

## Seasons that move us

*How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns."— Isaiah 52:7*

Advent marks the beginning of the church year. More than anything else, it is a time when we focus on our need for a savior. Just as the people of Israel for centuries waited and watched for a Messiah, so we anticipate the birth of the baby Jesus every Christmas.

And what joy it brings to hear how God came to earth as an infant, fulfilling the prophecies of old, heralded by angels, amazing the shepherds, causing Wise Men to follow a star to see what the heavens had wrought.

Advent signifies the "coming" or unfolding of a momentous event. So our gaze is not only on a moment in history that changed life forever but also on an event yet to come — when Jesus will return a second time, not as a babe in a manger but as a king to rule and judge the Earth.

Advent and Christmas are seasons of the heart playing out in each one of us. They evoke memories and sentiment, stirring deep emotions, mainly joy but sometimes sorrow and longing, or a mixture of feelings.

For these seasons are about another type of "coming" — the extent to which we allow God to enter our hearts and guide our lives. Scripture and songs ask us to prepare our hearts for the King. A voice in the wilderness calls for us to make the paths straight and smooth that the Lord may come into our lives.

Advent and Christmas are about awakenings, about turning our lives around and embracing a godly perspective. Taking stock of ourselves, eliminating sin from our lives, praying more steadfastly, reading Scripture, serving God's church — all these activities are part of the season. Decisions made in Advent can be lifelong changes. They are new beginnings.

Will we love our neighbor as ourself? Pray for our enemies? Feed the hungry? Comfort the afflicted? There are many ways to experience and celebrate Advent and Christmas.

Most essential is to worship God. We are doing just that at Emmanuel Episcopal Church during this blessed time of the year — each Sunday at 9:30 a.m. and Christmas Eve at 7 p.m. Our Lessons and Carols service will be held on Sunday, Dec. 29.

Please come and join us as we celebrate these wonderful days of Advent and Christmas. Our services are led by our parish priest, the Rev. Jerry Wichelns.

The Lord is coming. Come to worship Him.

May you have a meaningful Advent and a very Merry Christmas.