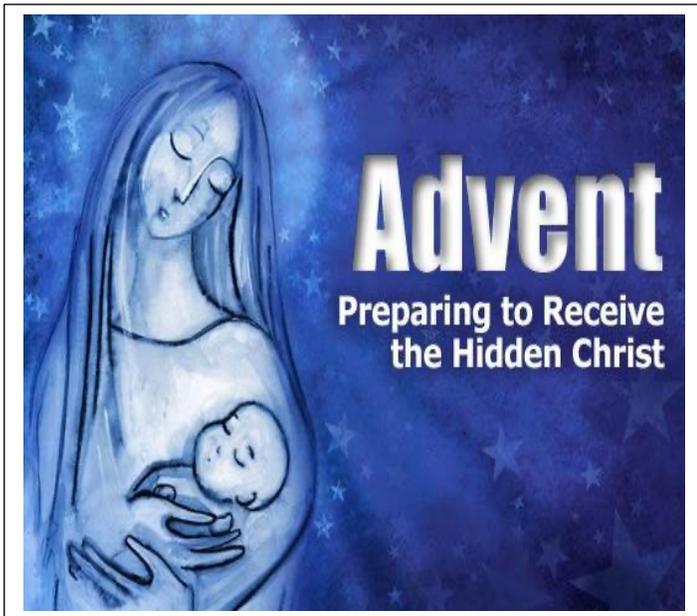


# ADVENT & CHRISTMAS 2021



3:1 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'" – *The Gospel of Luke 3. 1 - 6*

As the saying goes, "Dogs have owners; cats have staff!" That reality began to take shape as I envisioned what it meant to bring home the two sibling rescue cats I adopted: Alexander the Great (Maine Coon) and Ponce "Pounce" de Leon (Short Hair Tabby). So, I went shopping: a crate for transport, two liter boxes, gallons of liter, a scooper, two food bowls, dry food, wet food, filtered running water bowl, cardboard for "scratching", and a five-foot kitty condo for additional scratching posts and platforms for lounging and from which to survey their newly acquired dominion. Once they arrived, their 7-month-old behaviors introduced additional realities requiring further environmental adaptations: putting window blind drawstrings out of reach, covering fabrics subject to claw shredding, removing items easily swiped off tables, countertops, and shelves. The list goes on. Those of you similarly "on staff" understand ;o). Yet, they are quite lovely beings and all the effort I exert seems well invested whenever they curl up in my lap, lick my hand or purr.

Luke's Gospel writer (see above Bible reading) remembers the words of the Prophet Isaiah from centuries past about preparing for God's arrival so that "all flesh shall see the salvation of God." And if you think preparing for cats is difficult, imagine leveling every mountain, filling every valley, straightening out and smoothing the crooked, rough roads! Isaiah envisions that something on earth is happening that dramatically demonstrates the way God is saving the world. Can we see it? Perhaps our lives can be devoted to clearing the way for viewing God's presence at work or blocking the view – ours and others!

In the church, we listen for words and sing songs and decorate our homes in the four weeks of the Christian calendar called "Advent" to prepare our hearts and minds to welcome God's presence in our world and in our lives. All the celebrating of God's gifts of hope, peace, joy, and love make sense when we can find that place where we begin to see God's presence. The Gospel says that if we listen to and study the stories of Jesus, we'll learn to see God in our time and clear the way for others to receive God's gifts of hope, peace, joy, and love. That's what Christmas is all about!

So, how do we clear the way to see God's "saving" work for our day? We study what it means to be anti-racist and change our language and behaviors accordingly. We examine how the things we do that we think improves our style of life: where we live, what we wear, how we earn income, how we learn and/or are taught ultimately may lead to hurting us, others, our planet. We learn how we contribute more to keeping the peace

we have or making the peace God wants everyone to share. We risk conversation with others to experience greater perspective for making community. We try to see the larger picture while practicing what is possible for us to do here, now.

When I was about four or five years old, I loved parades. There were Independence Day and Thanksgiving Day parades in my hometown. Some people arrived early and brought chairs to line the streets where the marching bands and floats were scheduled to pass by. My family often showed up just before the start of it all; My view usually began at the level of other children my size - looking at the pants pockets of people! So, I'd hunt for a gap between people where I could slip through to the front row. When I tried that, I was pulled back by mom or dad, who were concerned I'd get lost. Sure, I could hear the music of the parade and the people marching in the street. But I didn't want to just hear it all; I wanted to see it, too! I wanted the whole experience. I wanted to be close enough to the parade to feel the vibrations of the bass drum in my chest. I wanted that so badly that I would cry. And when I was just about to give up entirely, my dad would pick me up and put me on his shoulders. That was great! I could see every part of the parade as it passed by ;o)

Advent, Christmas, and all the persons and prophets' part of Jesus' story have allowed us to have a view of God's parade marching through history, inviting us to join along. As the church we may see how to assist others to see it, too! Maybe they need a lift, or perhaps we need to stand aside so they can step forward for a better view. Each of us belongs somewhere in the story.

So, this year, how about we all ponder these questions: What can you see of God's loving work in the world? What needs to change for you to get a better view of God's presence? What can you do to make the view a bit easier for others?

**God's love is at work in each of us! I look forward to seeing that again and again in and with you!**

***Pastor Brandon***

## **"The Redemption of Scrooge"**

*By Matt Rawle*

**A Four-Session ADVENT DISCUSSION GROUP with *Pastor Brandon***

**Mondays @ 7:00 PM**

**Pick Up Your Book After Worship on Nov. 21<sup>st</sup> or Nov. 28<sup>th</sup>. OR Order Your Book At the Link Below**  
[https://www.amazon.com/Redemption-Scrooge-Pop-Culture/dp/1501823078/ref=tmm\\_pap\\_swatch\\_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=](https://www.amazon.com/Redemption-Scrooge-Pop-Culture/dp/1501823078/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=)

### **Session Dates/Chapter Titles**

**November 29 – "Bah, Humbug!"**

**December 6 – "The Remembrance of Christmas Past"**

**December 13 – "The Life of Christmas Present"**

**December 20 – "The Hope of Christmas Future"**

**Each Session Join Us On ZOOM here – "click" the link below:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81171169645?pwd=L3JJb2VRa2FrUTRRTGhISUFaajE2dz09>

"A Ghost Story of Christmas" is what Charles Dickens subtitled his well-loved book "A Christmas Carol". Author of the accompanying guidebook, we will consider what insights Dicken's story may offer to each of us. At the end of our discussion group series, maybe we can find a time as Christmas approaches to watch one of the movie versions of this story together!! Do you have a favorite? I do!

No need to sign up for this advent discussion group; just click the ZOOM link above and show up with your book for our discussion ;o). Questions? Contact me – Pastor Brandon

# ADVENT & CHRISTMAS 2021

Please add these services to your calendar and invite your family and friends to hear with you the story that has formed our faith community for centuries and makes us aware of God's presence, now! COVID protocols remain in place – fully vaccinated and masked persons may attend in person. With thanks to Dave Atkinson and Dick Dowell, each worship service is “live streamed”.

## NOVEMBER

28 SUN 10:00 AM 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent “Time to Go Home?”

29 MON 7:00 PM The Redemption of Scrooge: “Bah, Humbug!”

Join Us Each Week On ZOOM here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81171169645?pwd=L3JJb2VRa2FrUTRRTTGHISUFaajE2dz09>

## DECEMBER

1 WED 7:00 PM Church Conference

5 SUN 10:00 AM 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent “The Fear of Home” with Communion  
11:30 AM Family Worship Service

6 MON 7:00 PM The Redemption of Scrooge: “The Remembrance of Christmas Past”

12 SUN 10:00 AM 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent “The Joy of Home”  
11:30 AM Youth Group

13 MON 7:00 PM The Redemption of Scrooge: “The Life of Christmas Present”

19 SUN 10:00 AM 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent “The Blessing of Home”  
11:30 AM Family Worship Service

20 MON 7:00 PM The Redemption of Scrooge: “The Hope of Christmas Future”

24 FRI 7:00 PM CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE with “The Christmas Band”

*We begin with the annual tradition of hearing The Christmas Band under the direction of Stan “the music man” Johnson followed by readings of Jesus’ nativity story by our younger children and their parents. Some of our youth will provide additional music, as well!*

25 SAT

## CHRISTMAS DAY!

26 SUN 10:00 AM 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas “Lost at Home”

## JANUARY 2022

2 SUN 10:00 AM Epiphany Sunday “The Light of Home” with Communion  
11:30 AM Family Worship Service