

MM Advent Season Blue Sheet 1 — Hope

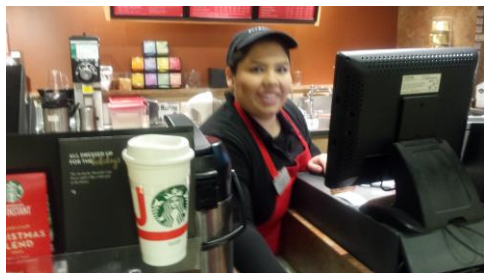
DAYS OF ADVENT (WAITING)



1 Beautiful winter dawn in Corvallis OR...
200 heads of state in Paris begin a world meeting to deal with climate change



2 December holy to many faiths with stamps for all we hope.



3 We are greeted with “How are you today?” with every cup of coffee even on this darkest day in San Bernardino



4 Guard goose watching flock by night hissing at us to stay clear



5 Jean with famed poster artist Earl Newman at Unitarian Bazaar

WAITING — WITH HOPE?

*“...The day shall dawn on us from on high
to give light to those who sit in darkness
and in the shadow of death
to guide our feet into the way of peace.”*

(From The Song of Zechariah: “*Benedictus*,” (Luke 1:78, 79)

This is a favorite Christmas-time text of mine. It fits dark times. There is always something dark going on at Christmas.

I listen to an hour of NPR every morning before dawn. When the news can’t get any darker, it does.

It hurts to hear it. I can’t imagine how people keep going.

Are there words for those who sit in darkness? Any hope? Any hint that the hope promised by the first candle of Advent is possible?

Preachers fish for some text to hang on to in hard times. Most texts are not used in context. I never had a Christmas in my ministry when the words of this text didn’t fit someone’s immediate trouble.

So Advent begins with hope.

It is increasingly more difficult to speak with assurance about the presence of a divine Power in this world.

I can appreciate the intent of scripture tellers to create metaphors which carry gigantic ideas. How might the Almighty one be seen, and where? And if so, when? Can all the hatred and brutality be untangled? Is it too late to reverse human atrocities toward this planet that gives us life?

It’s getting harder and harder to believe that any dawn will come to the darkness of the Middle East. How can millions of refugees be made whole again? No wonder some simply don’t read or watch news anymore. When good thoughts and prayers don’t work, what then?

A long season of waiting through dark times? Any hope?

So we started the season with our usual riverfront walk in downtown Corvallis. It was dark when we started, then dawn gave light to the river. The sun seems to have hope and the river keeps on rolling along.

Another day, a Post Office stop. Mailing some of our contribution checks. The banner says “Holiday Stamps are Here!” Many religions share one season. Cards will connect across the world from this very spot.

Three times a week our two mile morning walk ends at Safeway Starbucks in Corvallis. Today I am saddened by the dark news from San Bernardino. I am greeted by the barista today as every day, “*How are you today?*” The day is already brighter as she pours my coffee with that smile. Sun breaks through. She doesn’t wait for the solstice or Christmas. Why wait?

Another day we watch the guard goose which has been present with a couple of dozen ducks by Starker Pond along our walk. It takes exception to our presence, driving us off the path. Geese don’t know about Advent...or do they have the seasonal instinct shared by all creatures? Do they know that these dark days won’t last always?

Then on Saturday we are at the Unitarian Bazaar. We mingle and buy and banter. Something about being with people helps push darkness away. The last time I was here I shared in a memorial service for the “other liberal Art” of Corvallis. He always wore a Santa hat. It made me laugh.

It’s awfully dark these days. They say that it’s not long until the darkest days turn toward the light. “*The day shall dawn...*” That may be true or not. I’ll wait I guess. In the meantime I’m going to hang some lights.

Art Morgan, December 6, 2015