dec. 3

Read Mark 1:1-8

from Rev. Dennis Sparks,

*First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Ravenswood, and
Executive Director, West Virginia Council of Churches*

Imagine a young teen receiving such news and dealing it all by herself: no Facebook, no texting, no Twitter, just the news. The word that comes to my mind is “loneliness,” yet she was ready to serve. I’m not sure I’ve ever faced such a situation – *alone*. We know “the rest of the story,” but Mary did not...thank God.

*Thank you, Holy Creator, for those who through the ages
have been ready to serve. May we be as faithful.*

Fourth Sunday of Advent: Dec. 18

Read Ezek. 34:11-31

from Rev. Donald Snyder

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Beckley

While the flock of Israel has been scattered through exile, God decries the leadership that guided covenant people into this predicament. To remedy this circumstance the Lord of the covenant makes a threefold declaration: First, pride of place goes to the idea that God will look out for His sheep. The world may neglect and/or forget us, but God never does. Second, the promise of justice carries with it two connotations: retribution for the guilty, and vindication for their victims. In God’s justice people will reap what they have sown. Finally, through the realization of the covenant blessing would come proof of the bond between God and His people. The Good Shepherd will lead God’s people to green pastures. The Good Shepherd will anoint us in the presence of our enemies. We will dwell in the house of the Good Shepherd forever.

Great Shepherd,

grant us confidence in your care for us as your very own sheep.

Monday: Dec. 19

Read Isa. 9:2-7

from Rev. Steven Smith

United Disciples of Christ Church, Charleston

He is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace...and how soon we forget. We wake up in a bad mood. Someone gives us a bit of disturbing news. Something we wanted to go a certain way goes another...and we forget.

of us. Christmas is the birth of Jesus as a human child. We have a Savior who understands our human nature, because he shares it, and loves us anyway.

*O God, let me prepare for Jesus' coming not as a distant event
but as an event that occurs every time the doorbell rings.*

Friday: Dec. 16

Read Rom. 16:25-27

from Rev. Judith Bennett

Island Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Wheeling

What's the big secret? Here the secret seems to be that there is no secret. Paul is excitedly telling all who will listen that the mystery has been solved. The revelation of the prophets' foretelling is now revealed. The Messiah has come! What was once shrouded in holy secrecy is now evident to all.

We who have known the secret for a long time now once again find ourselves in this season of Advent, checking to see if there's anything new. Is God slowly but surely disclosing more of the mystery, bit by bit? As we follow the light of the star that still shines brightly on the horizon, let us be excited by and take comfort in the knowledge that God continues to reveal his secrets at precisely the right moments to all of humankind. The revelation of the mystery continues to unravel.

*God of mystery and wisdom,
help me to experience the glow of "the light revealed" anew,
and to share it with those who do not see.*

Saturday: Dec. 17

Read Luke 1:26-38

from Rev. Janice Hill

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Parkersburg

Have you ever received startling news? I'm reminded of the people who receive the Publishers Clearing House Sweepstakes with balloons and cameras and shouts of joy. Mary must have been just as surprised, but there were no cameras, no joyous celebration with friends, just a mysterious visitor who gave her news that would change her life forever – and probably not for the best!

My dear friends Micheal and Carmen Zoughbi have journeyed from Bethlehem to my doorstep as they travel across America talking about the disappearance of Christianity in the town where Jesus was born.

He is not clothed in camel's hair eating locust and wild honey, but Micheal reminds me of John the Baptist proclaiming "the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ." His stories of the repression of his people as they are encased within a 30 foot high concrete wall, calls me to repentance.

Bethlehem is one of the hundreds of places where people seek freedom. My Advent prayer is that Christians will be drawn to the liberating words of Isaiah the Prophet: "the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of Lord, make the paths straight.'"

*Call us, O God, into the journey of liberation
for all of your children.*

Second Sunday of Advent: Dec. 4

Read Is. 61:1-4

from Rev. Kevin M. Snow

*Central Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Huntington and
Associate Regional Minister for Youth and Young Adults*

There is no question that the Advent season is preparing us for something. Advent, from the Latin word *adventus*, or "coming," readies us each year to proclaim and bear witness to Christ's birth. The Word made flesh among us. Emmanuel, God with us. The question becomes, *what are we preparing for?*

Matthew and Luke relay the stories of Christ's birth. Isaiah makes sure we're ready to act upon God's presence made real to the world. Isaiah calls us to do several things: bring good news to the oppressed, bind up the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty and release to the captive, and comfort all who mourn. Isaiah reminds us that while Advent worship brings us together as the church, our greater calling is to live and share this good news with our community and world.

*Loving God, draw us together as the church this Advent season,
and mold us into the hands and feet of Christ, that we will liberate
the oppressed, welcome the forgotten, and bring hope to the lost.*

Monday: Dec. 5

Read Isa. 61:4-11

from Rev. Joshua Patty

Central Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Fairmont

When I was a kid, I remember being picked on at school. One day, I told myself, I would get what I deserved. One day, instead of teasing, there'd be praise. Instead of rumors, truth. Instead of rejection, inclusion. One day.

The ancient Jews looked for such a day too. When they'd be admired as the chosen people of God, priests to the Gentiles, richly rewarded for their faith. One day they'd get what they deserved.

During Advent, we look toward one day too, but I wonder if we're still fighting old battles, looking for vindication in other's eyes. Perhaps we could anticipate the justice of the Lord, where like perfectly fertile ground, "righteousness and praise will rise before all the nations."

One day, for all of God's children, we will share a restored relationship with God, through his Christ, our savior. Praise, truth, welcome, peace. One day.

*Come, bring the day, O God,
that all your children may know your reconciling grace.*

Tuesday: Dec. 6

Read Luke 1:67-79

from Rev. David T. Chafin

Deputy Regional Minister

In the back of many a preacher's head may lurk the same question that has crossed my mind through the years: What happens if I lose my voice completely? For Zechariah, it was a matter of lacking trust in Gabriel's promise of a son that had brought silence upon him. Tough life for a priest, or for anyone who realizes the consequences of faithlessness. But the striking power of this story within the Nativity story, for me, is the outburst that comes when the silence is over, and hard-won faith is made sight.

How do I wrestle through the obvious hard times of faith? Would the first words from my mouth, after nine months of struggling through the painful silence of such a divinely imposed

*Heavenly Father, may we always be mindful
that you have chosen us to serve others
as partners in your plan of salvation for the world.*

Wednesday: Dec. 14

Read Ps. 89:1-8, 13-18

from Rev. William Pollack

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Princeton

It is sometimes difficult to acknowledge Advent this time of the year. The sights and sounds of the days all seem to dismiss the significance of the season. We celebrate Christmas too early.

Though the Gift of Jesus has already come to Bethlehem, may we offer ourselves to the truth that there are still reasons for rejoicing today. The Psalmist says, "How blessed are the people who know the joyful sound!" He has already expressed his thankful spirit. Words like "covenant", "faithfulness", "righteousness" and "justice" are mentioned as reasons for his confidence and hope. How blessed we are when we read these words and understand that, in this Advent season, the "joyful sound" of His second appearing can be heard even as we celebrate the gift of God's love today.

*Heavenly Father, help us to hear and rejoice
in the good news of Your great love in our Advent longing.
May we be found in You when our Lord returns,
as we are faithful to the end.*

Thursday: Dec. 15

Read Ps. 89:19-26

from Rev. Daniel Harry

Community Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Beech Bottom

In this Psalm, God talks about the covenant made with David. In verse 19, God points out that David is one of them - one of the people of Israel. This is the key to understanding this text as an Advent meditation.

Advent is a time of preparation for the arrival of one who is with us. When we talk about Jesus as Immanuel (God with us), we are not merely saying that Jesus lives with us but that he is also one

Monday: Dec. 12
from Rev. Dawna Watkins
Bluefield, WV

Read 2 Sam. 7:1-11, 16

As I am preparing this devotion, I cannot help but take a moment to follow its example. I ask my spiritual advisor for guidance. I pray for divine guidance and God's will for the "what nexts" in my ministry and service to God.

God of many houses, what is it that I can do to honor Your glory in the midst of all that I have? Am I a Solomon or a David; am I being asked to wait for Your time, or are You giving me the green light for a new direction of service to You and Your kingdom?

Advent and Lent have become dedicated times of waiting in Godly time. Be a David: turn to your spiritual advisor, or your pastor or an elder with your calling, to better God's House and await your answer in God's time. Then get ready to go to work for God.

*You know me, and you know the right time, O God.
Prepare me to follow your guiding hand.*

Tuesday: Dec. 13
from Wesley Howsare

Read Luke 1:46-55

Big Run Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Cameron, and Fork Ridge Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Glen Easton

God confounds us with the way in which He accomplishes His will. Rather than using a queen or princess, He uses an ordinary Jewish girl to give birth to His only son--the King of Kings, the Savior of all humanity. And rather than have His son enter the world in a palace of gold and marble surrounded by royalty, Jesus enters it in a lowly, borrowed manger.

God shows us that it isn't the rich and powerful that He calls for duty, but those of His children who accept His son Jesus into their lives, and who have His love and forgiving grace in their hearts. Like Mary, we praise God for His plan of salvation that brought Jesus to Bethlehem! And we give thanks to God for using us, as ordinary and unworthy as we are, to serve others as part of that plan.

"attitude adjustment," be like Zechariah's Spirit-filled paean of praise?

May this time of waiting compose a song for all the ages within me, O God, and may my lips be opened to pour it out in praise!

Wednesday: Dec. 7
from Rev. Jamie Gump

Read Ps. 126

Madison Avenue Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Huntington

Dreams are about possibilities of what can be. Those who yearn and hunger are those who have hope for the future. When desire and longing are fulfilled, mouths will overflow with laughter and tongues with shouts of joy. What are your dreams? What are God's longings for you?

Truly I say to you... The Lord has done great things for you, is doing great things for you, and will do great things for you. For you, dreams have and will come true. Your deepest longings will be fulfilled. Have you recognized them? Have you celebrated them? Are you prepared to rejoice?

May we delight in what God has done and what God will do as we bear and share the seeds of God's love and grace with all.

*You have filled our lives with hope, O God.
May we offer them to you in praise.*

Thursday: Dec. 8
from Rev. Scott Thayer

Read Isa. 40:25-31

Bethany Memorial Church, Bethany, and Chaplain of Bethany College

In this magnificent poem, Isaiah reminds the people of God that the Lord had not forgotten about them, despite the bad turns they had experienced. They had witnessed the decimation of their cousins to the north by the ruthless Assyrians, and then they themselves suffered frightful treatment at the hands of the Babylonians. Now their land was gone, their Temple was gone, their people were scattered to the four winds. They were plunged into the abyss of deepest grief.

Then along comes Isaiah, reminding these wounded people that God is still in control. The Creator had never lost a single star, and this same God would never lose track of God's people. The time of salvation was on its way; it would come in God's good time. It is sometimes hard to understand God's schedule, but no one knows timing as well as God. As Paul wrote in Galatians 4: "when the time was just right, God sent forth a Son..." Christ's coming happened at just the right time. Whatever we need will come on time, too. That's another reason why grace is so amazing.

O God, you are the Shepherd of the Stars. Be my Shepherd today.

Friday: Dec. 9

Read 1 Thes. 5:16-24

from Rev. Rodney Hubbs

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), McMechen

When I read these verses they struck me in a way that I had never thought of before. If we look carefully, we can see the Advent candles brought to light. The Advent season is the Christian's time to look forward to celebrating the birth of our Lord and Savior: We look to the *hope* of spending eternity with Jesus. We tend to be more *joyous* at this time of the year, to be at *peace* with our soul and body, and pray that all the world could do the same. Of course *love* blossoms more at this time of the year.

Why is this? We seem to turn to the "love one another" phrase more fervently during Advent. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could continue to "love one another" throughout the entire year?

Let us keep the fire of the Spirit throughout the coming season and also into the coming year. May we all remember that this season is not the giving and receiving of gifts, but the celebration of the birth of our hope of salvation.

Father, we pray that the hope, peace, joy and love candles be lit in our souls throughout the season.

Saturday: Dec. 10

Read John 1:6-8, 19-28

from Rev. Del Parris

Lost Creek, WV

When I reflect on John's ministry, my thoughts keep circling around the concept of humility. John graciously accepted his role as one who points to the light; he did not feel a need to *be* the light. He even saw his baptism as fading in the light of the One "whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." As a minister I have found it necessary to remind myself from time to time that what I do is not about me – it is about pointing people to the true light. Sometimes it is difficult to move over and make room for Christ. In the season of Advent I am reminded that as Christians we are all called to bear witness to the light. I ask myself, "How am I doing that in my daily life?" and, "How well am I doing that?"

*Dear Lord, help me to put myself aside
that I may more completely direct others to You,
the true Light, who brings peace and love to our troubled world.*

Third Sunday of Advent: Dec. 11

Read Isa. 11:1-9

from Rev. Kenneth Hardway

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Wheeling

What kind of a world is this? Wolf living with lamb? Leopards lying with kid? The cow's children coming over to the bear's house to play? And what are an asp and an adder?

In the beautifully poetic way that Isaiah offers it, the natural order of things is altered by the coming of the shoot of the Jesse tree. The animal kingdom lives together without hunt and without fear. Infants play in their innocence around snakes that will not harm them. No fear. No harm. Harmony. Peace. Shalom.

The world would look like a strange place to us if Shalom ruled the day. A world operated under the auspice of mutuality instead of personal gain; of living for the good of the other as the deciding factor of our daily living; of living with the full knowledge of the Lord. Let us long for the strangeness of such a world.

*O God, may the strangeness of Shalom
be the fruit of the full knowledge of you being born in our hearts,
this day and forevermore.*