

Pastor's Letter

Sitting in a waiting room would not be my first choice for penning thoughts about Advent. However, it's where I am at the moment. So, I pen away. And I suppose it does fit...since Advent is a season traditionally associated with...waiting. I sit quietly...in a waiting room...waiting for thoughts...about...waiting. It's a comfortable room I'm in. On the wall hang a couple of impressionistic prints featuring lots of flowers. A few chairs ring the room – sufficiently cushioned for an hour's sit, but not so comfy as to put you to sleep. A Culligan water dispenser stands in the corner, just opposite a conveniently located bathroom. An hospitable place for waiting, all in all.

But I wouldn't want to live here. There's no food, no TV, and no beds in this waiting room. My astute powers of observation discern that waiting here is intended to be of a limited duration. Less than a week, to be sure. Probably less than 24 hours. For those who sit here, the assumption is that something will happen in fairly short order. A door will open, and we "waiters" will pass through it...on to something else. Waiting doesn't last forever.

It occurs to me that Mary, of Bethlehem fame, would have roundly (pun intended) affirmed that waiting has its limits. In time, the baby's head will emerge and – hail, Mary – let's start the breathing exercises! Even elephants don't gestate forever. Something new is coming...and let's get on with it!

Perhaps one of the blessings of Advent is that it ends...on December 25th. We aren't left hanging forever. There is a consummation...a culmination...in a grand and glorious event. The wait was worth it! By contrast, waiting for a bus or a train or a plane that never arrives can feel like a first-class waste of time. Not so with the Christmas miracle.

If I were to distill down one of the nuggets of Christian faith, it would be that Jesus will show up. Show up at Christmas. Show up at home, at work, at church, in nature, in prayer, in community. Often little, seemingly improbably arrivals of joy...or peace...or forgiveness...or hope that we have longed for, perhaps after a period of darkness. But not eternal darkness. He shows up...and with him love...and light – a light which drenches all the dark crevices and obstinate corners of fear with a bright hope. And things are new and different and somehow better.

The water cooler gurgles to my right, but otherwise little has changed in this waiting room for several minutes. There isn't much to mark the passing of time. Not even a clock on the wall. Yet things are happening. I trust it. I'll be moving along soon, to another place and another experience. Things will happen, however static it may look at the moment. Jesus is gestating – growing in our midst. Pushing, progressing and – in time – arriving. Wait with good heart...and bright hope. It won't last forever...and it'll be worth the wait.

Advent blessings...

Tim