



## *Raquette Lake Chapel Sunday Blast*

### *November 29, 2020, Advent begins!*

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*"Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock; shine forth..." (Psalm 80:1)*

*"I will surely gather all of you, Jacob; ... I will bring them together like sheep in a pen, like a flock in its pasture; the place will throng with people." (Micah 2:12)*

### **The New Church Year: Advent**

Before we ask, "Why did the color change to purple" and "What is Advent anyway," we are probably asking "When are we coming back to church?" The simple answer is: "When it is safe to do so." We might imagine the scripture verses above to be a short dialog as Advent begins between us and God. We are asking God to "show up!" (and when can we go back to church) and God is reiterating the eternal promise that He will. And purple? Purple is a symbol for reflection, anticipation, and ... waiting.

Advent is a season of "between times" in the church: between reading in scripture about the working of the Holy Spirit through the season of Pentecost and Christmas, the soon-to-arrive Christ. More than any other year I can remember, this Advent feels like "between times," between how normal life used to be and how, we hope, life will be normal again. But we are not there yet, are we?

I believe the time of uncertainty brought on by COVID with full and partial quarantines has caused us to re-evaluate our understanding about what church is and who God is. Believe it or not, even though churches have been closed or services disrupted, the work of the church goes on. How? Through us. Most of us have helped a neighbor, done some volunteer work, made phone calls, run errands and so forth for others who needed our help. St. Augustine supposedly said something like this: "God without us will not; we without God cannot." Though we may feel powerless at times, with God we are not. God continues to work through us, and we can be assured that church is not just "in here, in church": it is also "out there, in the world."

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### **Scripture for First Sunday in Advent:**

Isaiah 54:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 16-18; 1 Cor 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37

A spoiler alert: when you read through the scripture for Sunday November 29, you may be surprised that Advent does not begin with happiness, but rather of sadness and even despair. I can't help but see the timeliness of these scriptures for us. The scriptures reveal a Humankind

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that has reached the end of its rope, perhaps like us. Our efforts for self-improvement, our limited and solitary activities to cheer ourselves up, seem to have come to nothing. The scriptures describe a people who realize at the deepest level of their being, that they cannot save themselves, and that, apart from a direct intervention by God, they are totally lost.

The passages from Isaiah 64 and Psalm 80 express the longing of faithful people for God to break into their isolation and break up the gridlock of their circumstances. (Sound familiar?) The New Testament scriptures from 1 Corinthians and Mark 13 anticipate with wonder the coming of "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

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**Resources for Advent:** there are many, many resources on-line. Here are a few:

<b>Sanctified Art</b>	<a href="https://sanctifiedart.org/">https://sanctifiedart.org/</a>	Many resources, art, etc. especially for children. Thank you to Sue for passing this along!
<b>Advent World</b>	<a href="https://adventword.org/">https://adventword.org/</a>	Too many resources to list, including email reflections if you choose to sign up.
<b>The Lectionary Page</b>	<a href="http://www.lectionarypage.net/">http://www.lectionarypage.net/</a>	Lists scripture readings for each Sunday and special days.

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**Special prayers this week:** for the leaders of God's church in the world; for leaders of all nations; for health care workers everywhere; for law enforcement officers and first responders; for an impending birth.... Hear our prayers O Lord!



The first candle in Advent symbolizes hope and is called the "Prophet's Candle." The prophets of the Old Testament, especially Isaiah, waited in hope for the Messiah's arrival.