

International House of Prayer of Greater Fort Wayne

...a day and night , city-wide, multi-church prayer and worship ministry

Advent

The first day of the year? Well according to the Church calendar the first day of the year begins December 1st. Many church traditions can be both empty and meaningless but somewhere in the 4th century, not long after Christianity was no longer illegal in the Roman Empire, the church faced a new struggle. The church went from being persecuted to being accepted. Men and women of the church were faced with a new challenge to their faith—safety and comfort.

So church fathers intentioned to invite followers of Jesus to make sense of their life and even their calendar around the coming of Jesus—as a result somewhere in the 4th Advent began. First as a time for new converts to ready themselves for their Baptism and later as a formal season of embracing the coming of Jesus—literally as the beginning of the year -Advent! I would suggest there is much wisdom to embracing this intentionality for followers of Jesus in the 21st Century. Perhaps there is great wisdom to proclaim that our year actually begins in the Advent—the Coming of Jesus as our King! I would like to share two readings that relate to these thoughts. First about Advent on our calendar and second about what it means then to live with this understanding of locating our lives as followers of Jesus in our culture. Both of the readings come from **Common Prayer**; A liturgy for ordinary radicals.

Advent, meaning “the coming,” is a time when we wait expectantly. Christians began to celebrate it as a season during the fourth and fifth centuries. Like Mary, we celebrate the coming of the Christ child, what God has already done. And we wait in expectation of the full coming of God’s reign on earth and for the return of Christ, what God will yet do. But this waiting is not a passive waiting. It is an active waiting. As any expectant mother knows, this waiting also involves preparation, exercise, nutrition, care, prayer, work; and birth involves pain, blood, tears, joy, release, community. It is called labor for a reason. Likewise, we are in a world pregnant with hope, and we live in the expectation of the coming of God’s kingdom on earth. As we wait, we also work, cry, pray, ache; we are the midwives of another world. Just as red, white, and blue have meaning in the world (as in “These colors don’t run”), colors also have meaning in the church (though a different sort of meaning, needless to say).

Advent is often marked with purple, signifying royalty; in earlier times, purple often marked the coming of a king or Caesar. (Often, members of the royal family were the only people allowed to wear it.) Many Christians celebrate advent by lighting a purple candle each week for the four weeks leading up to Christmas, and then lighting a “Christ candle” (usually white or red) on Christmas Eve.

St. Nicholas, who was a faithful man of God before he was a cultural icon. Today, the season between Thanksgiving and Christmas that many of us recognize as Advent is the biggest frenzy of retail spending. More than half of it, hundreds of billions of dollars a year, is spent as we celebrate the birth of the homeless Son of God in that stinky manger. (And he got only three measly presents. One of them was myrrh. What baby wants myrrh? Myrrh was a burial spice—at His birth Jesus is already embracing the brokenness of the world He has invaded.) Hundreds of Christian congregations are now rethinking the Advent season as a time for compassion rather than consumption. (Check out www.adventconspiracy.org.)

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And the secret is simply this: **Christ in you!**

Yes, Christ in you bringing with him the hope of all glorious things to come. Col 1:27b, JB Phillips

Locating Our Lives in the Abandoned Places of the Empire

Everything in our society teaches us to move away from suffering, to move out of neighborhoods where there is high crime, to move away from -people who don't look like us. But the gospel calls us to something altogether different. We are to laugh at fear, to lean into suffering, to open ourselves to the stranger. Advent is the season when we remember how -Jesus put on flesh and moved into the neighborhood. God getting born in a barn reminds us that God shows up in the most forsaken corners of the earth.

Movements throughout church history have gone to the desert, to the slums, to the most difficult places on earth to follow -Jesus. For some of us that means remaining in difficult neighborhoods that we were born into even though folks may think we are crazy for not moving out. For others it means returning to a difficult neighborhood after heading off to college or job training to acquire skills — choosing to bring those skills back to where we came from to help restore the broken streets. And for others it may mean relocating our lives from places of so-called privilege to an abandoned place to offer our gifts for God's kingdom.

Wherever we come from, -Jesus teaches us that good can happen where we are, even if real-estate agents and politicians aren't interested in our neighborhoods. Jesus comes from Nazareth, a town from which folks said nothing good could come. He knew suffering from the moment he entered the world as a baby refugee born in the middle of a genocide. -Jesus knew poverty and pain until he was tortured and executed on a Roman cross. This is the -Jesus we are called to follow. With his coming we learn that the most dangerous place for Christians to be is in comfort and safety, detached from the suffering of others. Places that are physically safe can be spiritually deadly.

One of the best stories of community in the United States comes from the backwoods of Georgia. In the 1940s, long before the civil rights movement had begun to question the racial divisions in the South, white folks and black folks came together to start Koinonia Farm — a “demonstration plot” for the kingdom of God, as they called it. Koinonia survived attacks from the Ku Klux Klan in the '50s and '60s, tilling the soil and sowing seeds for God's movement in the least likely of places.



Join Us As we Pray for our City

- Thursday 6—7 am—phone call meeting. Contact Ben @ 260-403-4948 to join.
- Friday—7pm
- On Zoom—833 669 278

With gratitude and integrity we steward your gifts. Thank you for partnering with the mission the Lord has given us in this hour as we partner with Him in His kingdom purposes.

Please make your **tax deductible** contribution to:

**IHOP Fort Wayne
5907 West Wallen Road,
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Ben and Denise, Please agree with us over these prayer needs for the next month...

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