From the Pastor’s desk:

 Wait, it's Advent!

“I can t wait!” My daughter says it all the time. She can't wait for her birthday, for dessert, for it to snow, and then for the snow to melt .… But we adults say it, too: I can't wait to get this cast off; to get the test results; for the weekend to come etc...Waiting is hard, and it is not the great American pastime. We spend time, we lose time. We waste time. And when we suddenly have time, we don't know what to do with it. Advent comes and gently invites us Christians into a period of waiting. It actually teaches us the art of waiting — and the joy of preparation and anticipation. Advent invites us to be spiritually pregnant with all the hopes for which we long. In Advent, we learn that everything of value needs time to come to fullness. We learn to take time. And in taking time, we anticipate the reward and relish with joy the fruits of our waiting. Waiting helps us enjoy what finally arrives and that which we otherwise might take for granted. The cake in the oven needs time to be fully baked. Then it will taste good. The poem, after a period of mulling, incubation and corrections, finally emerges on the paper in full bloom. Over time, the grapes are transformed into fine wine. A big chunk of ones spiritual life is learning to have confidence in the darkness of winter, in times when things look bleak, to know that there is something out of our sight that is coming into being. Advent is one time in the year when the church says, "waiting may be difficult, but we have to wait, so let's wait together.” And so, in the darkest time of the year, we wait with longing for the slow return of light. As the culture rushes Christmas, the Christian is invited to be counter cultural. The outer world is whipping itself into a buying frenzy, decoration overload, and a season of budget strain, parties and anxiety in what society now calls the "holiday season” (that began, somehow, in October) It is hard work swimming against that cultural tide. But if we don't, we are cheated of a season we need: Advent. And without patience, we lose Christmas as well. Sadly, in our culture and society, families get really stressed out planning and preparing, when the season is over, we can tell that people are "relieved" from all the stress we created around the season., even though, when is a season of stillness, repentance and meditation. Dear friends, If we prepare and hear the Gospel for the four weeks of Advent, certainly our Christmas time is not a single day. The "12 days of Christmas” aren't before Christmas, but they are the Christmas season that now, fully prepared and ready, we celebrate, clear that Jesus Christ is born in our own flesh and blood. What a burst of joy when we gather around the tree, which is fresh, green and fragrant (which it can't be, if we set it up at Thanksgiving). Out of the darkness, and in the glow of only four candles from our Advent wreath, we are finally greeted by the blaze of lights on this tree of life. On Christmas Eve, the waiting really does lead us into Promise. Here, this tree of life and promise is the tree of knowledge, the tree of our fall, the happy fault that brings us onward through Christ's tree of the cross, the tree of our salvation. We sing our first carols, the table dances with our favorite traditional breads and foods. The hearth breathes warmth and lights. Let us add love, patience and kindness, acts of service and patience. Bring on the gatherings and visits, with gift exchanges and feasting, with outings and carol singing, with the full-on cheer that Christ is indeed among us. Behold, these are the tidings of great joy that we have longed for. This is a taste of heaven. The darkness is behind us.

Yours in Christ,

 Pastor Miguel