



St. Albert United Church
an Affirming Ministry within the United Church of Canada
20 Green Grove Drive St. Albert, AB T8N 5H6
Telephone (780)458-8355 Fax (780)459-6555
www.stalbertunited.ca office@stalbertunited.ca

Greetings of hope and love!

During Advent we sing: “Come thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free,” and during Christmas we sing: “Go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.” Thus the Advent-Christmas season is a balancing of: preparation for the filling of the empty places which we long to have filled in our lives, and celebration of the holy response that causes us to burst forth in enthusiastic messages of hope. How can we feel other than this tension when on the one hand we struggle through a global pandemic with far reaching consequences for personal health and job security, and on the other we rejoice as a nation that we can celebrate this season with so many different cultures and faiths? The birth of Jesus always calls us toward hope rather than despair, love rather than fear.

In the coming weeks our extended Advent worship services will focus on a variety of scriptures that encourage us not to quench the Spirit of God. The parable of the talents will remind us that we each have the resources we need and asks us how we use them. In the parable of the separation of sheep and the goats Jesus prompts us with the thought that “as you did it to one of the least of these you did it to me.” The story of John the Baptist challenges us to do our part to prepare the way of God by finding the balance Christ can bring to the highs and lows of our days. Isaiah and Paul encourage us to rejoice in the blessings that reveal God’s favor and pray without ceasing in the face of our struggles. Mary both gives us the courage to offer ourselves as the servants who give birth to Christ’ love in the world and raises the question of how we give life to the Spirit of divine justice?

As we enter into an Advent and Christmas season during the strange and unprecedented times of COVID 19, it is true that we face many challenges as a congregation. Gathering restrictions and technology glitches have interrupted our ability to worship and be in supportive community as fully as we would like. In turn, this has resulted in financial stresses. Yet as a community of faith preparing the way of Emmanuel, God-With-Us, we light candles: of gratitude for the gifts and giftedness we do have; of commitment to justice ‘for the least of these’; of hope for renewed life for all people; of peace in the presence of God and a community of faith who will not abandon us; of joy in the Spirit that encourages us not to give up; and of love that each and every one of us can allow to be our motivation to meet each and every day. The phrase may be a tad overused these days, yet it is true, we are in this together and with God’s inspiration we will give birth to renewed life.

May God’s peace be with you this Advent-Christmas.
May all you do help bring Christ’s love to the world.

Rev. Mervin Gallant

Rev. Deborah Hoekstra