



Advent Invitation

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The Advent season is an invitation to those of us in the northern hemisphere to wait in darkness for Emmanuel, God-with-Us. Long nights wrapped in shadow challenge us to embrace a time of reflection and deep rest. Slowing our relentless pace of anxious activity is a political act of resistance to the grind of consumerism, which would have us believe that our value as creatures of the Creator is rooted in production and productivity. God-with-Us is a sacred sign of the innate value of human life, all human life. Not only those, by age, ability or association, who are deemed of value by the world in which we live. This barren time invites us to soul rest not as an escape but as an opportunity to reorder what is worthy of our prayers, our work, our resources, both material and spiritual. Advent is a fallow and necessary time.

Especially because there are signs all around us that the sacredness of human life is not a commonly held value. Though I grew up in a rural community where many were struggling financially and certainly inhabited substandard housing, I did not see an unhoused human until I was in middle school and visited a big US city. Now I live in a small Oregon city where unhoused humans number in the thousands. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness [State of Homelessness: 2024 Edition](#), in my county 79 out of every 100,000 people are considered homeless, an increasing number of whom are unsheltered. The lack of safe and affordable housing for humans has touched every corner of the United States. Somehow, we have decided collectively that some humans are worthy of the necessities of survival, and some are not. Our current housing catastrophe is certainly an economic and political failure. It is also a spiritual crisis. At the heart of this dehumanizing reality is the belief that God is not with all of us. That some humans are not valued and

are not worthy even of the essential needs to sustain life, let alone well-being and dignity. We observe widespread and persistent blaming of the poor for their dire circumstances while opportunity and resource hoarding by the wealthy is encouraged and celebrated by our society.

Our collective assent to the disregard of human suffering and basic support of human life calls us all to account in this Season of Waiting. I see signs of hope and am encouraged by the creativity of local efforts in my community such as [Square One Villages](#) and [Community Supported Shelters](#). These impactful community-based movements remind me that the power of collective action for mutual aid and care is possible. The Holy One has not abandoned us. In this season, oh that we might still ourselves to remember and know again that the inherent dignity and worth of each person is an indelible mark from a Creator who will not rest until all creation thrives. A grounding spiritual practice in this season is to rest our bodies and renew our souls. To understand anew that human worth is not something to be earned but is innate and sacred. That I need only look into the face of my neighbor to meet Christ, Emmanuel, God-with-Us.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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