

INTRODUCTION:

The Church Seasons share with us the full story of Christianity, following the Gospel story from it's beginning to the end. ADVENT presents Christ Jesus as the anticipated Messiah. CHRISTMASTIDE & EPIPHANY reveals God incarnate in our midst: "God-with-us" and continues the revealing of God to humankind. LENT & EASTER reveals human beings to themselves. PENTECOST shows forth the Holy Spirit continuing the work of Christ Jesus through the Church.

It is important for Christians to hear, tell, and live the whole story and Gospel. Using the Church Seasons allows us to deal with the whole message of Christianity rather than just bits and pieces that correpond to their particular background and interests at the time.

As a person called to share in the ministry of all creation, I like to personalize the Church Seasons in physical terms in the drawing of parallels with the Cycle of the Seasons of the earth. (ADVENT/FALL, CHRISTMASTIDE & EPIPHANY/WINTER, LENT & EASTER/SPRING, and PENTECOST/SUMMER) Even so, life and our emotions can be cyclic and repetitive, so let's play and pray that way too! Sirituality and prayer seems to me like an ebb and flow from Contemplation/being with God to Action/living out God's presence.

I hope and pray that you will allow these simple plays and prayers to touch and move you as we live the "Seasons". Allow them to effect you as the outside world changes and grows through the seasons of life, may you inwardly experience the seasons of the heart and soul too.

ADVENT/FALL:

a time of preparation

getting ready for the comings of Christ: first & last

a mixture of Solemnity and Joy for God's love is nearer to us than we imagined

waiting in hope & anticipation for God's promises to be fulfilled

remembering the presence of Christ within us and the Call to bear Christ and live Christ for others in the spirit of poverty, humility & joy

a time of changing & turning around

resting in reassurance

a festival of colors

passages

"cooling down"

heightening of the senses

reflection

believing in hope that all things pass in due "season"

nestling

building a place of security and warmth

AFFIRMATION OF INTERFAITH:

We believe that life was created good by God and that life and creation are to be affirmed and uplifted as God's love is being constantly shown in every moment of every day.

We believe that God's love includes all people without distinction and that there is nothing that one is or that one does which can separate one from the active love and grace of God.

We believe that the being of God moves always towards relationships and that God creates human beings for relationships: with self, with others, and with God, the ground of being. As brokenness and separation occur in these relationships, we are called to announce God's intention to restore persons to wholeness.

We find God's presence of love with us which often speaks to us in the voices of other people. Therefore, we affirm that openness to God and openness to other humans are very much alike and that really listening to others can help us hear God.

We celebrate as good news that God will never give up on us and that nothing can separate us from God's active love.

Amen.

An Advent Reflection: "It's coming!"

(This piece could be used as a meditation, because of its length, I would memorizing the script. Although the piece may seem to be comical in tone, the lines should be delivered in all seriousness by the actors.

The only necessary set or props are three chairs all facing the congregation. Basically #1 waits with patient assurance, whereas #2 could care less, and #3 is very impatient. Both their body posture and interpretation should convey their attitudes.

The three enter from different areas, and survey the seats before sitting down. There is then a long pause as each begins in their own way the process of waiting. Perhaps to help this effect, #1 could read the newspaper, #2 relax carelessly, and #3 move around in their chair and look at their watch. After a couple of minutes of this and the interaction between them, they begin to speak:)

#1: It is coming you know...

#2: Who is it? (a casual attempt at conversation)

#1: It is! (as if they should know)

#3: Well if it is coming...it is late! (with annoyance)

#2: Who's late?

#3: It is!!!

#2: Now wait a minute, what exactly are you two waiting for?

#1: More precisely, it is whom we are waiting for!

#2: Alright whom...it doesn't make a bit of difference to me if it's a whom or a what! But it does seem that you're both waiting for something!

#1: Most adduredly!

#3: Aren't you? (questioning in wonder)

#2: Aren't I what?

#3: Waiting...

#2: No, I don't think I'm waiting for anything special, just wasting time...I'm just here...trying to find out what or whom you're waiting for!

#1: It's rather ambiguous...

#3: rather hard to describe or put your finger on...

#2: Well for my sake try...who is it?

#1: It's rather diverse.

#3: with more names and titles than anyone can count...

#2: Well...for example? (both pause and then in rapid fashion:)

#1: Messiah!

#3: Savior!

#1: Conqueror!

#3: Royal King!

#1: Avenger!

#3: Political Redeemer...but late! I've waited too long, more than just a lifetime. My parents and their parents and so on have all waited for the same thing. Each generation tells the next that this may be the time for it's coming. But it never is... the hope is always there, but as years and generations fly by, the assurance weakens and one becomes impatient in their longing for ultimate fulfillment!

#1: Don't stop now..it has other names too!

#2: It does sound intriguing...what does it bring?

#3: It will inaugurate a kingdom of justice and righteousness...

#1: with salvation and peace for all...

#3: writing a new covenant on our hearts not just mere stone!

#2: So it comes to be a conqueror of the nations and the supreme ruler of all the earth?

#3: Or else...(in a quiet voice, half embarassed)

#2: Or else what?

#3: Some say that it may come as one of the poor...

#1: (interrupting them harshly) Do you actually believe it would try and deceive us by coming in a different way?

#3: (continuing, as if not noticing the interruption) ...and be rejected by those who spent their lives waiting for it...even putting it to death! (pausing, letting what was said so abruptly sink in...)

#2: Must it come as triumphant King...why not a child in swaddling clothes?

#1: Because it must come in power and over throw our enemies; only then will it's kingdom be established! This is the way our parents have told us to expect it and for this day I patiently wait...

- #3: But can't you see that day may never come! Tommorrow will be as hopeless as today! How can we be sure that it's not already come and waits for us to discover it?
- #1: I have the tradition of my parents to believe in...they did not give up hope and forget its promise...
- #3: But they are dead from just sitting and waiting in one place with their expectations of what it has to be before they'll recognize it...It's beyound our titles and names that we chain it down with, isn't it?
- #1: I really don't know what to expect, but tradition reminds us of the promise it made to the people so long ago. I must be faithful to it for all my hope is in this. I must carry on the hope of it's coming and if necessary...pass it on to the next gneration...
- #3: and they the next?
- #1: If need be, we can't hurry it's coming by our impatience! I can not desert this hope and promise that I have always held in my heart just because it isn't here today, even though I pray it was!
- #2: Perhaps your mysterious "It" is out there now...unnoticed...
- #1: (insulted) Impossible! Its glorious long awaited Coming will be announced with trumpet blasts...
- #3: Maybe we've grown deaf in our waiting...(matter of factly)
- #2: You may continue to wait...but if it has already come unnoticed...I must at least try to search it out. I can't sit still with you and wait in silence...(leaves area and exits)
- #1: Who was that??? Surely not one of Us???
- #3: What difference does it make!! I'm too miserable from sitting here in our own secure world waiting...perhaps it can be found if we only begin to look beyound ourselves. Alone I would have never left, but now I want to follow them and see where they go...wait for me! (follows #2 out)
- #1: (pause, alone now picks up paper, but nervously puts it down to say:) I wonder whom they'll say it is? (puts paper back up and continues reading)

An Advent Prayer for Eucharist/giving thanks:

This is the moment for giving thanks;

this the moment for remembrance.

Let us remember why we are here:

We are here because we are Christians,

because we have been drawn together by the Spirit
which Christ promised to send into the world.

We, then, are the Church; we are the body of Christ.

Let us remember all those who are united with us
at this time,

and let us give thanks for that bond of union
which we now celebrate.

Let us remember our past

and give thanks for what we have become.

Let us give thanks for the whole universe

and especially for our creation and the life that is in us.

Let us remember our future

and give thanks for all that is to happen to us.

Let us give thanks for that consummation of all things
which the Spirit is working out in us.

And now in thanksgiving and remembrance

let us invoke the Spirit to bless

this bread and fruit of the vine,

so that when we share it among ourselves

we shall be sharing what we are ourselves and shall be:
the Body and Blood of Christ.

For we remember how Jesus,
before he died to bring us life by sharing our mortality,
ate this Passover meal with his friends.

Following Jewish custom he blessed the bread
by saying:

"Behold! This is the bread of poverty
which all our foreparents ate in the land of Egypt.
Let all who are hungry enter and eat;
let all who are needy come to our Passover feast.
This year we are slaves; next year may we be free..."

And then Jesus boldly added:

"Take, eat, for this is my body which is given for you,
do this in remembrance of me."

As the Passover meal was near over,
Jesus took Elijah's cup,
which was never to be shared
until the return of Elijah and the coming of the Messiah,
and pronounced the last blessing:

"Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the Universe,
O God our Parent, our Mighty One, our Creator, our Redeemer,
our Sacred One, our Shepherd, the One who is good and
does good to all; God who everyday did, does, and will do
good to us! God has favored, favors, and will favor us
forever; for sustenance and loving-kindness; for life,
peace and all that is good; may God never let us lack
of all that is good!"

And then Jesus added:

"Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sin.
Whenever you drink it, do this also in remembrance of me."

And so this meal becomes a sacrifice, a holy thing,
for by sharing this bread and the fruit of the vine,
we remember Jesus and what he is,
we remember ourselves and what we are,
we remember the glory of the whole universe
and what we shall all become!

MORNING WORSHIP:

ALL: Hear all people, our God is One,
praise be the name of the One
whose glorious dominion is forever and ever.
Eternal God, open our lips,
that our mouths may declare your glory.

*We cast away the shadows of our hiding now;
We cast away the names they have called us;
We cast away the wounds they've lashed upon
our lives, our minds, our souls;
We cast away the fetters they would bind us in;
We cast away the disgrace they would have us feel;
We cast away our angers,
and we cast away our fears.
We stand before you naked, now,
naked and frightened s young lovers.
Find us...Touch us...gently, God,
embrace our trembling with your love.
Amen.

Reading

Free Prayer

Hymn/Psalm

*
ALL: Dear God, come join your Children in your world.
Come share the joys that you have granted us,
and in our lifelaughter find your love returned.
Come whirl about when we dance,
and when we touch, clasp hands with us,
and when we play, be young with us,
and when we love, come love with us,
and when we march, walk there among us to end
the hatreds, crimes, and lies that spatter you world
with ugliness.

ALL: (cont.) And if we weep, O God,
then solace us with tenderness and strength;
but when our souls take flight in joy
with bodies you have given us,
come join our loves with yours, dear God.
Come join your Children in your world.
Amen.

EVENING WORSHIP:

ALL: *Source of all being,
we turn to you as did our parents in ancient days.
They beheld you in the heavens;
they felt you in their hearts;
they sought you in their lives.
Now their quest is ours.
Help us, O God, to see the wonder of being.
Give us the courage to search for truth.
Teach us the path to a better life.
So shall we, by our lives and our labors,
bring nearer to realization the great hope
inherited from ages past,
for a world transformed by liberty, justice,
and peace.

(alternating sides):

- #1: Your might, O God, is everlasting:
#2: help us to use our strength for good
and not for evil.
#1: You are the source of life and blessing:
#2: help us to choose life for ourselves
and for future generations.
#1: You are the support of the falling:
#2: help us to lift up the fallen.
#1: You are the author of freedom:
#2: help us to free the captive.

#1: You are our hope in death as in life:

#2: help us to keep faith with those who sleep in the dust.

#1: Your might, O God, is everlasting:

#2: help us to use our strength for good.

ALL: Amen.

Reading

Free Prayer

Hymn/Psalm

ALL: May the words of our mouths and
the meditations of our hearts
be acceptable to you, our Creator and Redeemer.
May you bless us and keep us.
May your countenance shine upon us and
be gracious unto us.
May your countenance be lifted up to us
and give us peace.
Amen.

*: texts from "Welcoming in the Sabbath" by the Shaar
Zahav (Golden Gate) Lesbian and Gay community synagogue
in San Francisco, California.